

## ABSTRACT

Title: AN INVESTIGATION OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS' EFFORTS TO SERVE STUDENTS WHO ARE HOMELESS: THE ROLE OF PERCEIVED KNOWLEDGE, PREPARATION, ADVOCACY ROLE, AND SELF-EFFICACY TO THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN RECOMMENDED INTERVENTIONS AND PARTNERSHIP PRACTICES

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With the array of challenges faced by children and youth who are homeless, approaches to support their needs must be systemic and involve partnerships with all key stakeholders. This study examined school counselors' involvement in partnership practices and interventions to meet the needs of students who are homeless. Further, this study explored relationships between school counselors' preparation to work with students who are homeless, their perceived knowledge of McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and their involvement in partnership practices and interventions to work with students who are homeless. An online questionnaire, which was a combination of the School Counselor Involvement in Partnerships Survey (SCIPS) and the revised Knowledge and Skills with Homeless Students Survey (KSHSS) was emailed to a random sample of American School Counselor Association (ASCA) members. Further,

descriptive statistics and regression analyses were run to determine relationships between variables. The results of the study suggested that school counselors are involved in practices to support students who are homeless that are more individual and school-based. They are involved less in practices that require collaboration and partnerships. The results of this research also suggest that there are relationships between school counselors' perceptions of their specific knowledge of homelessness, self-efficacy, and advocacy role and their involvement in interventions and partnership practices to support students who are homeless.

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PRACTICES

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years in the United States, the number of children and youth experiencing homelessness and entering the school system increased dramatically. From the 2006-2007 school year through the 2009-2010 school year, the number of students who were identified as homeless and enrolled in schools across the country increased by 38% (Institute for Children, Poverty, & Homelessness, 2011). According to the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness [ICPH] (2011), the majority of those students identified as homeless are enrolled in kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade (77.3%). Many of them are under the age of six (42%). Children and youth who are homeless experience challenges in their academic and emotional development. With the rapid increase of students who are homeless, schools face challenges addressing their needs.

Children and youth who are homeless are at-risk of having lower levels of academic achievement than their consistently housed peers and face emotional difficulties while coping with the stress of their unpredictable housing (Hicks-Coolick, Burnside-Eaton, & Peters, 2003; Miller, 2009a; U.S. Department of Education, 2004; Whitbeck, Johnson, Hoyt, & Cauce, 2004). With all of the challenges they face, they need additional support systems available. School counselors are key stakeholders who can implement and coordinate programs for children and youth who are homeless and can advocate to meet the needs of this population (Daniels, 1992, 1995).

In order to support children and youth who are homeless, school counselors need to first have strong knowledge on the policies under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Strawser, Markos, Yamaguchi, & Higgins, 2000) The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is the primary legislation that requires schools to address the



major needs of children and youth who are homeless (Department of Education, 2004). This act addresses the enrollment, attendance, and success barriers faced by students who are homeless. School counselors can use the provisions under this act to help students who are homeless have consistency in their education and receive appropriate services. Since this is vital legislation that supports the needs of students who are homeless, school counselors also have a role in educating parents and other educators on the provisions under McKinney-Vento so that families are aware of their children's rights (Grothaus, Lorelle, Anderson, & Knight, 2011).

Since being homeless impacts many facets of a student's life, school counselors must approach the issues faced by students who are homeless systemically, and not just within the school walls. In order to do so, counselors can partner with the school, family, and community to ensure the success of students who are homeless (Strawser et al., 2000). By spanning boundaries connecting the school and the community, school counselors can build bridges and connections between these two important pieces of a student's life (Miller, 2009a).

This study investigates school counselors' perceived knowledge, preparation, and involvement in partnership practices and interventions related to their work with students who are homeless. Since students who are homeless face an array of issues outside of the school, it is critical that interventions are systemic in nature and reach beyond the school walls. School counselors alone cannot address all of the challenges faced by students who are homeless, but through partnerships, they can build a system of support (Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011; Grothaus et al., 2011). Since there is a lack of research on the preparation, practices, and perceived knowledge of school counselors who work with students who

are homeless, this study fills in the gaps by providing insight on school counselors' partnership practices and interventions when working with students who are homeless, their perceptions of their preparation, and their knowledge of the provisions under McKinney-Vento.

### **Scope of the Problem**

With the downturn of the economy in 2008, the state of homelessness in the United States is a growing national problem. Families with children are the fastest growing population of the homeless across the country (National Coalition for the Homeless [NCH], 2009). In fact, one-third of the homeless population consists of families (The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2010). Moreover, one out of every 50 children in the United States experiences homelessness annually (The National Center on Family Homelessness, 2009). Further, over one million children nationwide live in shelters (Institute for Children and Poverty [ICP], 2001). Others are “doubled-up” with other families, living in transitional housing, and living in conditions not suitable for human beings (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The increasing number of students who are homeless and entering the school system is a critical concern that cannot be ignored by those working in schools (ICPH, 2011). This growing crisis can lead to devastating results for the educational and emotional development of children and youth.

Children and youth who are homeless face challenges in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Some of the challenges they face include difficulty maintaining the appropriate records to enroll in schools and higher rates of mobility and absenteeism due to frequent relocation and lack of transportation

(Hicks-Coolick, 2003; Miller, 2009b; Rafferty, Shinn, & Weitzman, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education (2011) recently reported that only 53% of students who are homeless in grades 3-8 were proficient in Reading and 52% in the same grades were proficient in Math. The Institute for Children and Poverty [ICP] (2001) indicates that 20% of students who are homeless repeat a grade in school, 12% miss a full month of class, and 33% miss at least two weeks of school. Children and youth who are homeless are also more likely to repeat a grade, be expelled or suspended from school, drop-out of school, and/or have a learning disability when compared to their peers with consistent housing (The National Center on Family Homelessness, n.d.).

Although challenges in enrollment and attendance greatly impact their educational development, students who are homeless are also affected emotionally. Living in unstable housing environments has a detrimental impact on the emotional and behavioral development of children and youth who are homeless (Coker et al., 2009; Strawser et al., 2000). Children and youth feel stress, confusion, and isolation due to their unstable housing (Gewirtz, Hart-Shegos, & Medhanie, 2008). They have a hard time making and keeping friends because of frequent transfers and the lack of basic needs such as regular bathing and clean clothes (Anooshian, 2005; Aviles & Helfrich, 2004; Daniels, 1992). The lack of social support systems, such as ongoing relationships with friends and teachers, makes it difficult for students who are homeless to feel successful in the school system.

Since the absence of consistent housing greatly affects the emotional and educational development of students experiencing homelessness, schools need to be

vigilant in providing supportive systemic services to aid in their healthy development (Grothaus et al., 2011; Strawser et al., 2000). Educators across the country must address the barriers faced by students who are homeless by working within the school walls and be willing to step outside of them to build partnerships with parents and the community. In particular, school counselors are key stakeholders in the school system that are equipped to address the educational, personal/social, and career planning needs of all students (American School Counselor Association, 2005). By developing programs that systemically address the needs of all students through partnerships with schools, families, and communities, school counselors can provide preventive programs that address the barriers that children and youth who are homeless face in their educational and emotional development.

School counseling programs are collaborative efforts where counselors, administrators, teachers, students, parents or guardians, and the community work together to support the development of children and youth (ASCA, 2005). Through their collaborative roles, school counselors have the potential to be boundary spanners who build connections between the school and the community to support the needs of students who are homeless. Boundary spanning is a systemic approach where a partnership is formed to build a bridge between the school and community (Miller, 2009a). By building partnerships to span boundaries, school counselors can advocate and lead on a systemic level.

According to a position statement on homelessness by the American School Counselor Association [ASCA] the role of school counselors' in working with students who are homeless includes advocating to reduce barriers to enrollment and academic

success, establishing programs for parents and children, collaborating and coordinating services, increasing stakeholder awareness on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and students' rights, and advocating for appropriate educational placement. With the appropriate preparation, school counselors can fulfill these roles, span boundaries, and build partnerships to meet the specific needs of students who are homeless (Daniels, 1992; Daniels, 1995; Strawser et al., 2000). Unfortunately, little is known about the partnership practices and interventions that school counselors are engaging in to meet the needs of students who are homeless. In particular, further research is needed on school counselors' perceived knowledge of the McKinney-Vento Act and their preparation and involvement in partnership practices and other interventions to support students who are homeless.

### **Need for the Study**

Professional school counselors collaborate with stakeholders to support the success of students, plan a guidance curriculum that is developmentally appropriate, conduct individual student academic planning, engage in responsive services as needed, and support the school system as a whole (ASCA, 2005). School counselors also must manage and maintain their programs, use data to determine the needs of the school and students, create action plans to address the needs, and regularly evaluate their programs to determine effectiveness (ASCA, 2005). Through their many roles, school counselors are capable of meeting the needs of all students. Included in their roles is the responsibility of determining how to meet the needs of traditionally underserved groups. This includes children and youth who are considered low-income, living in poverty, and those who are homeless. (ASCA, 2005)

Since the homeless population has many unique needs, ASCA calls on school counselors to have active roles in the education of children and youth who are homeless (ASCA, 2010). As previously mentioned, school counselors can advocate for students who are homeless, develop various programs that support students' needs, educate stakeholders to promote awareness of the issues faced by students who are homeless, and partner with all stakeholders to provide them with systemic services. These roles are all critical for the success of students experiencing homelessness. Unfortunately, there is scant research on how school counselors are engaging in these roles.

Several conceptual articles support the importance of the role of school counselors working with students who are homeless (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007; Daniels, 1992, 1995; Grothaus et al., 2011; Strawser et al., 2000), but to date, only two empirical pieces exist that have investigated their perceptions of their specific knowledge and skills (Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011). Through a case study, Baggerly and Borkowski (2004) found that by applying the ASCA national model to a student who was homeless, the child's behavior was positively impacted. This study suggests that identifying students who are homeless and applying interventions based on ASCA recommendations, such as running social skills classroom guidance lessons, consulting with parents, conducting play therapy, and running small groups, that school counselors can help meet the needs of this population. Additionally, the results of the study indicate the importance of school counselors' knowledge of students who are homeless and suggest how to build meaningful interventions to support them. Although the findings of the Baggerly and Borkowski (2004) study are important to better understand how counselors can effectively work with students who are homeless, they do

not indicate the counselor's prior preparation or knowledge to work with this population and how that impacted skills and practices to work with the student. Additionally, the study focuses on school interventions and does not focus on efforts to engage the community and build partnerships.

In a study by Gaenzle and Bryan (2011), a survey asking school counselors about their perceived knowledge, practices, and training regarding their work with students who are homeless was sent to school counselors across the country. The results suggest that school counselors perceive themselves as having some knowledge on the issues faced by students who are homeless, but report less knowledge on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Moreover, those who reported having some training on working with students who are homeless had higher perceived levels of knowledge on the homeless population and the McKinney-Vento policies and reported higher levels of involvement in advocacy and provision of services for this population. The results of this study suggest that school counselors need some training to learn about and understand the McKinney Vento Act. However, the methods for measuring training in this study consisted of one question, which was not sufficient to gain a clear understanding of the relationship between knowledge and preparation. Research is needed to gain a better understanding of school counselors' preparation to work with students who are homeless.

Both the Gaenzle and Bryan (2011) study and the Baggerly and Borkowski (2004) study added important information about the role of the school counselor who works with students who are homeless. The results of these studies suggest that more research is needed to determine how school counselors can better serve students who are homeless. Although the results of both studies suggest the importance of school counselors'

involvement in collaborative practices to support students who are homeless, more information is needed on school counselors' involvement in practices and interventions. Further, since knowledge appears to be linked to higher levels of involvement in advocacy and provision of services (Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011), it is important to get a clearer measure of perceived knowledge of McKinney-Vento and gather more information on the preparation of school counselors to work with this population.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the current study is to investigate school counselors' involvement in partnership practices and interventions to meet the needs of students who are homeless. Further, this study explores the relationships between school counselors' preparation to work with students who are homeless and their perceived knowledge of McKinney-Vento and their involvement in partnership practices and interventions. The results of this study provide further data on the extent that school counselors are involved in partnership practices and interventions to work with students who are homeless and the factors that relate to their involvement. These results have implications for school counselor preparation and practice.

### **Research Questions**

This study will address the following research questions:

1. How are school counselors meeting the needs of students who are homeless?
  - a. To what extent do school counselors perceive that they are prepared to work with students who are homeless?
  - b. What recommended interventions are school counselors engaging in to meet the needs of students who are homeless?



- c. What partnership practices are school counselors involved in to meet the needs of students who are homeless?
2. What factors explain school counselors' involvement in partnerships and interventions to serve students who are homeless?
    - a. To what extent do school counselors' preparation to work with students who are homeless, perceptions of their advocacy role and their perceived knowledge of McKinney-Vento relate to their involvement in recommended interventions and partnership practices to support students who are homeless after controlling for background variables (e.g., number of students who are homeless, school level, years of experience, region, role of school counselor)?

### **Definitions**

Included in this section are key definitions for terminology used throughout this paper. In particular, this section will define homelessness, children and youth who are homeless, and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

#### **Homelessness**

The official federal definition of homelessness refers to all individuals who lack a regular and fixed nighttime residence. Additionally, the term includes:

- an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is - a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);

-an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or 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, 2011)

### **Children and Youth who are Homeless (or Students who are Homeless)**

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2004) defined children and youth who are homeless as children and youth under the age of 18 experiencing homelessness who are:

- sharing housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (sometimes referred to as doubled-up);
- living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- abandoned in hospitals; or
- awaiting foster care placement (p. 2).

This additionally includes children and youth who reside in a location that is not suitable for humans and those who live in places such as in cars, substandard housing or places like bus or train stations and migratory children who fall into any of the above descriptions (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

The terms *children and youth who are homeless* and *students who are homeless* are purposefully used in this paper instead of the terms *homeless children and youth* or *homeless students*. Since homelessness is often a temporary and not a permanent circumstance (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009), using a term such as *homeless*

*student or homeless child* will label students and families as having a permanent condition and may be disempowering for children and youth.

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

“The McKinney-Vento program is designed to address the problems that homeless children and youth have faced in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 2). The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which was signed into law in 1987 under the Reagan administration (U.S. Department of Urban Housing and Development, 2011), promotes equality in the education that students who are homeless receive in schools as compared to their peers with consistent housing. The act assists in removing the barriers to education faced by students who are homeless and ensures that current policies do not impede their education. Under McKinney-Vento, children and youth who are homeless have the right to enroll in school immediately, even if records are not present; remain at their school of origin, even if they have moved outside of the zone during the school year; be transported to their school of origin, if it is in the best interest of the child; and receive additional support for academic success. Additionally, McKinney-Vento requires all states to have a local liaison assigned to each school and a state coordinator to ensure that provisions under the act are met. (U.S. Department of Education, 2004)

### **Summary**

Children and youth who are homeless experience a range of challenges in the school system. School counselors have a key role in ensuring that the barriers faced by these students are addressed. The current study will explore the knowledge and practices of school counselors who work with students who are homeless, in order to gain a better

understanding of how school counselors are currently supporting the needs of students who are homeless. The following section will provide an in-depth overview of the current literature on children and youth who are homeless and the role of the school counselor.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following chapter includes a review of the literature on the issues faced by children and youth who are homeless and the supportive services that meet their needs. This chapter will begin with a discussion about poverty and its connection to homelessness. Further, literature on the educational and social challenges of homelessness on children and youth will be described. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of the literature the role of school counselors and how they can meet the needs of students who are homeless.

### **The Connection between Homelessness and Poverty**

When discussing homelessness, it is imperative to also discuss the impact of poverty. Poverty and homelessness are intricately interconnected. Indeed, poverty is one of the leading causes of homelessness and its impact is often similar. As individuals and families struggle to stay above the poverty line, many are falling further behind. The current economic crisis in the United States accentuates the gap between the wealthy (top 1-10%) and the rest of the American population. It also heightens the debt and lowers wages for the American public (Liu & Watt, 2012). The downturn of the economy worsens the position of already economically disadvantaged individuals and families, causing many families to experience poverty or fall into homelessness (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009).

During this challenging economic time, family members may lose their jobs, miss a paycheck, or have a health care emergency that could eventually lead them to not be able to afford their housing and fall behind on rental or mortgage payments (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009). According to the National Coalition for the Homeless

(2009), the descent into homelessness is often caused by poverty. In an unstable economy, families are more likely to lose their housing if they cannot recover from poverty.

Families may not be able to afford their mortgages or pay their monthly rent. Some states have as many as 1 in 116 homes foreclosed (Realty Trac, 2010). With rising rental costs, families cannot afford to buy or rent. The lack of affordable housing is a growing issue that affects many facets of a family's life. Unfortunately, across the country, federal support for low-income housing has decreased, despite the increased need (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2011).

### **Poverty**

According to the United States Census Bureau (2010), in 2009, the U.S. saw the greatest increase in the poverty rate since 1994. This record increase is detrimental to the outcomes of children and families (Najman et al., 2010). Poverty, according to Liu and Watt (2012), is defined as a "situation, context, and the outcome of economic disadvantage and inequality." In the most basic sense, it means that an individual or family does not have enough financial support to provide for everyday needs (Butler & Humphrey, 2009). Poverty guidelines that are defined by the United States Census Bureau are adjusted yearly to account for inflation, based on the Consumer Price Index. Guidelines to determine who is considered as living in poverty are measured by the number of individuals in the household and the total salary earned. For instance, in 2011, for a family of four, the federal guideline was \$22,350 per year. For an individual, the salary was \$10,890 per year. Families and individuals who make more than these numbers do not qualify as living in poverty, even though they may be considered low-

income and struggle to make ends meet. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011)

Each year, a growing percentage of individuals and families fall under the poverty guidelines in the United States. Unfortunately, children are one of the largest groups that are considered to be living in poverty under these guidelines. In 2010, 18% of children (13 million) were recorded as living in poverty (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010; Children's Defense Fund, 2008). This alarming number reflects a challenging time in the United States. Unfortunately, the needs of this population are often overlooked (Butler & Humphrey, 2009), which has a lasting impact on the lives of individuals, families, and children. Poverty has a damaging effect on individuals, but it is particularly hard on families with children. The next section will describe how living in poverty impacts children and their families.

### **Impact of Poverty on Families with Children**

When families with children are living in poverty, they face heightened levels of stress, a lack of basic needs, and the stigma of not being able to provide for one another. Other challenges include a lack of health care, missed housing payments, an inability to pay for utilities and afford stable childcare arrangements, and a lack of regular substantial and nutritious food (Cauthen & Fass, 2008). These challenges can make it nearly impossible for families to break the cycle of poverty.

Common misconceptions about families living in poverty are that they all have drug or alcohol problems, do not work, and regularly experience violence and abuse (Cauthen & Fass, 2008). Although these factors may contribute to family poverty, family circumstances greatly vary. In fact, 70% of families with children living in poverty have

at least one member of the family who is employed (Children's Defense Fund, 2010). Unfortunately, their low wages make it challenging for parents to fully provide for their family and ensure that their children grow up in a supportive environment that nurtures learning and healthy development. Other risk factors for poverty include low levels of parental education, having immigrant parents, and single-parent family homes (Cauthen & Fass, 2008).

Regardless of the family's circumstance, parenting while living in poverty presents many challenges. As such, there are often negative attitudes towards parents who live in poverty (Russell, Harris, & Gockel, 2008). Often, blame is placed on the individual parent for his or her financial situation and not on the system, which tends to play a larger role in the family's circumstances. In a grounded theory research study by Russell et al. (2008) several themes emerged in parental interviews with those living in poverty. First, parents reported feeling as though they were fighting an uphill battle to provide for their children and constantly struggled to meet the basic needs of their family. They placed the blame on themselves for not being able to financially provide for their children. Additionally, parents suggested that having hope that their situation could improve was important for them. Parents reported that when they felt that hope was gone, they fell into depression, and faced other mental health issues related to anxiety and stress. Feelings of despair and depression were reported and often resulted in frustration towards their children. The undue stress that poverty puts on parents and their families greatly affects children and their development.



## **The Emotional, Behavioral, and Educational Impact of Poverty on Children and Youth**

Living in poverty takes a toll on the development of children and youth. It impacts them emotionally, behaviorally, and academically. Children and youth living in poverty experience stress related to their life circumstances that affect all other areas of their life. Poverty-related stress according to Wadsworth et al. (2008) occurs due to factors such as the stress of economic strain, violence, discrimination, and trauma related to the experience. Wadsworth et al. (2008) found that poverty-related stress is associated with internalizing and externalizing symptoms, school dropout, substance abuse, legal problems, and DSM-IV diagnostic symptoms. The exposure to poverty can lead to negative outcomes as children struggle to cope with their situation.

Children who experience repeated exposure to poverty often have persistent behavioral problems, as well as emotional concerns (Najman et al., 2010). The results of a study by Najman et al. (2010) suggested that long-term family poverty predicts aggressive behavior, drinking, and smoking in children and youth. The study also indicated that the repeated experience of poverty is the best predictor of negative outcomes in young adults. Family poverty experienced during adolescence seemed to have the most negative impact on delinquent behaviors. Jarjoura, Triplett, and Brinker (2002) also revealed a relationship between the length of time living in poverty and delinquency in youth. Using a longitudinal data set, the results of their study indicated that families who experience chronic poverty tend to have children with higher rates of delinquency. The experience of poverty early in childhood (birth to age five) leads to higher rates of delinquency, as children get older.

The stress related to poverty leads to higher rates of delinquency and emotional and behavioral challenges in children and youth, which impacts academic achievement (Jarjoura et al., 2002). The importance students place on academics is overshadowed by their lack of basic needs and constant stress of their life circumstances. Moreover, children who experience poverty early in life have lower levels of cognitive functioning due to poor nutrition, health care, and prenatal care (Jarjoura et al., 2002; Wang, 2009). Their exposure to stressful life events and lower levels of cognitive development put them at a disadvantage in the school system (Shinn et al., 2008). Research suggests that children who grow up in poverty do not have the resources available to them to do well academically and have less supervision from their parents and other adults while at home (Jarjoura et al., 2002). Trying to manage all of the factors that hinder the emotional, behavioral, and educational development of children who live in poverty makes it difficult for them to achieve success.

### **Summary**

Poverty has a detrimental impact on the lives of families. The educational, emotional, and behavioral development of children and youth who grow up in poverty are adversely affected. The more stress a child feels, the harder it is for him/her to cope with his/her life circumstances. As previously mentioned, one of the leading risk factors for homelessness is the experience of poverty. Those living in poverty are often one step from becoming homeless due to challenges such as job loss, illness, and loss of housing (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009). Since most Americans tend to pay over 50% of their income towards rent or housing payments, many families are one missed paycheck, a health emergency, or unpaid bill away from becoming homeless (National

Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2010). Poverty and homelessness are often connected. Since housing consumes a large portion of family income, it sometimes has to be sacrificed when other factors such as paying for food, childcare, and healthcare are priorities (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009). Although the results are very similar to poverty, in the next section, homelessness will be discussed and its impact on child development.

### **Characteristics and Challenges of Homelessness**

As mentioned earlier, the federal government defines homelessness as lacking a fixed, regular, or adequate residence at nighttime (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). This definition includes living in a shelter, sharing housing with another family due to inability to afford housing, or residing in substandard housing, such as a location that is not suitable for humans. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness (2011), only 17% of the homeless population is chronically homeless, while the majority of the homeless population tends to recover from homelessness. Due to the transient nature and various definitions of those experiencing homelessness, it is difficult to get an exact count of the amount of people experiencing homelessness in the United States. The best estimate is that 643,067 people are homeless on any given night (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2011). These numbers are most likely much higher when taking into consideration families who are doubled-up with other families or those who go in and out of homelessness for various reasons.

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness (2011), the main reasons that individuals and families become homeless include the lack of affordable rental properties and an increase in those living in poverty. Other factors that contribute to the

causes of homelessness include a lack of affordable health care, domestic violence, mental illness, and addiction disorders (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2011). Some lose their housing due to low incomes that cannot support rising housing costs. Others cannot keep up with bills or lose a job, and many experience an illness or flee an abusive situation at home (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003). Families with children may be more susceptible to losing housing while trying to support more than one person on a limited income. Since there are so many challenges faced by families and children who are homeless, it is critical for stakeholders to know the needs of this population.

### **Homelessness and Families**

One third of those who are homeless consist of families (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2010). Diverse reasons exist why families fall into homelessness. Reasons include a lack of affordable housing, extreme poverty, decrease in governmental supports, challenges of single-parenthood, domestic violence, changing family demographics, and lack of social supports (National Center on Family Homelessness, 2011). The Institute for Children and Poverty (2010) suggests that single parents head the majority of families who are homeless. Of these parents, 53% of mothers who are homeless have not completed high school and 50% are likely to experience issues with their mental health. The impacts of homelessness are great and can adversely affect a family's development.

Since it impacts nearly every aspect of their lives, families are very impacted by homelessness (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009). Families experiencing homelessness face heightened levels of stress due to unstable housing environments, frequent relocations, and overcrowded shelters or other housing locations, such as living

with relatives (National Center on Family Homelessness, 2011). Due to their constraints in housing, members of families experiencing homelessness are also more likely to be separated from each other (National Center on Family Homelessness, 1999; U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2006). The undue stress on families makes them more likely to face serious health conditions and experience violence directly or indirectly (ICP, 2010).

Due to the stress experienced by families, parents are forced to focus on the family's survival needs over a child's educational needs. In a study by Miller (2009b), mothers reported that they were unable to focus on their child's schooling because there were so many other issues in their lives. In this study, mothers reported being overwhelmed with tasks such as finding jobs and applying for assistance. Even though they were dedicated to their children, they were not as involved in their child's schooling as they would prefer to be. In a related study, mothers also reported facing issues that included limited access to resources, ineffective flow of information, and lack of productive relationships (Miller, 2011c).

The stress felt by families who have difficulty coping with their circumstances, is further exacerbated by greater challenges. One major issue that may arise for families with children is finding affordable daycare so that parents can work to continue to support their family or gain further education (Swick, 2010). Another concern for parents experiencing homelessness is that if they gain employment they may lose the benefits of welfare and lower housing costs, even if their employment income is not enough to allow them to afford housing and meet their basic needs (Fraenkel, Hameline, & Shannon, 2009). This predicament puts families in challenging positions that may make it difficult to get out of homelessness. The effects of homelessness are felt strongly by the children

in families and may cause them to feel disempowered or that they have lost control. They are impacted educationally and emotionally, while they struggle to deal with the stress and understanding of their current circumstances.

### **Experience and Impact of Homelessness on Children and Youth**

During the 2009-2010 school year there were 939,903 students who were homeless enrolled in schools in the United States (National Center on Family Homelessness, n.d.). This number indicates an 18% increase since 2007-2008. The majority of students (72%) who are homeless are doubled-up with other families, friends, or relatives. Others live in shelters (19%), hotels or motels (5%), or are unsheltered (4%) (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Individual circumstances affect how children and youth fare in their educational and emotional development.

The individual experience of homelessness for children or youth will determine how effectively they manage the challenges they face. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory states that there are connected systems in a child's life that have a bi-directional influence on one another. This means that a child can influence his/her environment, but the environment also influences him/her. The systems that impact children's development include the microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem, chronosystem, and exosystem. The microsystem is where the child lives. This includes the areas where the child regularly interacts, such as the family, school, and neighborhood. The mesosystem is the relationships between the microsystems. This may include relationships between the family and the school and how these two interact. The macrosystem is the culture of the individual. This includes an individual's beliefs and values. The next system, the chronosystem, refers to time over the life span. A child's

development changes over time depending on life events and changes in society. Finally, the exosystem is the system where the individual is not regularly active, but it may have an impact at points during development. An example may include a change in a parent's job that takes him or her away from the home during the week (Santrock, 2002).

Taking into account all of the systems in a child's life, development does not occur in one place. This suggests that children who are homeless are impacted by various contexts. Therefore, a student who is homeless will be impacted by all of the systems in his/her contexts including the school, community, family, time, and the greater society. Depending on how the systems are interacting, a student may have a healthy development, or be negatively impacted by being homeless.

In a study by Huntington, Buckner, and Bassuk (2008), a cluster analysis with 53 preschool children and 69 school-age children, revealed that children who are homeless are not a homogeneous group, but fit into two distinct subgroups based on their behavior problems, adaptive functioning, and achievement in school. Through cluster analysis of interview content, the researchers found that within the population of children who are homeless, two distinct groups emerge. They include one cluster of children and youth who are homeless who are doing well academically and behaviorally. Their life circumstances do not seem to impact their functioning. The second group includes those who fall behind academically and behaviorally and experience poor health. The difference between the two groups often lies in the support systems that are available for the children. These systems may include relationships with teachers, administrators, counselors, friends, and family members. Due to the transient nature of homelessness, it can be difficult for children to maintain strong connections with the school, family, and

the outside community. The authors suggest that service providers should not treat all children who are homeless as a homogeneous group, but instead assess the individual student to determine their unique educational and emotional needs. Unfortunately, the population of children and youth who are homeless is hard to access, and determining their needs can be challenging (Whitbeck et al., 2004).

### **Needs of Children and Youth who are Homeless**

Children and youth who are homeless have many needs that may not be readily addressed due to their housing status. Hicks-Coolrick et al. (2003), in a qualitative study, explored the needs of students who are homeless and the services and supplies that shelters had available to them. The results of the study suggest that there is lack of knowledge regarding students' needs in shelters and that children and youth who live in shelters lack many of the necessities needed to be successful socially and academically. Through interviews and observations, the findings of the Hicks-Coolick et al.'s (2003) study suggest that there are three major areas of need of students who were living in shelters. First, students in the study were lacking basic care such as developmental assessments and medical screenings (such as hearing and vision). Second, services such as before- and after-school care, mentoring, transportation, tutoring, and attendance support services were lacking. Third, those working in the shelter needed more knowledge on the needs of children who are homeless. Those working in the shelter lacked knowledge on the McKinney-Vento Act and the majority of the shelters involved in the study did not provide any training or resources for staff on how to work with children who are homeless. This research indicates a need for those in shelters to understand educational policy and the needs of children in their shelters.



Children and youth who are homeless face other needs academically and socially. Aviles and Helfrich (2004) also indicated several needs reported by children and youth who are homeless. Children and youth in their study reported that although there may be resources available to them, they were not able to access the services due to the lack of transportation. Additional needs included mental health services, basic needs such as a healthy diet, consistent education, and access to services and service providers with knowledge of the needs of students who are homeless. Nabors et al. (2004) suggested that there is a need for services to be brought to the students in their natural setting, such as during the school day. This way, students do not have to worry about the challenges of transportation to receive services. Since the causes and experience of homelessness vary greatly between individuals and there is not one clear way to address the needs for all students (Aviles & Helfrich, 2004), it is important to look closer at the impact of homelessness and how it affects children and youth.

### **Emotional Impact of Homelessness on Children and Youth**

Understanding the emotional and psychosocial needs of children and youth who are homeless is essential to helping them to be successful in school (Gewirtz et al., 2008). Many children and youth who are homeless have a hard time coping emotionally, as they deal with the stress and struggle of understanding their life circumstances (Gewirtz et al., 2008). They also have a difficult time making and keeping friends (Daniels, 1992) and feel isolated due to the lack of quality relationships and social attachments that accompany the transitory experience of homelessness (Anooshian, 2005). The frequent moves and regular environmental instability make it challenging for students to build positive relationships (Daniels, 1992; Darden, 2009). Although children and youth

experiencing homelessness have heightened risks for mental health issues, they are less likely to receive the necessary services to help them cope with their problems (Nabors et al., 2004). With all of the challenges and stressors faced by children and youth who are homeless, there is potential for serious impact on their emotional development.

The emotional struggles of children and youth who are homeless can eventually lead to depression and anxiety. In a study that examined 220 families who were homeless and 293 of their children, the relationship between housing status and child and parents' level of self-reported depression and anxiety was assessed (Buckner et al., 1999). The self-report study by Buckner et al. (1999) found that homelessness negatively impacts development and the behavior and emotional wellbeing of children. Although it was not a significant variable in this study, children reported having higher levels of depression than their peers with consistent housing. The results also suggested that school-aged children who are homeless have higher levels of internalizing behaviors than their peers with consistent housing. Shinn et al. (2008) supported this finding, as the results of their research also indicated that students who are homeless have both higher internalizing and externalizing behaviors than their consistently housed peers. These findings support other research that also suggests that students who are homeless face higher rates of mental illness (Tyler, Caucés, & Whitbeck, 2004; Whitbeck et al., 2004).

Whitbeck et al. (2004) indicated that children who are homeless have higher levels of mental illness and comorbidity than their peers with consistent housing. Based on the qualitative analysis of street interviews, researchers found that adolescents who are homeless in the Midwest were six times more likely to have two or more mental disorders than their same-aged peers with consistent housing. The findings also suggested

that older adolescents were more likely to demonstrate signs of more than one mental disorder. Additionally, gender differences were suggested from this research. Males were more likely to show more than one mental disorder compared to females. Many of those who exhibited two or more mental disorders also reported being victimized at some point when they were on their own. A second study by Tyler et al. (2003) found similar results. In interviews of 328 youth who were homeless and runaway, researchers found widespread prevalence of dissociative symptoms. The higher levels of mental illness may be connected with the unique emotional struggles that children and youth who are homeless face and the heightened anxiety and confusion over being homeless.

Mental health concerns experienced by children and youth who were homeless lead to emotional and behavioral problems (Gewirtz et al., 2008). In Gewirtz et al. (2008), caretakers frequently reported disruptive behavior by children and youth who were homeless that caused negative consequences in school, such as suspensions, expulsions, and displacement in daycare. Another area of concern reported by caretakers included students experiencing heightened levels of depression and/or anxiety as a result of their housing status. In this study, caretakers reported higher levels of concern for mental health issues as students got older. For example, for students who were aged 12 through 19, overall psychosocial concerns were reported by 67% of respondents. This number dropped for students aged five through eleven to 47% and further for those aged zero through four to 14.5%. These numbers suggest that the experience of homelessness has a greater impact emotionally as children get older.

Shinn et al. (2008), found that stressful life events experienced by children who are homeless effects the emotional impact of homelessness. This suggests that it is not

simply being homeless that negatively impacts children, but it is the events that are associated with homelessness that have a major impact on children's development. Stressful life events in this study included the experience of a parent's death; being mugged, robbed, or beaten up; having a serious illness; and/or having seen someone being killed. Other stressful life events include physical and mental abuse experienced by children and youth who are homeless. Shinn et al. (2008) suggested that the experience of one or more of these events makes homelessness more challenging for children and youth.

Children and youth who are homeless reveal higher levels of sexual abuse, physical abuse, and family mental health concerns than their consistently housed peers (Tyler et al., 2004). In a study by Tyler et al. (2004), these higher levels were associated with dissociative symptoms and had more influence than the experience of neglect or rejection from family. Further, research shows that children and youth who are homeless experience higher levels of direct or indirect violence in families than their peers with consistent housing (Anooshian, 2005; ICP, 2010; Swick, 2008). The experience of abuse and violence impacts students' general wellbeing and their sense of control over their lives. Additionally, the effects of homelessness can be particularly damaging when combined with these other negative experiences (Gewirtz et al., 2008).

The experience of abuse may be a common experience for many children and youth who are homeless. In a self-report study of 64 youth who were homeless by Keeshin and Campbell (2011), it was found that 84% of the sample screened positively for childhood physical and/or sexual abuse prior to the age of 18. Additionally, 72% of those who had experienced abuse reported that they were still affected by the abuse today. In the study, the majority of those who reported abuse also reported a history of residing

with someone who suffered from alcoholism or mental illness. Those who reported abuse were also less likely to report feeling loved or cared for by family members. Finally, those who had a history of abuse reported higher rates of current drug use and suicide attempts. The results of this study indicated the heightened levels of abuse experienced by children who are homeless and suggested the detrimental effects that abuse has on the experience of homelessness.

Attending school may be the only time when students who are homeless feel a sense of stability and safety (Daniels, 1992; Darden, 2009). When students are in school they have their basic needs met through a nutritious and consistent breakfast and lunch and are removed from the experience of abuse or neglect. In school, they also are able to socialize with their peers and build relationships with adults and other children. The routine of the school week gives students who are homeless a sense of consistency and support in their lives. Unfortunately, despite the positive aspects of attending school, children and youth who are homeless are impacted in their educational development. Even though students experiencing homelessness may feel more secure in school, they still face many issues that impede their success (Daniels, 1992). These issues have a major impact on the academic achievement of students who are homeless.

### **Educational Impact of Homelessness on Children and Youth**

Education is critical to the success of children and youth who are homeless. It can be a vehicle for them to feel success and allow them to access necessary services to support their healthy development (Aviles & Helfrich, 2004). Since all children and youth who are homeless are entitled to a formal education in daycare and public schooling, this is an opportunity for them to gain an education and further discontinue the

family cycle of homelessness (Hicks-Coolick et al., 2003). Due to the challenges of being homeless and the stress that surrounds it, children and youth are impacted in all facets of their lives, but particularly in their educational development. Children and youth who are homeless face educational barriers such as difficulty enrolling in school and inconsistent transportation and attendance, which influences their academic success (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Additionally, basic needs such as access to quiet study environments and space to complete after-school assignments may be lacking (Aviles & Helfrich, 2004). These factors challenge the academic development of children and youth who are homeless.

Due to the additional stressors in their lives, students who are homeless have lower levels of achievement than their peers with consistent housing (ICP, 2010; Joze-Simbeni & Isreal, 2006). Of the population of students who are homeless in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade in the United States, only about half are proficient in reading and math (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Supporting these findings, Gewirtz et al. (2008) found that 39% of the elementary school-aged children in their study reported below grade level in either reading or mathematics. Gewirtz et al. (2008) found that these numbers increased to 45% for the adolescents in their study. According to the National Center on Family Homelessness (n.d.), children experiencing homelessness are four times as likely to demonstrate delayed development and score 16% lower in math and reading proficiency rates than their peers with consistent housing. Children and youth experiencing homelessness are also more likely to face grade retention and have higher rates of mobility than low-income children with consistent housing. Moreover, students

who are homeless report aspiring to pursue higher education less frequently than their peers with consistent housing (Rafferty et al., 2004).

In a study that assessed cognitive abilities and life experiences of children and youth who were homeless, Shinn et al. (2008) found that children living with families who were close to becoming homeless did not differ significantly on standardized tests than students who had consistent housing. However, when students eventually became homeless, their test scores dropped one third of a standard deviation. This demonstrates the detrimental effects of becoming homeless on students' cognitive development. This study also found that homelessness for four- to six-year olds has a particularly negative impact on cognitive development. This younger age group had lower scores on nonverbal performance and marginally lower scores on the Stanford Binet intelligence test than their consistently housed peers. Additionally, the results of the study indicated that students who are homeless repeat more grades in school than those who have consistent housing. The Shinn et al. (2008) study indicated that homelessness has a more negative impact cognitively on younger age groups, but all age groups are impacted.

As suggested, children and youth who are homeless experience lower standardized test scores, higher retention rates, and lower cognitive abilities (Gewirtz et al., 2008; ICP, 2010; Joze-Simbeni & Isreal, 2006; Shinn et al., 2008). These realities make it challenging for students who are homeless to keep up with their peers and to find success while at school. While facing educational and emotional barriers and needs, children and youth who are homeless may fall behind without further support systems. The next section will further explore the barriers faced by children and youth experiencing homelessness.

**Educational barriers for children and youth who are homeless.** Children and youth face many barriers to access and achievement in their education. The United States Department of Education (2009) suggested that the major barriers that impede the educational achievement of students who are homeless include enrollment, attendance, and transportation. Due to these barriers, students experiencing homelessness often have high rates of mobility and absenteeism (Hicks-Coolick et al., 2003; Miller, 2009b; Rafferty et al., 2004), which makes it difficult to acquire a quality education and maintain continuity while in transition (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Enrolling in new schools can be challenging without the proper paperwork. Gaps in education are often affected by the lack of paperwork that is required for students to enroll in schools, such as immunization records, leases or deeds, and academic records (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Most schools require documentation of permanent residence in order to enroll, which families who are homeless do not have (Strawser et al., 2000). Without the proper paperwork, students may face challenges entering a school system and may be delayed while they wait for approval. It may also be hard to place students in the proper classes if they have academic records from several schools (Grothaus et al., 2011). Since curriculums differ between schools, students' placement in courses may be disjointed from their previous education. The discontinuity makes it difficult for students to keep on top of their education due to varying curricula and missing school records. This may cause a delay in their education or cause them to not be successful in their coursework.

One of the other significant barriers to the educational success of students who are homeless is having consistent transportation (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).



The transient nature of homelessness causes frequent relocation to different homes and shelters that may be outside of the student's home district (ICP, 2010). Being transient means it is difficult to maintain regular transportation to and from school. The lack of transportation from the shelter or other housing locations to the school makes it difficult to attend one school regularly and may eventually lead to high rates of absenteeism (Hicks-Coolick et al., 2003). Additionally, not having transportation may make it impossible for students to be involved in afterschool activities and other engagements that would help students to build stronger relationships with other students and staff. The lack of transportation and difficulties with enrolling in school relates to students' attendance rates. When students are not able to get to school or when transportation is outside of their district, students may be more apt to stay home and miss classes. Additionally, the frustration that comes with being behind and not feeling connected to the school may lead to a lack of interest in attending school.

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

In order to address the educational barriers faced by students who are homeless, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act was designed. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act was the first piece of federal legislation that addressed homelessness in education. President Ronald Reagan originally signed it into law in 1987 as the Stewart B. McKinney Act (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2007). In 1987, the McKinney Act was established as a landmark federal legislation to provide assistance to individuals who were homeless with the intention of reducing homelessness (Hicks-Coolick et al., 2003). Prior to this act, homelessness was handled at the state or local level (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2012). The

McKinney Act established 15 different programs that addressed homelessness nationally. The act was reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 under Part C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Under the reauthorization, it was designed to provide equal access to education for students who are homeless compared to their peers with consistent housing (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

The legislation has a critical role in addressing the needs of children and youth who are homeless. In addressing the educational barriers faced by students who are homeless, the McKinney-Vento Act requires states to review and revise any policies, laws, regulations, or practices that may be a barrier to the enrollment, attendance, or success of students who are homeless in schools. The provisions under McKinney-Vento attempt to ensure that being homeless does not separate students from the mainstream and that students who are homeless are given the same opportunities and held to the same standards as students with consistent housing. (U.S. Department of Education, 2009)

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act was authorized to ensure that the education of children and youth who are homeless is not impacted by their housing status. In essence, it forces schools to recognize students who are homeless and address the challenges they face (Miller, 2011a). It is the first legislation to require schools to provide systemic supports to ensure that students who are homeless are able to thrive in the school setting, despite the barriers they face (Miller, 2011a). Under this act, schools are required to identify and enroll students who are homeless who do not have the proper paperwork, such as educational and immunization records (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The act also mandates the appointment of a state coordinator and local liaison for

students who are homeless, assists them to remain in schools by allowing students to stay at their school of origin regardless of housing status, provides requirements for transportation to and from school, and provides funding for states to put these services and others in place (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, 2009).

This legislation has a positive impact on those students experiencing homelessness because it provides a framework for schools to follow and requires schools to recognize students who are homeless and further develop interventions that can benefit them (Miller, 2011a). According to Julianelle and Foscarinis (2003), the McKinney-Vento Act is designed to meet three particular categories that impact students who are homeless: unrecognized educational needs, unmet education needs, and lack of stable social relationships (p. 42). This act promotes educational stability, access, and success (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003).

Despite this federal legislation, equality in education still does not typically exist between those who are homeless and those who are not. Both those who are poor and students who are homeless tend to be less successful academically and socially than their middle class peers (ICP, 2010; Gerwartz et al., 2008; Joze-Simbeni & Isreal, 2006; Shinn et al., 2008). The lack of continuity in their education, attendance support, before and after school services, mentors, and transportation to and from school has a major impact on how successful students who are homeless are in school (Hicks-Coolick et al, 2003; ICP, 2001; Miller, 2009b; U.S. Department of Education, 2004). This may be due in part to several downfalls of the McKinney-Vento Act. Lack of funding due to budget constraints causes schools to not be able to provide the transportation necessary and the academic placement of students in courses may be difficult without records (Miller,

2011a). In order to ensure that the provisions under McKinney-Vento are effective, knowledge of this act is critical to the success of its implementation (Hicks-Coolick et al., 2003).

### **Summary**

Even though the McKinney-Vento Act was designed to provide access and equality for students who are homeless, there still remain barriers and gaps in education. Students who are homeless continue to experience more challenges in their education than students who have consistent housing (Swick, 2008). Since shelters and other housing locations are unable to provide all of the services that are needed to support students who are homeless (Hicks-Coolick et al., 2003), stakeholders in the educational system must be knowledgeable on this act to help recognize and support the needs of students. They must also be prepared to implement the provisions of the act and build partnerships to support students who are homeless. In the following section, the role of the school counselor and their work with students who are homeless will be discussed.

### **School Counselors' Roles in Supporting Students who are Homeless**

Professional school counselors are stakeholders in the school system that are trained to address the academic, career planning, and personal/social needs for all students (ASCA, 2005). They are advocates, collaborators, and leaders who support the education of all children and youth (Lee, 2005). In their roles, they provide counseling and consultation services, coordinate programs, and assess and use data to support programs (Education Trust, 2009). They are capable of removing barriers to academic success by being advocates and agents of change for children and youth in the school system (Erford, House, & Martin, 2007; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Lee, 2007). According

to the Education Trust (2009), school counselors help students develop their career goals, select appropriate courses to guide their path, and help prepare students for life after high school. Through these roles and others, school counselors can influence change by recognizing inequitable practices and finding ways to decrease gaps in achievement and improve the lives of students (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007).

Education Trust (2009) and the National Center for Transformed School Counseling [NTSC] describe school counselors as leaders and advocates who promote their programs; provide student outcome data to important stakeholders; arrange programs, such as mentoring or other forms of additional academic support; use data to influence change, advocate for student placement, and for a rigorous curriculum; and play a leadership role in the school. The ultimate goal is that school counseling programs will support all students to access a quality education that will prepare them to graduate successfully from high school, complete college, and enjoy a meaningful career. Despite these meaningful roles, there is limited research available on how school counselors are involved in practices to meet the needs of students who are homeless and whether they have the knowledge and preparation to work effectively with this population (Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011).

School counselors' unique set of skills gives them the ability to address many of the issues faced by children and youth who are homeless (Daniels, 1992; Walsh & Buckley, 1994). The position of the American School Counselor Association (2010) on the role of school counselors who work with students who are homeless suggests that their roles include advocating to reduce barriers to enrollment and academic success, establishing programs for parents and children, collaborating and coordinating services,

increasing stakeholder awareness of McKinney-Vento and students' rights, and advocating for appropriate educational placement. As ASCA (2010) suggested, the roles of school counselors who work with the homeless population require them to be leaders and collaborators within the school system. Since a child's development is not just affected by the school or family, but by multiple contexts and systems in their lives, approaches to work with children and families need to address all systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Stronge and Reed-Victor (2000) recommended that since students who are homeless face unique issues academically, within their family, and in the community, school counselors must think systemically and step out of the confines of the school to meet students' needs. In their role as an advocate, they are the voice for students who are homeless and can connect resources for students and ensure that barriers are lifted. By doing so, they will build connections to better meet the needs of students who are homeless (Miller, 2009a).

Unfortunately, despite the important roles school counselors have in working with students who are homeless, there is limited literature on how school counselors are applying their skills and partnering with others to meet the needs for these students (Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Daniels, 1992, 1995; Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011; Grothaus et al., 2011; Strawser et al., 2000). In this section, literature on school counselors' involvement in partnerships and interventions to meet the needs of students who are homeless will be described. Additionally, literature discussing the factors related to involvement in partnerships and interventions, such as counselor preparation and knowledge of McKinney-Vento will be discussed.

## **Involvement in Partnerships and Other Recommended Interventions to Meet the Needs of Students who are Homeless**

Despite the recommendation of the importance of partnership roles of school counselors (Bryan, 2003; Bryan & Griffin, 2010; Bryan & Henry, 2008, 2012; Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2007), there is scant empirical evidence describing how school counselors are engaging in partnership practices and other interventions to support the needs of students who are homeless (Grothaus et al., 2011). There is a need to examine how school counselors are engaging in these practices to support students who are homeless. In the following section, literature on the importance of engaging in partnership practices and a description of other interventions will be described.

### **Involvement in partnerships to support students who are homeless.**

Partnerships are shared learning processes where there is a common goal between the parties involved (Swick, 2003). ASCA (2005) stated that school counseling programs are cooperative efforts that involve school counselors, teachers, administrators, parents or guardians, students, and the community. There is agreement in the literature that school counseling partnership practices are beneficial to systemically supporting the needs of students (Bemak, 2000; Bryan, 2005; Bryan & Henry, 2008, 2012; Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Strawser et al., 2000). As leaders in the school system, school counselors partner with all stakeholders and span boundaries (Miller, 2009a) to build connections to the community. Collaborative partnerships with other professionals across the school system and with community members will aid in the academic, career, and personal/social development for all students (ASCA, 2005; ASCA, 2010; Bemak, 2000).

Since few educational agencies are equipped to handle all of the complex needs faced by students who are homeless, collaborative partnerships are increasingly important to systemically support students' needs (Miller, 2009a). Students who are homeless need additional support from the school, family, and community in order to be successful in their development (Daniels, 1992; Grothaus et al., 2011; Stronge & Victor-Reed, 2000). By being proactive and collaborating with all stakeholders, counselors are instrumental in meeting the needs of students who are homeless (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007; Griffin & Farris, 2010; Grothaus, et al, 2011; Miller, 2008, 2009a; Swick, 2010).

**School counselors as boundary spanning leaders to support the needs of students who are homeless.** Boundary spanning leadership is a partnership approach where bridges are built between the school and community to provide a comprehensive system to support students (Miller, 2009a). According to Miller (2009a), characteristics of boundary spanning leaders include several that are reflected in the role of the school counselor. These include the ability to work in diverse contexts, the knowledge to understand the complexities of collaboration, the access to many contacts, and the ability to unite groups and to collect and disseminate information (Miller, 2009a). Based on his research, Miller (2008), also suggested that boundary spanners are trusted and respected, possess strong interpersonal skills, are resourceful, and can move freely within and between organizations.

For those students who live in shelters, Miller (2009a) suggested that using systems advocates, such as graduate students or faculty members, to act as the go-betweens from the shelter to the school, works well when spanning boundaries for the homeless because the advocate is not strongly associated with either the school or the



shelter. School counselors, however, although strongly associated with the school, have invested interests both in the community and in the school, so they can act in this capacity. Since they share the characteristics and themes that Miller (2008, 2009a) suggested for boundary spanners, school counselors are capable of building partnerships through boundary spanning. Boundary spanners can streamline their practices and target the specific needs of students who are homeless (Miller, 2008).

Boundary spanners work with all partners involved in the education of students who are homeless by building relationships with those working in the shelter and community and collaborating with them to provide services for the children and youth and their families (Miller, 2009a). They also provide insight for decision-making, generate resources, develop a long-term partnership between the school and shelter, and promote best practices in both the school and community (Miller, 2009a). Miller (2009a) suggested that boundary spanners, such as school counselors, expand their impact and provide more comprehensive services to students who are homeless by stepping outside of the school. In the homeless context, school counselors can organize collaborative efforts between the school, the shelter, and the community (Miller, 2009a).

Since not all students who are homeless live in shelters, boundary spanning leadership can also build connections between the school and the family. Amatea and West-Olatunji (2007) suggested that counselors build a cultural bridge between teachers and parents. This can be accomplished by working with teachers to share information regarding resources to support the family's unique circumstances, modeling the best ways to reach out to families, and mediating cultural differences that may exist between the school and the family (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007). Reaching out to the community

and providing parents with resources and a support system helps meet the needs and gives a sense of support to children who are homeless (Griffin & Farris, 2010; Grothaus, et al, 2011). Swick (2010) recommended listening to the voices of the families of children who are homeless, the children themselves, and the professionals who work with them (e.g., shelter workers, other community members). Including families in boundary spanning efforts helps them to become empowered to advocate for themselves.

Boundary spanning leadership is an important role for school counselors to build bridges and connections between the school, family, and community. Through boundary spanning, school counselors can be involved in specific partnerships to meet the needs for students who are homeless. In the next section, specific partnership practices will be described.

**Specific partnership practices to support students who are homeless.** School counselors can be the liaison between the school, family, and community (Strawser, 2000). They can create and coordinate programs by reaching out to the community and connecting families to resources to meet their needs and to give them a sense of support (Griffin & Farris, 2010; Grothaus et al, 2011). Swick (2000) recommended that school counselors form a collaborative team with staff from various agencies that serve students who are homeless. He suggested that teams include staff in the shelter, social workers, homeless education coordinators, transitional housing coordinators, staff in social service, staff involved in pre-school child development, and faith-based leaders. Additionally, school psychologists, behavior specialists, nurses, parent liaisons, teachers, and principals may be included on the collaborative team (Bryan & Griffin, 2010). By forming teams,

school counselors can build partnerships to provide a supportive network for students who are homeless.

Building partnerships to provide mentoring, tutoring, and other services may include developing supportive relationships with businesses in the community. Bryan and Henry (2008) reported that community partnerships through school counselors empower students to recognize their strengths. The authors in this article describe a school counseling program that is entrenched in partnership practices. Through creating a program that is partnership-focused, the authors suggested that building connections with the community involves a variety of different organizations and businesses. In this case study, partnerships included relationships with businesses and organizations such as Sam's Club, McDonald's, Family First, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, and the University of Tampa student athletes. Businesses can donate money or time to help support programs in the school. By forming partnerships with a variety of businesses and other community agencies, counselors can form different programs that impact a greater number of students in the school and the community.

Collaborative partnerships with stakeholders are critical when advocating for students who are homeless (Duffield, 2000). Duffield (2000) suggested that relationships with the community and key players in the education of students who are homeless are important to foster their growth and development. She recommended that community-wide collaboration with faith-based organizations, or parent teacher associations, is key to advocating for students. These types of relationships give a voice to families experiencing homelessness. Additionally, she recommended building relationships with key players, such as board members, superintendents, and other local, state, and national

officials. By forming relationships and collaborating with these key players, school counselors can advocate for policy change and have a voice in the decisions made regarding children and families who are homeless. Unfortunately, despite the recommendations in the literature, there is little evidence describing how school counselors are engaging in these types of partnership practices to support students who are homeless.

When establishing interventions for children and youth who are homeless, partnering with parents and getting student input helps school counselors to know how to best meet their needs (Aviles & Helfrich, 2009). Herbers et al. (2011) suggested that early childhood programs should consist of parental consultation and education where positive parental involvement is encouraged and facilitated. Parents can be active in determining the interventions needed for their family and will feel more empowered if their input is requested. High quality parenting, which consists of warmth, enthusiasm, and high levels of involvement, structure, consistent discipline, and positive expectations for children, can strengthen families (Herbers et al., 2011). The results of a study by Herbers et al. (2011), which focused on children in kindergarten and first grade, suggested that parenting quality is positively correlated with IQ score and teacher's report of the child's academic functioning. The study also suggested that the effect of parenting quality on academics is most important if a child is at-risk academically. Provision of parental consultation and workshops, at times and locations that are accessible to all families, in order to educate parents on how to enhance their parenting skills and to meet the needs of their children, may relieve some of the stress faced by parents who are homeless.

One way to foster family and school partnering includes forming a Parent Involvement Committee (Bryan & Henry, 2008). Involving parents who are homeless gives them a voice in the school. This committee consists of teachers and parents who form a partnership to plan family-focused programming. Engaging parents may involve connecting personally with family members as they come and go from the school and hosting events for fathers and/or mothers (Bryan & Henry, 2008). By involving families who are homeless and getting their input, partnership approaches can help them to feel connected and to give them a voice. Despite the recognition that parent involvement is important for successful partnerships to support students who are homeless, there is little evidence supporting how school counselors are partnering with parents to support children who are homeless.

Building connections through partnerships helps school counselors to impact more students and perform their roles more efficiently. In the following section, research on how school counselors can be involved in specific interventions to support students who are homeless will be described. Although interventions may include partnerships, many interventions require school counselors to provide services directly to students.

**Recommended interventions to support the needs of students who are homeless.** The literature suggests that there are many interventions that can be implemented in schools to provide comprehensive services for students who are homeless. Counseling interventions include counseling services to support students who are homeless such as individual counseling, small group counseling, and classroom guidance (ASCA, 2005; Daniels, 1992; Daniels, 1995; Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011; Grothaus et al., 2011). In one study with over 182 survey responses from

school counselors, counselors reported the types of interventions and practices they engaged in to support students who are homeless (Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011). The majority of school counselors reported providing interventions to support students who are homeless including referrals to community resources, individual counseling, academic support, and teacher and parent consultation. Despite the recommendation of their importance, few school counselors reported engaging in shelter visits, parent education workshops, providing training and workshops for teachers, home visits, behavioral skills training, communication with shelter staff, and mentoring programs. The majority of the reported interventions require some type of partnership with the school, family, or community. This study did not investigate the frequency of involvement in these practices; only those practices school counselors were involved in to support students who are homeless.

Counseling interventions are important services that school counselors provide to address the emotional, social, and academic challenges faced by students who are homeless (Daniels, 1992). Despite the positive impact that counseling services can have on students, there is limited research available on whether and how school counselors are providing counseling services to students who are homeless (Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004). As previously mentioned, students experiencing homelessness have higher rates of dissociative disorders and mental illness than their consistently housed peers (Aviles & Helfrich, 2004; Tyler et al., 2003). Additionally, many lack the social supports necessary to be successful in school (Daniels, 1995). They also report being bullied in the school (Grothaus et al., 2011). Through providing counseling interventions within the school and having referral sources available for more in-depth mental health counseling, school

counselors deliver important supportive services to students who are homeless. Aviles and Helfrich (2004) suggested that counseling interventions address the needs of students who have low self-esteem, those students lacking social skills, and those experiencing heightened levels of stress. These interventions should be empowerment focused in order for students who are homeless to gain a stronger sense of control over their lives (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007).

School-wide classroom guidance lessons are important interventions that address some of the needs of students who are homeless (Grothaus et al., 2011). Classroom lessons, given to all students, may focus on topics such as increasing self-esteem, building social skills, developing academic success, increasing awareness of diversity, and managing stress (Strawser et al., 2000). Additional topics may include prevention-focused lessons on violence prevention, risks associated with drugs and drinking, and conflict resolution (Nabors et al., 2004). Baggerly and Borkowski (2004) utilized a weekly social skills training program in the classroom called “Stop and Think” that reinforced wise-decision making, while incorporating positive reinforcement through a token reward system. Through the token reward system, they encouraged teachers to use frequent praise with the child who was homeless. This intervention and others had a positive impact on the child’s behavior. Through these types of lessons, counselors can reach all students, which will, in turn, help improve the lives of students who are homeless.

Small group counseling interventions that address the needs of students experiencing homelessness are also effective (Baggerly, 2004; Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Daniels, 1995). When planning small groups that include students who are

homeless, counselors must take into consideration the composition of the group, the type of group, and the timing of the group (Yalom, 2005). It is important to note that under McKinney-Vento (U.S. Department of Education, 2004), school environments must be inclusive for students who are homeless and therefore, educational services need to include both homeless and those who have consistent housing. This means that the composition of the group should include both students who are homeless and those who are not if the group is held in the school. Additionally, determining the type of group will depend on the needs of the individual students. Some groups may be more academically focused to help develop students' academic abilities or they may be more emotionally based to address the stress faced by students who are homeless. Finally, it is particularly important to consider the timing of the group. Since students who are homeless are often absent and have high rates of mobility (Strawser et al., 2000), groups may need to be open or short-term.

Baggerly (2004) described the effectiveness of using a child-centered play therapy approach to group counseling for children who are homeless. The group was designed to improve self-concept, decrease depression, and decrease anxiety. Nine to twelve group therapy sessions were provided by a play therapist for children at a homeless shelter. After the group, children showed significant improvements in self-concept, in some aspects of depression, and in their anxiety. These results suggest the benefits of group counseling for children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Individual counseling interventions may include integrating play therapy into sessions to further support student development (Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004). Since homelessness appears to be related to lower levels of nonverbal performance, Shinn et al.



(2008) recommended that counselors have toys and materials available for students to play with in their office, in order to stimulate growth and development. Individual counseling should also include approaches that focus on helping students to feel more empowered and become advocates for their services and supports (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). Students who are homeless experience a loss of control over their lives. By helping them to recognize how to overcome the barriers they face and to advocate to strengthen the services they receive, they will become more resilient.

Despite some evidence that indicates the value of counseling interventions to support students who are homeless (Baggerly, 2004; Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Grothaus et al., 2011), there is no evidence describing how frequently counselors are engaging in these practices and what practices are being utilized and underutilized in the school and community setting. These data are necessary in order to determine the best interventions to meet the needs of students who are homeless.

**Coordination of interventions and partnerships to support students who are homeless.** In the ASCA (2010) position statement, it is suggested that a role of school counselors working with students who are homeless is to coordinate services. This may include ensuring that partnerships are working effectively and that interventions are properly implemented in the school. Students who are homeless need an array of services in order to be successful in school (Aviles & Helfrich, 2004) and effective coordination of interventions and partnerships is vital to meeting their needs (Strawser et al., 2000). Although school counselors may not be directly providing the services, their roles include actively coordinating services such as before- and after-school care, mentoring, tutoring, cultural enrichment, and attendance support services (Bryan & Henry, 2008, 2012).

Grothaus et al. (2011) recommended that counselors coordinate these types of services at the school level and/or determine how to implement them with the community (Grothaus et al., 2011). Unfortunately, there is limited evidence on how counselors are coordinating these services (Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011).

Critical services that need to be coordinated for students who are homeless include transportation. Under McKinney-Vento, schools are required to provide transportation for students to their school of origin, and may provide additional transportation to before- and after-school activities (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Coordinating transportation requires partnering with homeless liaisons and other staff members to schedule travel for students who are homeless and to coordinate bus times and pick-up and drop-off areas. This involves key stakeholders, such as shelter workers, homeless liaisons, and administrators to ensure the process is as seamless as possible for children and youth (Miller, 2009a).

### **Factors Related to School Counselors' Involvement in Partnerships and Recommended Interventions to Support Students who are Homeless**

This section will focus on two important and connected factors that may be related to school counselors' involvement in partnerships and recommended interventions. School counselors' perceived knowledge of McKinney-Vento, perceptions of advocacy role, and preparation to work with students who are homeless will be discussed in this section as factors that may be connected to their involvement in partnerships and interventions. Currently, there is little research on these factors, despite their importance in the services provided to students who are homeless. More research is needed on how

these factors specifically relate to the role of the school counselor in working with students who are homeless (Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011).

**School counselor preparation and advocacy role to work with students who are homeless.** In the Gaenzle and Bryan (2011) study, findings suggested a significant relationship between training, knowledge, and advocacy and provision of services. Those school counselors who reported receiving some training to work with students who are homeless also reported higher levels of knowledge and engagement in advocacy and provision of services. The results of the Gaenzle and Bryan (2011) study suggested the importance of preparing school counselors to work with students who are homeless. The study also suggested that those counselors who have more knowledge on homelessness, engage in advocacy practices to work with students who are homeless. According to Gaenzle and Bryan (2011), the advocacy role may include making contact with families, assessing student needs, ensuring registration practices remove barriers, providing programs such as mentoring, ensuring transportation requirements are met, and visiting community agencies such as shelters to support students who are homeless.

The majority of school counselors who had training, reported being trained during in-service while at their school, followed by those who received voluntary professional development outside of their school. Although this limited information is important, further research is needed on counselors' preparation to work with students who are homeless. More specifically, information is needed on school counselors' amount of training, location of training, and perceptions of their preparation. Currently, to date, only one study discusses school counselor preparation to provide supportive services for students who are homeless (Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011).

Despite the lack of research on the preparation school counselors receive to work with students who are homeless, having training to work with students who are homeless, does appear to have a positive impact. The results of a study by Kelly et al. (2000), which examined training for parent-child advocates to serve the homeless, indicated that through training personnel to be advocates to work with parents and provide positive feedback and promote quality parent-child interactions, interactions between homeless mothers and their children were increasingly more positive. Amedore and Knoff (1993) also found a positive result of training through a study with school psychologists. Their research suggested a relationship between training and engagement in professional activities in boundary spanning practices between schools and school psychologists to support students who are homeless. Since limited research is available on how school counselor preparation impacts involvement in interventions and partnership practices, more research is needed on this topic. This type of data has implications for counselor preparation during and after graduate school.

**Knowledge of McKinney-Vento.** As previously mentioned in this chapter, the McKinney-Vento Act is an important piece of legislation that addresses the barriers faced by students who are homeless (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Since it attempts to address the major needs of students who are homeless, such as barriers to transportation, enrollment, and attendance, professionals who work with students who are homeless need to know the provisions under this act and be prepared to ensure that it is implemented properly in the school (Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011). In Gaenzle and Bryan (2011), school counselors reported slightly below average knowledge of the McKinney-Vento Act and on the role of the state coordinator for homeless services. They reported slightly above

average knowledge on the role of the homeless liaison, above average knowledge on the registration policies under McKinney-Vento, and about average knowledge of the transportation requirements. Other studies are needed to determine how this knowledge translates to practice.

Research indicates that school personnel, such as teachers, have intermediate to substantial levels of knowledge on McKinney-Vento (Cartner, 2009). Although it was not significant in his study, Cartner (2009), found a positive relationships between teacher's attitude towards students who are homeless and teacher's knowledge of McKinney-Vento. This research further suggests the importance of understanding the McKinney-Vento policies. More information is needed to better understand school counselors' knowledge of the specific provisions under McKinney-Vento and how this knowledge is related to their involvement in partnerships and interventions.

### **Summary**

Children and youth who are homeless experience emotional and academic issues (Annoshian et al., 2005; Aviles & Helfrich, 2004; Darden, 2009; Gewirtz et al., 2008; Hicks-Coolrick et al., 2003). They benefit from partnership and boundary spanning interventions such as mentoring, tutoring, counseling, and after-school programs (Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011; Grothaus et al., 2011; Strawser et al., 2000). School counselors are stakeholders who can coordinate the interventions to support students who are homeless (Daniels, 1992, 1995; Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011; Grothaus et al., 2011). However, there is limited research investigating the partnership practices and interventions that school counselors are engaging in to support the needs of students who are homeless. The following section will describe the methods for the current study that address the need to

determine how school counselors' preparation and perceived knowledge of McKinney-Vento potentially influences their involvement in services for students who are homeless.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the current study is to investigate school counselors' involvement in partnership practices and interventions to meet the needs of students who are homeless. Further, this study will examine school counselors' preparation to work with students who are homeless and their perceived knowledge of the McKinney-Vento act. The following section describes the methods used for answering the research questions related to the purpose of the study.

### **Research Questions**

The methods discussed in this section focus on answering the following research questions:

1. How are school counselors meeting the needs of students who are homeless?
  - a. To what extent do school counselors perceive that they are prepared to work with students who are homeless?
  - b. What recommended interventions are school counselors engaging in to meet the needs of students who are homeless?
  - c. What partnership practices are school counselors involved in to meet the needs of students who are homeless?
2. What factors explain school counselors' involvement in partnerships and interventions to serve students who are homeless?
  - a. To what extent do school counselors' preparation to work with students who are homeless, perceptions of their advocacy role, and their perceived knowledge of McKinney-Vento, relate to their involvement in recommended interventions and partnership practices

to support students who are homeless after controlling for background variables (e.g., number of students who are homeless, school level, years of experience, region, role of school counselor)?

### **Participants**

The population targeted for this study is K-12<sup>th</sup> grade school counselors across the United States. The American School Counselor Association [ASCA] directory was used for this study. Three separate searches at each of the three school levels (elementary, middle, and high) were run using this directory. The initial search resulted in a sampling frame that consisted of 3,014 elementary school counselors, 1,930 middle school counselors, and 4,443 high school counselors. The total number of school counselors in the sampling frame was 9,387.

Using a margin of error at 5% with a confidence level of 95% and a population size to draw from of 9,387, the recommended sample size is 370 to have representative responses. Since the researcher has experienced a low response rate (12.4%-19.8%) using this directory in the past, the survey was sent out to 2,500 counselors listed in the directory in order to get the desired amount of responses. The sample of 2,500 school counselors was selected from the sampling frame through random number assignment. Each of the 9,387 school counselors was assigned a number 1-9,387. Those who are assigned 1-2500 were sent an email with an invitation inviting them to complete the survey. Initially, 189 email addresses were not valid and bounced, which adjusted the final sample to 2,311 school counselors. The total response rate was 18.6%, with 431 completed surveys.



Participants were requested to report on several background variables. These variables include years of experience, amount of students who are homeless, region, and school level. Table 1 describes the participant background variables.

Table 1

*Participant Background Variables*

Variables	N	%
<b>Years of Experience</b>		
(N=431)	151	35.0
0-5	116	26.9
6-10	81	18.8
11-15	49	11.4
16-20	34	7.9
21 and over		
<b>Region (N=431)</b>		
Northeast (ME, NH, VT, MA, RI, CT, NY, PA, NJ)	79	18.3
Midwest (WI, MI, IL, IN, OH, MO, ND, SD, NE, KS, MN, IA)	94	21.8

South (DE, MD, DC, VA, WV, NC, SC, GA, FL, KY, TN, MS, AL, OK, TX, AR, LA)	167	38.7
West (MT, WY, NV, UT, CO, AZ, NM, AL, WA, OR, CA, HI)	88	20.4
Other (AS, CM, MC)	3	0.7
School Level (N=427)		
Elementary	149	34.5
Middle	78	18.1
High	200	46.3

Amount of Students who are  
Homeless in School (N=431)

0	75	17.4
1-20	278	64.5
21-40	39	9
41-60	19	4.4
61-80	6	1.4
81-100	9	2.1
101 and over	5	1.2

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### **Instrumentation**

Since there was no instrument available that specifically addressed the research questions for this study, the current study utilizes two surveys. The first survey, the Knowledge and Skills with Homeless Students Survey [KSHSS] was created for a previous exploratory study developed by the author to assess the knowledge, skills, and practices of school counselors who work with students who are homeless (Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011). The original instrument was refined and piloted to include improvements made from the previous survey and additional items for the purpose of this study. Since student development is impacted by systems in the school, family, and community (Bronfennbrenner, 1979), the second survey was selected to examine school counselors' involvement in partnerships. The second survey, the School Counselor Involvement in Partnerships Survey [SCIPS] (Bryan, 2003; Bryan & Griffin, 2010; Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2007), is used to determine school counselors' involvement in partnership

practices. Only one scale, involvement in partnership practices, will be utilized from the SCIPS. Although the SCIPS survey was not designed to specifically measure school counselors' partnership practices with students who are homeless, items from the survey were adjusted for the purpose of this study. In this section, the KSHSS survey development and revisions will be described, as well as a description of the SCIPS. Further, this section will describe the procedures for the current study.

### **The Knowledge and Skills with Homeless Students Survey**

The Knowledge and Skills with Homeless Students Survey [KSHSS] was designed by the author for the purpose of determining school counselors' perceptions of their knowledge of issues faced by students who are homeless and the McKinney-Vento Act and the practices they engage in to address the needs of children and youth who are homeless (Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011). The survey items were developed from an extensive review of the literature on homelessness, the needs of students who are homeless, and recommended interventions and practices in that literature, including the limited literature on school counselors' interventions with students who are homeless (Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Daniels, 1992, 1995; Strawser, et al., 2000; Walsh & Buckley, 1994).

**Study 1: Development of the original KSHSS.** The original KSHSS was divided into several sections comprising of background, training, knowledge, advocacy and provision of services, and intervention sections. The original KSHSS consisted of 27 items that measured school counselors' perceived knowledge of students who are homeless and their needs, their perceived knowledge of the McKinney-Vento Act, school counselors' training to work with this population, and their involvement in specific types of interventions to address the needs of students who are homeless.

The first section of the KSHSS consisted of five items that addressed the backgrounds of the participants including their school setting (urban, rural, or suburban), school type (private, parochial, or public), school level (elementary, middle, or high), years of experience, and number of students who are homeless in the school. Participants completed one open-ended item that asked them how many years of school counseling experience they had. Finally, number of homeless students was measured by participants' selection of one of nine categories (0, 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, and 55+).

The second part of the KSHSS focused on the training school counselors received related to homelessness. In this section, counselors rated their training on a scale from 1-5 (1 = No Training through 5 = Extensive Training). The third section consisted of four questions that assessed school counselors' perceived knowledge on homelessness and on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. These four items were measured on a 5-point scale from 1 = No Knowledge to 5 = Extensive Knowledge. In the fourth section, the focus was on the types of interventions counselors currently implement with students who are homeless in their school. Participants checked all the interventions that they engaged in to support students who are homeless.

***KSHSS Study Sample.*** The KSHSS was initially piloted with a group of master's level school counseling students. After the pilot, a study was conducted using a random sample of school counselors (N=1,000) selected from the membership database of the American School Counselor Association [ASCA]. The final sample comprised of 315 elementary school counselors, 477 high school counselors, and 208 middle school counselors. Each of these individuals was sent an email from Survey Monkey with a link

to the survey. Of the 1,000 surveys sent, 182 completed the survey in its entirety. The total response rate was 19.8% who fully completed the survey.

**Factor Analysis.** A principal component analyses (PCA) with varimax rotation was conducted as a data reduction method (Costello & Osborne, 2005) to determine how participants' responses were structured. In order to determine factor structure, responses to the items measuring (a) perceived knowledge of McKinney-Vento policies (b) interventions implemented with homeless students (c) perceived knowledge of emotional/social and educational issues were analyzed using PCA. The objective for this analysis was to minimize a large set of interrelated items by identifying a set of uncorrelated factors (or components) (Jolliffe, 2005).

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .877, indicating that factor analysis is appropriate for these variables. Barlett's test of sphericity was significant at .000 indicating that the items were excellent candidates for factor analysis. Although a four-factor analysis was examined, the three-factor solution was a better fit for the data. The three factors consisted of Knowledge of McKinney-Vento (7 items; Cronbach alpha = .907), Knowledge of Educational and Emotional Issues (2 items; Cronbach alpha = .957), and Advocacy and Provision of Services (7 items; Cronbach alpha = .808).

**Study 2: Revision of the KSHSS.** For the purpose of the current study and to improve the validity of the instrument, the KSHSS was revised. This instrument was improved based on (a) a review of the results of the Gaenzle and Bryan (2011) study, (b) feedback from an initial focus group, (c) a pilot study of the revised survey, and (d) final feedback from a second focus group. The major revisions to the KSHSS comprised of (a)

the addition of a few background items, (b) the addition of items to measure school counselors' perceptions of their preparation and role for working with students who are homeless, and (c) a change in the Likert scale. Table 2 describes the revisions made to the KSHSS to reach the final survey to be used for the current study.

Table 2

*Revisions Made to the KSHSS Survey at Each Stage of Survey Development<sup>a</sup>*

Changes Made to Survey	Study 1	Study 2	Final Survey
Background Items	5 items	Added 4 items: -Role of school counselor (3 items) -Amount of students attending school (1 item)	Added 1 item: -State Removed 2 items: -School setting -School type
Knowledge Items	10 items with varying scales	11 items: scale from 1-5 (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)	Retained 5 knowledge items from study 2 and adjusted scales to 1-5 (No Knowledge to Extensive Knowledge)

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Preparation Items	2 preparation items:  -Amount of training: Scale 1-3 (No Training through Extensive Training)  -Location of training	15 perceptions of preparation items on scale 1-5 (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)	Adjusted preparation items from study 1. Amount of training: Scale 1-5 (No training to Extensive Training)  Broke amount of training into 2 items:  -Amount of training in graduate school and amount after graduate school.  Broke location of training into location during and after graduate school  Retained 6 perceptions of preparation items.
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Interventions	1 item, 24 options Select all that apply	Not included	18 items: Frequency scale (Not at All to Very Frequently)
Advocacy and Provision of Services	9 items	8 items	Used 1 item from SCIPS to measure Perceptions of Advocacy Role
Total Items	27	43	61
Reasons for Adjustments	Focus group and study	Focus group	Pilot study and focus group

<sup>a</sup>This table shows the changes at each stage of survey development

*Addition of several background items.* In addition to the scale adjustments, several background items were added to the revised version of the survey in order to gain better insight into the relationship between background variables and perceived knowledge and training. Two additional items were added including one that participants reported the state of their school and the second that asked them to report the number of students enrolled at their school. These items were added to gain a better understanding of the environment where the counselor works and to determine whether location and amount of students are related to the variables. Further, three items were added that determined the role of the school counselor in working with students who are homeless.

The role items include “Who is responsible for registering and enrolling students who are homeless at your school?”; “Who is the homeless liaison for your school?”; and “Who is the main person responsible for addressing the needs of students who are homeless at your school?”. The purpose of these items is to get a clearer understanding of the role of school counselors who works with students who are homeless and to determine how their role may relate to school counselors’ perceived knowledge and involvement in practices.

***Addition of preparation items and revision of scale.*** On the revised KSHSS, the scales for items measuring school counselors’ preparation to work with students who are homeless were adjusted to better measure perceptions of preparation and training. Preparation items measure how prepared school counselors feel they are regarding their implementation of the McKinney-Vento provisions and for working with students who are homeless. These items are rated on a Likert scale of Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree (1 - 5). In the initial instrument, the training items were measured from No Training to Extensive Training (1 - 5). This scale was adjusted to better capture perceptions and because it was unclear what “extensive training” meant to survey participants. After further consideration, amount of training was further broken down into two items measuring amount of training during and after graduate school.

***Focus group.*** After redesigning the 2011 KSHSS, a focus group was conducted with five masters and doctoral level counseling students. The researcher administered the survey to the students and held a short discussion session afterwards to discuss their interpretations of the survey items. From this initial testing, the researcher further adjusted some items on the instrument to improve clarity. After the initial focus group, the instrument consisted of 43 Likert scale and multiple-choice items. Nine of the items

were background items, 11 measured knowledge, 15 measured their perceptions on preparation, and 8 measured school counselors' advocacy and provision of services. The Institutional Review Board at the University of Maryland approved the final version of the survey prior to it's being sent to participants.

*Pilot study for the revised KSHSS.* The population for the pilot study was K-12<sup>th</sup> grade school counselors in the United States. The sampling frame included all 9,170 K-12<sup>th</sup> grade school counselors in the American School Counselor Association online directory. The ASCA directory at that point consisted of elementary, middle, and high school counselors who chose to have their email addresses listed. For the purpose of the pilot, the researcher wanted a sample of 100 counselors. Since the participation rate of those listed in the database has a tendency to be low, the researcher randomly selected 500 participants. Twelve surveys bounced back immediately, so the final sample from the directory was 488. The pilot survey was sent out three separate times throughout the period of one week. Since the initial response was limited and a higher number was desired in order to increase reliability, the researcher added a convenience sample of 20 masters level school counseling students, 18 of whom completed the survey. Therefore, the final sample for the pilot survey consisted of 64 participants. The pilot survey had a relatively low response rate of 12.4%, however, the researcher was satisfied with this response rate since the purpose was to improve the survey and not to address the research questions.

*Pilot reliability.* Cronbach alpha was used to determine the reliability of the pilot survey prior to running further analysis. The alpha was .812, which demonstrates high reliability for the pilot instrument.

After examining the descriptive statistics of the survey items, a factor analysis was conducted to determine the factor structure of the items and to further determine what items to remove from the final version of the survey.

*Factor analysis.* Principal component analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation was conducted to determine how the pilot participants' responses to survey items were structured. In order to determine factor structure, a PCA was conducted on responses to items measuring (a) school counselor perceived knowledge (b) counselor perceptions of preparation, and (c) counselor advocacy and provision of services. The objective for this analysis was to minimize a large set of interrelated items by identifying a set of uncorrelated factors (or components) (Jolliffe, 2005). A Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy score of .780 was obtained, which indicated that this data was appropriate for factor analysis. Further, Bartlett's test of Sphericity was significant indicating these data are excellent candidates for PCA.

The scree plot suggested a two or three component/factor solution so a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was run initially with two factors, then with three factors. On looking at the three factor model, many of the items on component two fit better with component one, so those factors were combined (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Pilot Study: Rotated Component Analysis on Survey Responses*

Item	Component		
	1	2	3
Knowledge of McKinney-Vento	<b>.775</b>		
I know who the homeless liaison is for my school	<b>.667</b>	.306	

I know the school enrollment requirements for homeless students	<b>.681</b>	
I know where the homeless students on my caseload reside	<b>.508</b>	.585
I know the role(s) of the local homeless liaison for my school	<b>.701</b>	
I know the role of the State Coordinator for homeless services	<b>.597</b>	
I know the transportation requirements for homeless students under the McKinney-Vento Act	<b>.723</b>	
I can describe the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act	<b>.827</b>	
I know the various definitions of homelessness	<b>.664</b>	
I know the housing locations of homeless students on my caseload	<b>.525</b>	.534
I can identify the homeless students on my caseload	<b>.581</b>	.487
I have had sufficient training to work with homeless students	<b>.822</b>	
I have had sufficient training on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act	<b>.821</b>	-.324
I have had sufficient education during in-service training on the homeless student population	<b>.729</b>	
I have had sufficient training outside of my school	<b>.584</b>	

on working with the homeless student population			
I need to have more training to effectively work with the homeless student population	<b>-.654</b>	.570	
I feel that I am prepared to work with homeless students at my school	<b>.750</b>		
I am prepared to ensure the McKinney-Vento Act requirements are being met at my school	<b>.834</b>		
I need more training to work with homeless students	<b>-.674</b>	.588	
I need more education on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act	<b>-.572</b>	.424	
I can describe the basic requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act	<b>.751</b>		<b>-.335</b>
I ensure that the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act are being met at my school	<b>.779</b>		
I know what the educational needs are for homeless students in my school	<b>.563</b>		
I would like more training to work with homeless students	<b>-.628</b>	.518	
Homeless students at my school have equal opportunities compared to their non-homeless peers	.415		<b>.603</b>
The emotional needs of homeless students at my	.455		<b>.682</b>

school are being met		
My school meets the needs of homeless students	.517	<b>.599</b>
Homeless students at my school do well emotionally		<b>.653</b>
Homeless students at my school do well academically	.339	<b>.715</b>

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The first component was comprised of knowledge items, the second component was comprised of training and preparation items and the third component was comprised of items that demonstrate counselor's attitude on how they are meeting the needs of students. When looking at the factors, the items on Component 2 also loaded strongly on Component 1, which suggests that knowledge and training are related items.

Results of the factor analysis helped to determine which items to retain and drop from the KSHSS. For example, the item "I have had sufficient education during graduate school" did not fall strongly into any component, so it was considered for removal, however, it will be kept in the revised version of the survey to determine whether school counselors feel they were prepared to work with students who are homeless while at graduate school. "Mentorship is necessary for the success of homeless students" was removed as well as "School counselors should conduct site visits" as they did not fall strongly into any component and through reflection they can be measured in other ways. Other items that were removed include "I know what the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is" due to high correlation to similar items, but it was replaced with "I know the general requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act" due to

clearer wording on the item. Additionally, “Addressing the needs of homeless students is my role” was deleted due to the vague wording of the question and high reports on this item.

The current study utilized the KSHSS and one scale from the School Counselor Involvement in Partnerships Survey. The items from the SCIPS were adjusted for the purpose of the survey. Therefore, to prepare for the current study, an additional focus group session was conducted to gather feedback on both the KSHSS and the scale from the SCIPS. Some further minor revisions were made to the KSHSS based on the focus group feedback.

**Focus group.** Prior to sending out the final survey, a focus group was held with six masters level school counseling students in order to gather feedback on the comprehensibility of the KSHSS and the added scale from the SCIPS. The feedback received from the focus group included the recommendations that the survey was too long, that the scale of the knowledge items did not seem to align with the questions (they felt it would make more sense if this item was scored Yes or No), and that the Likert scale items should be reorganized by the focused area (i.e., perception of training items should be in one grouping and collaboration and coordination items should be separated). Taking into consideration the recommendations of the focus group, the researcher further refined the survey.

In order to make the survey shorter and more focused, the researcher removed items that fell below .6 on the PCA. Three items were removed: “I had sufficient education during in-service training on students who are homeless”, “I had sufficient training outside of my school on working with students who are homeless”, and “I need



more education on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act”. Two additional items were removed because the focus group suggested they were repetitive with other items in the survey. These were “I can describe the basic requirements of the McKinney-Vento act” and “I ensure that the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act are being met as my school.” One further item, “I can identify the students who are homeless on my caseload,” was removed because it did not fall onto any of the factors indicated in the PCA.

The end points of the scale for the items measuring Knowledge of McKinney-Vento (e.g., “I know the school enrollment requirements for students who are homeless”), which was measured on a five-point Likert scale going from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, was changed to No Knowledge to Extensive Knowledge (the items were measured on this scale in the initial version of the KSHSS). Focus group participants reported not understanding the agreement scale for these items. Therefore, this adjustment was made after consideration of the importance of measuring perceived knowledge and ensuring the scale was clear to the participants.

To further shorten the final survey for this study, two background items were removed from the original and revised versions of the survey. These items include school setting and school type. Both of these variables were removed because they were not significant in the previous study. Finally, one training item that had been included in the original version of the instrument was added back into the survey. The item “how much training have you received to work with students who are homeless?” will replace the item “have you received training to work with students who are homeless?” This item has a five-point Likert scale (No Training through Extensive Training). In the initial survey

this item was measured on a 3-point scale. The change to a five-point scale should improve its performance.

**The final instrument.** Table 3 describes all of the variables in this study and the items used to measure them. The final version of the KSHSS, used in this study, is comprised of 61 total items including background, perceived knowledge of McKinney-Vento, and perceptions of preparation items (see survey in Appendix B). In addition, the survey incorporates 18 items pertaining to involvement in partnerships and interventions adapted from the School Counselor Involvement in Partnerships Survey (SCIPS). In total, the final survey consists of eight background items (i.e., school level, years of experience, number of students, number of students who are homeless, state where school is located, and three items measuring role of the school counselor in working with students who are homeless). These items consist of fill-in-the-blank and multiple-choice items. In order to measure perceived knowledge, there are five knowledge of McKinney-Vento items. These items are measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = No Knowledge through 5 = Extensive Knowledge). Preparation to work with students who are homeless was measured by 10 items. Two preparation items measured amount of training on a Likert scale (1 = No Preparation/Training through 5 = Extensive Preparation/Training) and two preparation items asked participants to select the location of their training. Preparation was further measured on a Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree through 5 = Strongly Agree) to determine counselors' perceptions of their preparation to work with students who are homeless. In addition, 18 items measured involvement in recommended interventions from the homeless literature (i.e., individual counseling, tutoring, group counseling, classroom guidance, mentoring) on a five-point frequency scale (1 = Not at

all through 5 = Very Frequently). Finally, 16 items taken from the SCIPS measured involvement in partnerships. A frequency scale will be used for these items (i.e., 1= Not at All through 5 = Very frequently). The 18 involvement in partnership items comprised of the three dimensions of the SCIPS (i.e., school/family partnerships, school community collaboration, and involvement on collaborative teams). Following is a brief discussion of the School Counselor Involvement in Partnerships Survey (SCIPS) including a discussion of the 18 items selected for use in this study.

### **The School Counselor Involvement in Partnerships Survey [SCIPS]**

The SCIPS was initially designed by Bryan (2003) and further improved by Bryan and Griffin (2010) to better investigate school counselors' involvement in school-family-community partnerships. The purpose of the SCIPS is to determine how school counselors are involved in school-family-community [SFC] partnerships and their perceptions of the conditions influencing their involvement (Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Bryan & Griffin, 2010). After recognizing the importance of collaborative interventions to support students who are homeless (Grothaus et al., 2011; Miller, 2008; Miller, 2009a; Swick, 2010), items from the SCIPS were selected for the current study to further assess the perceptions of partnership practices of school counselors who work with students who are homeless.

Bryan and Holcomb-McCoy (2007) used the SCIPS to examine the factors influencing school counselors' perceptions of their involvement in school-family-community partnerships. This study included 235 participants who completed and returned the SCIPS. The SCIPS measured a number of factors including involvement in school-family-community partnership roles, role perceptions, other school counseling

factors (i.e., confidence in building partnerships, commitment to advocacy, attitudes about partnerships and families, and perceived barriers), and school related factors (i.e., school climate, principal support, and school practices of partnerships). This study suggests that there are 18 partnership role behaviors. The results of the study suggest that role perceptions were highly correlated with perceived involvement in partnerships. Role perceptions and attitudes about partnerships were highly correlated with attitudes about partnerships. The results also suggest that school counselors' confidence in their ability to build partnerships has a positive relationship with perceived involvement.

The items from the SCIPS survey that will be used for this study come from the revised version of the survey (Bryan & Griffin, 2010). Bryan and Griffin (2010) further refined the SCIPS and used it to examine the school counselors' involvement in partnerships through their counseling programs and relationships between the school and school counselor factors affect involvement in partnerships. The scales that measure the school and school counselor factors were not included in this current study. However 18 items that measure partnership involvement are incorporated in this study. The items are adapted to focus on partnership practices for the homeless population.

The results of the Bryan and Griffin (2010) study suggest that involvement in school-family-community partnerships fall into three dimensions. Dimension one, the first type of involvement, is school-home partnerships/collaboration. This dimension includes eight items that assess the connection between the school and the home and whether counselors engage in building connections with parents and families and how they collaborate with school professionals to support families. Items such as “coordinating programs to help school staff understand the needs of families (e.g.,

reaching out to local church, business leaders, police/fire officers)” are included on dimension one. Dimension two, the second type of school-family-community partnerships, is involvement in school-community collaboration. This dimension includes five items that measure school counselors’ involvement with the community such as whether counselors collaborate with businesses, community work committees, and community agency professionals. An example of a dimension two item that is used in the current study is “collaborating with local businesses and industries to provide enrichment activities for students (e.g., mentoring, tutoring, job shadowing).” Dimension three is the type of involvement in which school counselors work on collaborative teams. An item on dimension three includes “teaming with staff, family, and community members to increase parents’ involvement in their children’s learning for families (e.g., partnership planning team, action team).” In this dimension, there are three items that measure whether counselors team with others. All 16 partnership involvement items are measured on a five-point scale (1 = Not at All to 5 = Very Frequently).

## **Procedures**

The following section will describe the procedures used for the current study.

**Survey distribution.** Surveys were sent electronically through Survey Gizmo (<https://students.sgizmo.com>) to the random sample of elementary, middle, and high school counselors (N = 2,500). Each selected participant received an email from the researcher that included an invitation to participate in the study. By clicking on this link, the participants were directed to a page that included the general purposes for the study (see Appendix A), the IRB statements required by the University of Maryland, the contact information for the researcher, and the link for the survey. Participation was

entirely voluntary. There were no known risks or benefits associated with taking or not taking the survey. The researcher sent the survey 12 times within a six-week span prior to reaching the desired number of responses.

**Confidentiality.** Confidentiality and anonymity were upheld in this survey. Although responses were initially linked to email addresses, email addresses were not linked with other identifying information, such as names or phone numbers. Additionally, when results were downloaded into SPSS, email addresses were deleted and respondents were assigned a number to identify their responses. The researcher upheld anonymity in the survey responses. Participants were made aware of the confidentiality and anonymity of this survey in the cover letter.

**Incentives.** In order to increase participation in the survey, participants were given the opportunity to enter their email address into a raffle for one of two \$25 Amazon gift cards. This was stated in the emails sent to participants requesting their response to the survey. Email addresses were not connected to survey responses or used for other purposes. The raffle winners were selected by the researcher and notified approximately two months after data collection had ceased.

### **Data Analysis**

Responses to the survey were collected through Survey Gizmo. Participant responses were downloaded into an SPSS spreadsheet for further analysis. The data analyses used in this study include factor analysis and logistical regression. Additionally, descriptive analyses were run to determine means and frequencies of responses. In the following section, data analysis will be broken down by research question.

**Variables.** Table 4 includes a description of the background, independent, and dependent variables discussed in this study.

Table 4

*Description of Variables Table*

Variable Name	Definition	Survey Items	Survey
School counselor preparation to work with students who are homeless	Independent Variable: School counselors' amount and type of training to work with students who are homeless and school counselors' perceptions of their preparation to meet the needs of students who are homeless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately how much preparation or training have you received to work with students who are homeless after graduate school?</li> <li>• Approximately how much preparation or training have you received to work with students who are homeless <i>while you were in graduate school?</i></li> <li>• What type of preparation or training have you received to work with students who are homeless <i>after graduate school?</i></li> <li>• What type of preparation or training have you received to work with students who are homeless <i>during graduate school?</i></li> <li>• I had sufficient training to work</li> </ul>	KSHSS

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		with students who are homeless	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am prepared to ensure the McKinney-Vento Act requirements are being met at my school</li> <li>• I had sufficient education <i>during graduate school</i> on students who are homeless</li> <li>• I would like more training to work with students who are homeless</li> <li>• I am prepared to work with students who are homeless at my school</li> <li>• I need more training to work effectively with students who are homeless</li> </ul>	
School counselor perceptions of their advocacy role	Independent Variable: School counselors report of feeling that they are an advocate for students who are homeless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am a voice for students who are homeless to ensure that the school meets their needs</li> </ul>	SCIPS

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Knowledge of McKinney-Vento	Independent Variable: Perceived knowledge school counselors have on the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I know the general requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act</li> <li>• I know the school enrollment requirements for students who are homeless</li> <li>• I know the role of the homeless liaison for my school</li> <li>• I know the transportation requirements for students who are homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act</li> <li>• I know the various definitions of homelessness</li> </ul>	KSHSS
Involvement in recommended interventions	Dependent Variable: Interventions that are recommended in the literature to support students who are homeless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent Consultation</li> <li>• Workshops for Parents</li> <li>• Teacher Consultation</li> <li>• Community Partnerships</li> <li>• Mentoring program</li> <li>• Academic Support</li> <li>• Small Group Counseling</li> <li>• Individual Counseling</li> <li>• Communication with shelter staff</li> </ul>	KSHSS

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Involvement in partnership practices	Dependent Variable: Counselors' involvement in partnership practices that support students who are homeless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shelter visits</li> <li>• Home visits</li> <li>• After-school programs</li> <li>• Tutoring</li> <li>• Referrals to community resources</li> <li>• Provided workshops/training for teachers</li> <li>• Classroom Guidance</li> <li>• Career Exploration</li> <li>• Behavioral Skills training</li> <li>• Locating community resources for students who are homeless</li> <li>• Collaborating with school, family, and community members to organize student support programs for students who are homeless (e.g., tutoring, mentoring, enrichment programs)</li> <li>• Coordinating with school-community outreach efforts to involve the community in the school to support students who are homeless (e.g., reaching out to local</li> </ul>	SCIPS
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church and business leaders,  
police/fire officers)

- Coordinating the integration of community services into the school to support students who are homeless (e.g., mental health and social services housed in school)
  - Coordinating programs to help school staff understand the needs of families who are homeless the community (e.g., in-service training)
  - Coordinating programs to help families who are homeless and community members understand the school (e.g. family resource center, parents and family seminars)
  - Training parents and students who are homeless to access services in the school and community
  - Collaborating with family and community members to deliver services to students who are
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homeless (e.g., parent volunteers and business professionals provide career guidance)

- Collaborating with local businesses and industries to provide enrichment experiences for students who are homeless (e.g., mentoring, tutoring, job shadowing)
  - Collaborating with community members on working committees to support students who are homeless (e.g., community task force, advisory committee)
  - Coordinating parent education workshops to enhance parent skills and knowledge for families who are homeless
  - Collaborating with community agency professionals to increase access to services for students who are homeless (e.g., invite family/community counselors to lead groups or counsel students)
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- Training staff to build effective school-family-community partnerships with resources to support students who are homeless
  - Teaming with staff, family, and community members to increase parents' involvement in their children's learning for families who are homeless (e.g., partnership planning team, action team)
  - Teaming with school staff, family, and/or community professionals to provide services for students who are homeless (e.g., school mental health team)
  - Training teacher, school social worker, or a parent liaison to conduct visits to shelters

Number of students who are homeless

Background  
Variable: Number of students who are homeless are at the participant's

- Approximately how many students attend your school?

KSHSS

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	school		
Role of school counselor	<p>Background</p> <p>Variable: The role the school counselor holds in the school to work with students who are homeless.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is primarily responsible for enrolling students who are homeless?</li> <li>• Who is the homeless liaison for your school?</li> <li>• Who is the main person responsible for addressing the needs of students who are homeless in your school?</li> </ul>	KSHSS
State	<p>Background</p> <p>Variable: State in which the school counselor works</p> <p>*this variable was recoded into regions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what state is your school located?</li> </ul>	New Item
School level	<p>Background</p> <p>Variable: The level of school where the school counselor works (Elementary,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what school level do you currently work?</li> </ul>	KSHSS

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	Middle, or High School)		
Type of training	Background Variable: The location in which the counselor received training the type of education they received	• What previous education or training have you had to work with students who are homeless?	KSHSS
Years of experience	Background Variable: Years of experience as a school counselor	• How many years have you been a school counselor?	KSHSS

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***Independent variables.*** The independent variables in the study include school counselor preparation to work with students who are homeless and perceived knowledge of McKinney-Vento.

***Dependent variables.*** The dependent variables include involvement in interventions and involvement in partnerships.

**Question 1.** To answer research question 1 and its two sub-questions, descriptive analyses were run on several variables in the study.

1. How are school counselors meeting the needs of students who are homeless?

- a. To what extent do school counselors perceive that they are prepared to work with students who are homeless?
- b. What recommended interventions are school counselors engaging in to meet the needs of students who are homeless?

The descriptive analyses were run to answer question 1, including examining means and standard deviations for several items. In order to answer the first sub-question, preparation items were analyzed. Frequencies were run on the items measuring preparation in order to determine the amount of training that school counselors receive to work with students who are homeless. Finally, means and standard deviation were run on the six items measuring perceptions of preparation to determine how prepared school counselors feel they are to work with students who are homeless.

For sub-question two of the first research question, means and standard deviations were run on reported interventions. Results of this analysis indicated which practices are occurring most frequently and which practices counselors are not engaging in to support students who are homeless. Table 4 includes an overview of the data analysis.

**Question 2.** To answer research question 2 and its sub-questions, factor analysis and logistical regression were used.

2. What factors explain school counselors' involvement in partnerships and interventions to serve students who are homeless?
  - a. To what extent do school counselors' preparation to work with students who are homeless, perceptions of their advocacy role, and their perceived knowledge of McKinney-Vento, relate to their involvement in recommended interventions and partnership practices



to support students who are homeless after controlling for background variables (i.e., number of students who are homeless, school level, years of experience, region, role of school counselor)?

For Question 2, principal factor analysis (also known as principal axis factor analysis) with an oblique rotation (direct oblimin) was used to determine item structure on the KSHSS. Preparation and knowledge of McKinney-Vento items were entered into the principal component analysis. When factor structure was determined, multiple regression analysis suggested relationships between background variables (i.e., number of students who are homeless, school level, years of experience, region, role of school counselor, number of students who are homeless), independent variables (preparation and knowledge of McKinney Vento) and dependent variables (involvement in interventions and partnerships). Refer to Table 5 for an overview of the data analysis.

Table 5

*Data Analysis Table*

Research Question	Variables	Analysis to be Used
<p><b>1.</b> How are school counselors meeting the needs of students who are homeless?</p> <p><b>a.</b> To what extent do school counselors perceive that they are prepared to work with students who are homeless?</p>	<p>School counselor preparation for working with students who are homeless</p> <p>Involvement in recommended interventions</p>	<p>Descriptive analyses: Frequencies, means and standard deviations</p>

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<p><b>b.</b> What recommended interventions are school counselors engaging in to meet the needs of students who are homeless?</p>		
<p><b>2.</b> What factors explain school counselors' involvement in partnerships and recommended interventions to serve students who are homeless?</p>	<p>Independent Variables: School counselor preparation to work with students who are homeless,</p>	<p>Principal Factor Analyses Linear Regression Analysis using factors</p>
<p><b>a.</b> To what extent do school counselors' preparation to work with students who are homeless, perceptions of their advocacy role, and their perceived knowledge of McKinney-Vento, relate to their involvement in recommended interventions and partnership practices to</p>	<p>advocacy role, and knowledge of McKinney Vento. Dependent Variables: Involvement in recommended interventions and partnership practices to support students who are homeless</p>	<p>derived from the Principal Factor Analysis of the involvement in partnership items and the recommended intervention items -Examining relationships among the derived factors and independent variables</p>

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support students who are	Background
homeless after	Variables: school
controlling for	setting, number of
background variables	students who are
(i.e., number of students	homeless, years of
who are homeless,	experience, region,
school level, years of	role of school
experience, region, role	counselor
of school counselor)?	

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### Summary

In order to determine the practices that school counselors are engaging in to support the needs of students who are homeless and to determine relationships between school counselors' preparation and knowledge and their involvement in interventions and partnership practices, survey methodology was used for this study. The sample for this study includes school counselors who are members of ASCA and listed in the member directory. The methods applied to analyze the collected survey responses include descriptive, factor, and regression analyses. The following section will describe the results of the analyses for this study.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter will describe the results of the data analyses used to answer the following research questions:

1. How are school counselors meeting the needs of students who are homeless?
  - a. To what extent do school counselors perceive that they are prepared to work with students who are homeless?
  - b. What recommended interventions are school counselors engaging in to meet the needs of students who are homeless?
  - c. What partnership practices are school counselors involved in to meet the needs of students who are homeless?
2. What factors explain school counselors' involvement in partnerships and interventions to serve students who are homeless?
  - a. To what extent do school counselors' perceptions of preparation for working with students who are homeless, perceptions of their advocacy role and perceived knowledge of McKinney-Vento, relate to their involvement in recommended interventions and partnership practices to support students who are homeless after controlling for background variables (e.g., number of students who are homeless, school level, years of experience, region, role of school counselor)?

This chapter is organized by research question. In each section, the research question will be stated, as well as the data analyses used to answer the question and the results of the analyses. For the first research question, descriptive results and results of a factor analysis

will be described. For the second research question, the results of factor analyses and linear regression analyses will be discussed.

### **Research Question 1**

The following section will describe the results related to the first research question and its sub-questions:

1. How are school counselors meeting the needs of students who are homeless?
  - a. To what extent do school counselors perceive that they are prepared to work with students who are homeless?
  - b. What recommended interventions are school counselors involved in to meet the needs of students who are homeless?
  - c. What partnership practices are school counselors involved in to meet the needs of students who are homeless?

In this section, the results of descriptive analyses applied to answer question one will be described. The section will begin with an examination of school counselors' preparation to work with students who are homeless, then will include a description of the descriptive results of school counselors' involvement in interventions and partnership practices to support these students.

#### **School Counselors' Preparation to Work with Students who are Homeless**

In order to investigate school counselors' perceptions of their preparation to work with students who are homeless, descriptive analyses were initially conducted to determine general responses to items. For questions examining preparation (including amount of training and perceptions of preparation), means, standard deviations, and frequencies were determined.

School counselors participating in this study were asked to respond to preparation items in order to determine how prepared they feel they are to work with students who are homeless. These items were measured on a scale from 1-5 (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). They were also asked to respond to items indicating the amount of training they received to work with this population. Amount of training was measured on a scale from 1-5 (1 = No Training to 5 = Extensive Training). In general, participants in the study reported feeling that they were unprepared during graduate school to work with students who are homeless ( $M = 1.88$ ,  $SD = .98$ ). Overall, participants reported low amounts of training during graduate school ( $M = 1.48$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ). Participants reported slightly higher on the amount of training they had received after graduate school ( $M = 2.12$ ,  $SD = .76$ ). However, this number is still relatively low. The majority of the participants (63.8%) reported having no training during graduate school to work with students who are homeless and 35.7% reported having no training after graduate school. Counselors also were slightly below neutral on their responses to having received training to implement school, family, and community partnerships ( $M = 2.83$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ). On average, they seemed to disagree that they had sufficient training to work with students who are homeless. In keeping with this suggested lack of preparation to work with students who are homeless, the majority of the participants indicated that they would like more training to work with students who are homeless ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = .91$ ). Despite reporting the desire to have more training and having a lack of training, many respondents reported feeling prepared to work with students who are homeless ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = .15$ ).

## **School Counselor Involvement in Recommended Interventions to Support Students who are Homeless**

To determine the types of practices school counselors are involved in to support students who are homeless, participants were asked to rate the frequency of their involvement in recommended interventions. Additionally, in order to determine the structure of responses on the items measuring involvement in interventions, principal factor analysis (also known as principal axis factor analysis) was used. In general, participants reported infrequent involvement in many of the interventions recommended in the literature (Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Daniels, 1992; Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011; Grothaus et al., 2011; Miller, 2009a; Swick, 2008) to support students who are homeless. Table 6 displays the means of participant involvement in recommended interventions. Means are for items measured on a scale from 1-5 (1 = Not at all through 5 = Very frequently). Participants reported most frequent involvement in school-based interventions such as consultation with parents ( $M = 2.94$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ), consultation with teachers ( $M = 3.14$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ), academic support ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ), individual counseling ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ), referrals to community resources ( $M = 2.95$ ,  $SD = 1.30$ ), and career exploration ( $M = 2.91$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ). Participants reported less frequent involvement in providing services outside of the school, such as communication with shelter staff ( $M = 1.76$ ,  $SD = .98$ ), shelter visits ( $M = 1.33$ ,  $SD = .68$ ), home visits ( $M = 1.57$ ,  $SD = .96$ ), providing workshops/training for teachers ( $M = 1.64$ ,  $SD = .96$ ), and afterschool programs ( $M = 2.03$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ).

Table 6

*Descriptive Analyses of School Counselors' Involvement in Recommended Interventions to Support Students Who are Homeless*

<b>Interventions</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Consulting with Parents	428	2.94	1.23
Educating parents on McKinney-Vento	428	2.04	1.12
Consulting with teacher	428	3.14	1.27
Community partnerships	428	2.33	1.10
Mentoring programs	428	2.05	1.13
Academic support	423	3.20	1.32
Small group counseling	428	2.31	1.26
Individual counseling	428	2.31	1.26
Communication with shelter staff	428	1.76	.98
Shelter visits	428	1.33	.68
Home visits	426	1.57	.96
After-school programs	428	2.03	1.24
Tutoring	428	2.31	1.24
Referrals to community resources	428	2.95	1.3
Behavioral skills training	431	2.51	1.35
Career exploration	426	2.91	1.37
Provided workshops/training for teachers	428	1.64	.96
Classroom guidance	428	2.78	1.52



### **Factor analysis of items measuring involvement in recommended**

**interventions.** After determining the means and standard deviations for the intervention items, further analysis was used to determine factor structure of the items. Eigenvalues, scree test, and the interpretability of the items were used to determine the structure. For the involvement in intervention items, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .935. This number indicates that factor analysis for these variables is appropriate. Barlett's Test of Sphericity was significant at .000 indicating that these items are excellent candidates for Principal Axis Factoring. Final scales were determined by those factors that loaded strongly ( $r \geq .30$ ) on each of the three factors. After consideration, one item, involvement in community partnerships, was removed due to vague wording and possible misinterpretation by participants. This item also did not fall strongly on any of the three factors.

The involvement in recommended interventions items fell into four factors. The four-factor model explains 69.84% of the variance. The first factor includes *individual and school based interventions* (5 items;  $\alpha = .92$ ). These interventions include academic support, individual counseling, consulting with teachers, consulting with parents, and referrals to community resources. The second factor, *collaborative relationships* (6 items;  $\alpha = .84$ ) includes shelter visits, home visits, communication with shelter staff, after-school programs, tutoring, and mentoring. The third factor includes *group and classroom interventions* (4 items;  $\alpha = .84$ ). These include classroom guidance, behavioral skills training, career exploration, and small group counseling. Lastly, the fourth factor consists of *training interventions* (2 items;  $\alpha = .70$ ). Training interventions include educating

parents on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and providing workshops/training for teachers. See table 7 for factor loadings.

Table 7

*Principal Factor Analysis of Items Measuring Involvement in Recommended Interventions*

Item	Factor Loading			
	1	2	3	4
Academic Support	<b>.716</b>	.044	.112	.146
Individual Counseling	<b>.688</b>	.143	.185	-.064
Consulting with Teachers	<b>.607</b>	-.060	.185	.275
Consulting with Parents	<b>.530</b>	-.040	.095	.439
Referrals to Community Resources	<b>.479</b>	.199	.216	.062
Shelter Visits	-.194	<b>.929</b>	.018	-.018
Home Visits	.125	<b>.700</b>	-.066	.017
Communication with Shelter Staff	.121	<b>.588</b>	.039	.083
After-school Programs	.216	<b>.468</b>	.085	.069
Tutoring	.321	<b>.358</b>	.038	.097
Mentoring	.200	<b>.300</b>	.232	.141
Classroom Guidance	-.064	-.077	<b>.852</b>	.015
Behavioral Skills Training	-.018	.065	<b>.770</b>	.039
Career Exploration	.232	-.017	<b>.667</b>	-.054
Small Group Counseling	.224	.163	<b>.436</b>	-.005

Educating Parents on McKinney-Vento	.067	.019	-.028	<b>.807</b>
Provided Workshops/Training for Teachers	-.220	.381	.213	<b>.418</b>

### **School Counselor Involvement in Partnership Practices to Support Students who are Homeless**

After determining how school counselors were involved in interventions to support students who are homeless, items measuring their involvement in partnership practices were examined. Descriptive analyses were run on the items from the SCIPS measuring school counselors' involvement in partnership practices to determine how frequently school counselors were reportedly involved in these practices (see Table 8 for all items, which were measured on a scale from 1 = Not at all through 5 = Very frequently). The descriptive analysis of the involvement in partnership items showed that, in general, school counselors report low participation in partnership practices to support students who are homeless. In particular, participants reported low participation on items that required collaboration outside of the school and in the community. These items include collaborating with community members on working committees ( $M = 1.77, SD = .96$ ), teaming to conduct visits to shelters or other community locations ( $M = 1.80, SD = 1.08$ ), coordinating parent education workshops ( $M = 1.66, SD = .94$ ), collaborating with local businesses and industries ( $M = 1.83, SD = 1.02$ ), and training teachers, school social workers, or parent liaisons to conduct visits to shelters ( $M = 1.42, SD = .76$ ).

Although the numbers were still relatively low, school counselors seemed to engage more in school-based services such as coordinating the integration of community services into the school ( $M = 2.66, SD = 1.21$ ), collaborating with the school, family, and community

to organize outreach efforts to involve the community ( $M = 2.42$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ), and teaming with school staff, family, and/or community professionals to provide services ( $M = 2.56$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ). The results of the descriptive analysis for the involvement in partnership items fell into a similar pattern as the involvement in intervention items, where school counselors reported increased levels of involvement in services held within the school and less involvement in those practices that required involvement in the community or after school hours.

Table 8

*Descriptive Analyses of Involvement in Partnership Practices*

Partnership Practices	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Collaborating with community members on working committees	424	1.77	.96
2. Teaming to conduct visits to shelters or other community locations.	429	1.80	1.08
3. Coordinating parent education workshops	429	1.66	.94
4. Collaborating with local businesses and industries (e.g., mentoring, tutoring, job shadowing)	428	1.83	1.02
5. Training teachers, school social workers, or a parent liaisons to conduct visits to shelters	429	1.42	.76
6. Collaborating with family and community members to deliver services	429	2.17	1.17

7. Collaborating with community agency professionals to increase access to services	429	2.03	1.08
8. Coordinating programs to help families who are homeless and community members understand the school	429	2.21	1.08
9. Coordinating the integration of community services into the school	425	2.66	1.21
10. Collaborating with school, family, and community members to organize student support programs	429	2.61	1.17
11. Coordinating with school-community outreach efforts to involve the community	429	2.42	1.13
12. Teaming with school staff, family, and/or community professionals to provide services	429	2.56	1.15
13. Training staff to understand the provisions under McKinney-Vento	429	1.90	1.10
14. Training staff to work collaboratively with families who are homeless	429	2.01	1.08
15. Training staff to build effective school-family- community partnerships	429	1.83	.927
16. Training parents and students who are homeless to access services in the school and community	426	2.22	1.13
17. Teaming with staff, family, and community members to increase parents' involvement	427	2.20	1.07

18. Coordinating programs to help school staff	429	2.12	1.08
understand the needs of families who are homeless			
the community			

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After the descriptive analysis was conducted on the partnership items, a factor analysis was conducted to determine the underlying structure of the item. The results of this analysis are described in more detail below. The three factors derived from the factor analysis for the involvement in partnership items and the four factors derived from the factor analysis of involvement in recommended interventions to support students who are homeless will be used to determine relationships between variables to answer research question two.

**Factor analysis of items measuring involvement in partnership practices.** A principal factor analysis with oblique rotation was run on the 18 items from the SCIPS measuring involvement in partnerships. The KMO for this analysis is .956, which makes it adequate for factor analyses. The analysis is also significant using Bartlett's Test of Sphericity at .000. Three and four factors models were initially run on the partnership items, but the three-factor model fit best. Three factors explained 72.98% of the variance and were all found to be highly reliable. The item structure of each of the three involvement factors in this study is slightly different than in the Bryan and Griffin (2010) study. The differences in involvement in partnership item structure may be due to the adjustment of each of the actual items from the SCIPS. Each involvement item was adjusted to focus the response to partnerships practices that specifically were focused on working with students who are homeless. It may also be that these three types of

partnership involvement overlap in a manner that makes it impossible to separate them out completely. In other words, there may be one underlying factor to the various types of school-family-community partnership involvement.

Similar to the Bryan and Griffin (2010) study, in the current study, the items fell into three factors. The factors include: (1) *involvement in the community* to support students who are homeless (8 items;  $\alpha = .93$ ); (2) *involvement in the school* to provide services for students who are homeless (4 items;  $\alpha = .90$ ); and (3) *involvement in training and teaming* to increase support for students who are homeless (6 items;  $\alpha = .91$ ). *Involvement in the community* to support students who are homeless consisted of items with factor loadings .874-.494. This factor includes items such as collaborating with community members on working committees to support students who are homeless (e.g., community task force, advisory committee), and teaming with teacher, school social worker, or a parent liaison to conduct visits to shelters or other community locations where families who are homeless reside. *Involvement in the school* to provide services for students who are homeless includes items that loaded on this factor from .754-.567. Examples of these items include coordinating the integration of community services into the school to support students who are homeless (e.g., mental health and social services housed in school) and collaborating with school, family, and community members to organize student support programs for students who are homeless (e.g., tutoring, mentoring, enrichment programs). The final factor, *involvement in training and teaming* to increase support for students who are homeless, consists of items that loaded on this component from .836-.430. Examples of these items include training staff to build effective school-family-community partnerships with resources to support

students who are homeless and teaming with staff, family, and community members to increase parents' involvement in their children's learning for families who are homeless (e.g., partnership planning team, action team). See Table 9 for all of the 18 items and their factor loadings.

Table 9

*Principal Factor Analysis of Items Measuring Involvement in Partnership Practices*

Item	Factor Loading		
	1	2	3
1. Collaborating with community members on working committees	<b>.874</b>	-.028	-.032
2. Teaming to conduct visits to shelters or other community locations.	<b>.837</b>	.036	.001
3. Coordinating parent education workshops	<b>.770</b>	.080	.086
4. Collaborating with local businesses and industries (e.g., mentoring, tutoring, job shadowing)	<b>.743</b>	-.136	-.039
5. Training teachers, school social workers, or a parent liaisons to conduct visits to shelters	<b>.682</b>	.253	.313
6. Collaborating with family and community members to deliver services	<b>.681</b>	-.253	-.048
7. Collaborating with community agency professionals to increase access to services	<b>.598</b>	-.279	.002
8. Coordinating programs to help families who are homeless and community members understand the	<b>.494</b>	-.316	.154



school			
9. Coordinating the integration of community services into the school	.100	<b>-.754</b>	.072
10. Collaborating with school, family, and community members to organize student support programs	.179	<b>-.679</b>	.110
11. Coordinating with school-community outreach efforts to involve the community	.272	<b>-.583</b>	.101
12. Teaming with school staff, family, and/or community professionals to provide services	-.027	<b>-.567</b>	.406
13. Training staff to understand the provisions under McKinney-Vento	-.022	.066	<b>.836</b>
14. Training staff to work collaboratively with families who are homeless	.000	-.094	<b>.832</b>
15. Training staff to build effective school-family-community partnerships	.161	.008	<b>.739</b>
16. Training parents and students who are homeless to access services in the school and community	.040	-.305	<b>.583</b>
17. Teaming with staff, family, and community members to increase parents' involvement	.147	-.333	<b>.464</b>
18. Coordinating programs to help school staff understand the needs of families who are homeless the community	.291	-.182	<b>.430</b>

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## Research Question 2

To answer research question two and its sub-questions, factor analysis and linear regression analysis were conducted in order to determine relationships between variables.

2. What factors explain school counselors' involvement in partnerships and interventions to serve students who are homeless?

- b. To what extent do school counselors' preparation for working with students who are homeless, perceptions of their advocacy role, and perceived knowledge of McKinney-Vento, relate to their involvement in recommended interventions and partnership practices to support students who are homeless after controlling for background variables (e.g., number of students who are homeless, school level, years of experience, region, school counselors' role in working with homeless students)?

Prior to examining the relationships between the dependent and independent variables, a factor analysis was conducted on the items measuring knowledge and preparation. A principal factor analysis with oblique rotation was conducted in order to determine the structure of the responses for these items. In order to determine how these items were structured, eigenvalues, scree test, and the interpretability were examined. After item structure was determined, linear regression analysis was run to examine the relationships between the dependent (involvement in partnerships and involvement in recommended interventions) and independent variables (school counselor preparation and knowledge of McKinney-Vento).

## **School Counselors' Preparation and Knowledge to Work with Students who are Homeless**

A principal factor analysis with oblique rotation was run on the 12 knowledge and preparation items to determine how participants' responses to these items were structured. The Kaiser-Meyer-Okin [KMO] score for these items was .931 and Barlett's Test of Sphericity was significant at .000, making the items suitable for factor analysis. Initially, a two-factor model was run, but a three-factor model was deemed a better fit. The three-factor model explained 74.04% of the variance and the factors were all found to be highly reliable. Preparation and knowledge items fell into three factors. These factors include (1) *specific knowledge of homelessness* (3 items;  $\alpha = .87$ ), (2) *self-efficacy to work with students who are homeless* (5 items;  $\alpha = .78$ ), and (3) *knowledge of McKinney-Vento* (4 items;  $\alpha = .90$ ). *Specific knowledge of homelessness* measures whether counselors are aware of critical information that is essential to helping students facing homelessness: i.e., I know where students on my caseload reside; I know the role of the homeless liaison for my school; and I know the various definitions of homelessness. *Knowledge of McKinney-Vento* items measures school counselors' perceptions of their knowledge of the tenets of the act, including: I know the general requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act; I know the transportation requirements for students who are homeless; I am prepared to ensure the McKinney-Vento requirements are being met at my school; and I know the school enrollment requirements for students who are homeless. *Self-efficacy to work with students who are homeless* includes items that ask counselors to report how prepared they feel they are to work with students who are homeless. These items include: I have had sufficient training to work with students who are homeless, I have received sufficient

training to implement school-family-partnerships to support students who are homeless, I have received sufficient education during graduate school to work with students who are homeless, I am prepared to work with students who are homeless, and I would like more training to work with students who are homeless. Each factor comprised items that loaded on it with factor loadings above .30. Table 10 shows the factor loadings for each of the knowledge and preparation items.

Table 10

*Principal Factor Analysis of Knowledge and Preparation Items*

Item	Factor Loading		
	1	2	3
I know where students on my caseload reside	<b>.787</b>	.007	.060
I know the role of the homeless liaison for my school	<b>.719</b>	.013	-.098
I know the various definitions of homelessness	<b>.603</b>	.057	-.213
I have had sufficient training to work with students who are homeless	.094	<b>.753</b>	-.195
I have received sufficient training to implement school-family-partnerships to support students who are homeless	.252	<b>.602</b>	-.054
I have received sufficient education during graduate school to work with students who are homeless	-.014	<b>.511</b>	.004
I am prepared to work with students who are homeless	.339	<b>.465</b>	-.155
I would like more training to work with students who are homeless	-.034	<b>.302</b>	.027
I know the general requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act	-.073	.024	<b>-.988</b>

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I know the transportation requirements for students who are homeless	.232	-.065	<b>-.677</b>
I am prepared to ensure the McKinney-Vento requirements are being met at my school	.127	.376	<b>-.531</b>
I know the school enrollment requirements for students who are homeless	.409	.095	<b>-.445</b>

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**Relationships Between Preparation and Knowledge, Perceptions of Advocacy Role, School Counselors' Involvement in Partnerships, and Involvement in Recommended Interventions to Support Students who are Homeless**

The following section will describe the results of nine linear regression analyses that were conducted to examine the relationships between the dependent variables (i.e., involvement in partnerships and involvement in recommended interventions), the independent variables (i.e., specific knowledge of homelessness, self-efficacy to work with students who are homeless, knowledge of McKinney-Vento, and perceptions of advocacy role), and background variables (i.e., number of students who are homeless, total student enrollment, region, school level, years of experience, amount of training after graduate school, amount of training during graduate school, school counselors' role in working with homeless students) for this study.

After careful consideration, a measure of school counselors' perceptions of their advocacy role was included in the regression models as an independent variable. This variable, perceptions of advocacy role, was measured by one survey item, "I am a voice for students who are homeless." Perceptions of advocacy role was included in the linear

regression analyses to determine whether school counselors' view of themselves as advocates for students who are homeless was related to their involvement in partnership practices and involvement in recommended interventions. In this section, there will be a discussion about the results of the analyses of the variables related to school counselors' involvement in partnerships. This discussion will be followed by a description of the results related to school counselors' involvement in recommended interventions. The factor scores derived from the factor analyses are used as variables in the regression models.

**Involvement in partnerships.** In order to determine relationships between the involvement in partnership variables (i.e., overall partnership involvement, involvement in the community to support students who are homeless, involvement in the school to provide services for students who are homeless, and involvement in training and teaming to increase support for students who are homeless), four multiple regression analyses were run. Each regression model comprised the independent variables (i.e., specific knowledge of homelessness, self-efficacy to work with students who are homeless, knowledge of McKinney-Vento, and perceptions of advocacy role), and background variables (i.e., number of students who are homeless, total student enrollment, region, school level, years of experience, amount of training after graduate school, amount of training during graduate school, and school counselors' role in working with homeless students). First, a regression analysis was run using overall involvement in partnerships as the dependent variable, followed by three regression analyses with each of the three involvement in partnership factors. Overall involvement in partnerships was derived by averaging scores on the 18 partnership involvement items.

In all four regression analyses of the involvement in partnership items, the background variables: amount of homeless students, amount of training after graduate school, and amount of training during graduate school were significant predictors of partnership involvement. The background variables: years as school counselor, amount of students in the school, school level, region, and school counselors' role in working with homeless students were not significantly related to any of the partnership variables. The independent variables: specific knowledge of homelessness, self-efficacy to work with homeless students, and perceptions of advocacy role were significant predictors of involvement in partnerships in nearly all of the regression analyses.

***Overall partnership involvement.*** When overall partnership involvement was examined in a linear regression analysis, the results indicated that there were several significant relationships. The background variables and the independent variables accounted for 48.1% of the variance in overall partnership involvement,  $R^2 = .50$ ,  $F(16, 392) = 24.59$ ,  $p < .001$  (see Table 11).

The following independent variables were significantly related to overall partnership involvement: specific knowledge of homelessness ( $\beta = .20$ ,  $t = 2.80$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and self-efficacy to work with homeless students, ( $\beta = .25$ ,  $t = 4.04$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Additionally, school counselors' perceptions of their advocacy role (i.e., I am a voice for students who are homeless) was significantly related to overall involvement in partnerships ( $\beta = .17$ ,  $t = 4.30$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Also, the background variables: number of homeless students, amount of training after graduate school, and amount of training during graduate school were significantly related to overall partnership involvement.

Table 11 shows the results of the regression analyses for overall involvement in partnership practices.

Table 11

*Overall Involvement in Partnerships Regression Analysis*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
				.501	.481
Years as school counselor	.000	.005	-.002		
Total student enrollment	.000	.000	-.005		
Number of homeless students	.005	.001	.147***		
Amount of training after graduate school	.167	.048	.181***		
Amount of training during graduate school	.173	.053	.131***		
School Level – Elem	.087	.086	.041		
School Level – Middle	.130	.100	.050		
Region – South	.522	.429	.253		
Region – West	.419	.433	.168		



Region – Northeast	.428	.429	.165
Region – Midwest	.333	.429	.139
School Counselor Role as Liaison	-.013	.081	-.006
Specific knowledge of homelessness	.202	.072	.188**
Self-efficacy	.252	.062	.238***
Knowledge of McKinney-Vento	-.040	.072	-.038
Perceptions of advocacy role	.172	.040	.174***

*Note:* The reference category for Region is Other, School Level is High School, and for School Counselor Role is Not Homeless Liaison

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

***Involvement in partnerships in the community.*** For the factor, involvement in partnerships in the community, the independent variables, self-efficacy to work with homeless students, ( $\beta = .24, t = 3.65, p < .001$ ) and school counselor perceptions of their advocacy role (having a voice for students who are homeless) ( $\beta = .13, t = 3.09, p < .001$ ) were both significantly related to school counselors' reports of involvement in partnerships in the community to support students who are homeless. Taken together, the background variables and the independent variables accounted for 37.8% of the variance

( $R^2 = .38$ ,  $F(16, 401) = 15.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ) in school counselors' involvement in partnerships in the community. The background variables that predicted involvement in partnerships in the community were number of homeless students ( $\beta = .17$ ,  $t = 4.09$ ,  $p < .001$ ), amount of training during graduate school ( $\beta = .17$ ,  $t = 3.81$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and amount of training after graduate school ( $\beta = .17$ ,  $t = 2.90$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Table 12 displays the results for the regression analysis for involvement in partnerships in the community.

Table 12

*Partnerships: Involvement in the Community Regression Analysis*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
				.378	.353
Years as school counselor	-.003	.006	-.021		
Total student enrollment	.000	.000	.010		
Number of homeless students	.005	.001	.174***		
Amount of training after graduate school	.150	.052	.168**		
Amount of training during graduate school	.215	.056	.168***		
School Level – Elem	.007	.091	.003		

School Level – Middle	.066	.107	.026
Region – South	.371	.462	.187
Region – West	.216	.466	.090
Region – Northeast	.179	.463	.071
Region – Midwest	.041	.463	.018
School Counselor Role as Liaison	-.063	.087	-.030
Specific knowledge of homelessness	.140	.077	.134
Self-efficacy	.243	.066	.237***
Knowledge of McKinney-Vento	-.122	.077	-.121
Perceptions of advocacy role	.133	.043	.138**

*Note:* The reference category for Region is Other, School Level is High School, and for School Counselor Role is Not Homeless Liaison

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

***Involvement in partnerships in schools.*** Specific knowledge of homelessness ( $\beta = .23$ ,  $t = 3.27$ ,  $p < .01$ ), self-efficacy ( $\beta = .24$ ,  $t = 3.94$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and school counselors' perceptions of advocacy role ( $\beta = .20$ ,  $t = 4.94$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were all significant

variables that predicted school counselors' involvement in partnerships in the school. The significant background variables included amount of homeless students ( $\beta = .12, t = 3.10, p < .01$ ) and school level, ( $\beta = .11, t = 2.58, p < .01$ ) with elementary school counselors reporting significantly higher involvement in partnerships in schools than high school counselors. The independent and background variables accounted for 42.2% of the variance ( $R^2 = .44, F(16, 402) = 10.55, p < .001$ ) in involvement in partnerships in schools. Table 13 shows the results of regression analysis of involvement in partnerships in schools.

Table 13

*Partnerships: Involvement in Schools Regression Analysis*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
				.444	.422
Years as school counselor	-.002	.005	-.018		
Amount of students at school	-7.598E	.000	-.001		
Amount of homeless students	.004	.001	.124**		
Amount of training after graduate school	.040	.048	.046		
Amount of training during graduate school	.097	.052	.077		

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School Level – Elem	.218	.085	.109**
School Level – Middle	.117	.099	.047
Region – South	.686	.429	.350
Region – West	.708	.433	.300
Region – Northeast	.753	.430	.303
Region – Midwest	.618	.430	.271
School Counselor Role as Liaison	-.004	.081	-.002
Specific knowledge of homelessness	.232	.071	.227**
Self-efficacy	.242	.061	.242***
Knowledge of McKinney-Vento	.004	.070	.004
Perceptions of advocacy role	.198	.040	.209***

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*Note:* The reference category for Region is Other, School Level is High School, and for School Counselor Role is Not Homeless Liaison

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

***Involvement in training and teaming.*** The final regression analysis run on the was for the dependent variables, involvement in training and teaming. This analysis was similar to the others in that self-efficacy to work with students who are homeless ( $\beta = .18, t = 2.95, p < .001$ ) and school counselors' perceptions of advocacy role ( $\beta = .15, t = 3.96, p < .001$ ) were significant predictors of involvement in training and teaming. The significant background variables included number of homeless students ( $\beta = .09, t = 2.40, p < .05$ ), amount of training during graduate school ( $\beta = .12, t = 2.97, p < .01$ ), and amount of training after graduate school ( $\beta = .20, t = 3.88, p < .001$ ). The independent and background variables accounted for 47.7% of the variance ( $R^2 = .50, F(16, 401) = 12.00, p < .001$ ) in involvement in training and teaming. See Table 14 for results of the regression analysis involvement in training and teaming.

Table 14

*Partnerships: Involvement in Training and Teaming Regression Analysis*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
				.497	.477
Years as school counselor	.007	.005	.050		
Amount of students at school	.000	.000	-.019		
Amount of homeless students	.003	.001	.092*		

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Amount of training after graduate school	.178	.046	.202***
Amount of training during graduate school	.148	.050	.117**
School Level – Elem	.118	.081	.058
School Level – Middle	.149	.096	.059
Region – South	.345	.413	.174
Region – West	.276	.416	.115
Region – Northeast	.357	.413	.143
Region – Midwest	.359	.413	.156
School Counselor Role as Liaison	.109	.077	.053
Specific knowledge of homelessness	.120	.068	.116
Self-efficacy	.176	.060	.173**
Knowledge of McKinney-Vento	.118	.067	.119
Perceptions of advocacy role	.152	.038	.159***

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*Note:* The reference category for Region is Other, School Level is High School, and for School Counselor Role is Not Homeless Liaison

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Involvement in recommended interventions.** In order to determine whether relationships exist between the involvement in recommended interventions variables (i.e., overall involvement in recommended interventions, involvement in individual and school based interventions, involvement in collaborative relationships, involvement in group and classroom interventions, and involvement in training interventions), the independent variables (i.e., specific knowledge of homelessness, self-efficacy to work with students who are homeless, knowledge of McKinney-Vento, and perceptions of advocacy role), and background variables (i.e., number of students who are homeless, total student enrollment, region, school level, years of experience, amount of training after graduate school, amount of training during graduate school, school counselors' role in working with homeless students), five linear regression analyses were conducted. First, a regression analysis was run using overall involvement in recommended interventions as the dependent variable, followed by four regression analyses with each of the three involvement in interventions factors. The variable, overall involvement in recommended interventions, was derived by averaging scores on the 17 recommended intervention items.

Many of the significant relationships found in the regression analyses for the involvement in partnership variables were also found in the regression analyses for the involvement in recommended interventions variables. Amount of training after graduate school was significant across all three involvement in recommended interventions



variables. The background variable, number of homeless students, significantly predicted overall involvement in recommended interventions, school and individual interventions, and group and classroom interventions. Amount of training during graduate school was a significant predictor of overall involvement in recommended, group and classroom interventions, and training interventions.

***Overall involvement in recommended interventions.*** The independent and background variables accounted for 48.4% of the variance,  $R^2 = .50$ ,  $F(16, 401) = 25.26$ ,  $p < .001$ , in overall involvement in recommended intervention. There was a similar pattern of results for overall involvement in recommended interventions as there was for overall involvement in partnerships. The background variables, number of homeless students ( $\beta = .10$ ,  $t = 2.70$ ,  $p < .01$ ), amount of training after graduate school ( $\beta = .12$ ,  $t = 2.27$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and amount of training during graduate school ( $\beta = .08$ ,  $t = 1.97$ ,  $p < .05$ ) were all related to overall involvement in interventions. The independent variables that significantly predicted involvement in recommended interventions were specific knowledge about homelessness ( $\beta = .32$ ,  $t = 4.84$ ,  $p < .001$ ), self-efficacy ( $\beta = .15$ ,  $t = 2.47$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and school counselors' perceptions of their advocacy role ( $\beta = .23$ ,  $t = 5.69$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Table 15 shows the results of the linear regression analysis for overall involvement in recommended interventions.

Table 15

*Regression Analysis Results for Overall Involvement in Recommended Interventions*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
				.504	.484
Years as school counselor	-.004	.005	-.025		
Total student enrollment	.000	.000	-.019		
Number of homeless students	.003	.001	.103**		
Amount of training after graduate school	.108	.048	.119*		
Amount of training during graduate school	.102	.052	.077*		
School Level – Elem	.138	.085	.065		
School Level – Middle	.153	.099	.059		
Region – South	.748	.425	.365		
Region – West	.642	.429	.259		
Region – Northeast	.701	.426	.270		

Region – Midwest	.610	.426	.255
School Counselor Role as Liaison	-.035	.080	-.016
Specific knowledge of homelessness	.341	.071	.318***
Self-efficacy	.152	.062	.145*
Knowledge of McKinney-Vento	-.009	.070	-.009
Perceptions of advocacy role	.227	.040	.229***

*Note:* The reference category for Region is Other, School Level is High School, and for School Counselor Role is Not Homeless Liaison

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

***Involvement in individual and school-based interventions.*** The independent and background variables explained a significant proportion of the variance in the involvement in individual and school based interventions variable (see Table 16). The model explained 46.6% of the variance ( $R^2 = .49$ ,  $F(16, 400) = 23.711$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The background variable, number of homeless students, was significantly related to involvement in individual and school based interventions ( $\beta = .10$ ,  $t = 2.60$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Specific knowledge of homelessness significantly predicted involvement in individual and school-based interventions, ( $\beta = .46$ ,  $t = 6.65$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Additionally, those who reported higher perceptions of their advocacy role for working with students who are

homeless, also reported significantly higher involvement in school and individual interventions, ( $\beta = .23$ ,  $t = 5.94$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Table 16

*Interventions: Individual and School-Based Regression Analysis*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
				.487	.466
Years as school counselor	-.008	.005	-.059		
Amount of students at school	.001	.000	-.011		
Amount of homeless students	.003	.001	.100**		
Amount of training after graduate school	.063	.047	.072		
Amount of training during graduate school	.045	.051	.035		
School Level – Elem	.000	.083	.000		
School Level – Middle	.086	.097	.034		

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Region – South	.881	.418	.444**
Region – West	.754	.422	.313
Region – Northeast	.867	.419	.347**
Region – Midwest	.834	.419	.361**
School Counselor	-.052	.079	-.025
Role as Liaison			
Specific knowledge of homelessness	.461	.069	.445***
Self-efficacy	.077	.060	.076
Knowledge of McKinney-Vento	-.038	.069	-.037
Perceptions of advocacy role	.232	.039	.241***

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*Note:* The reference category for Region is Other, School Level is High School, and for School Counselor Role is Not Homeless Liaison

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

***Involvement in group and classroom interventions.*** Taken together, the independent and background variables accounted for 33.3% of the variance ( $R^2 = .36$ ,  $F(16, 403) = 14.07$ ,  $p < .001$ ) involvement in group and classroom interventions. School

level, in particular, elementary school, was a significant background variable, ( $\beta = .50$ ,  $t = 5.22$ ,  $p < .001$ ). More specifically, elementary school counselors reported being more involved in group and classroom interventions than high school counselors. Since elementary school counselors tend to engage in more classroom and group counseling interventions than middle and high school counselors, this finding was not unexpected. Specific knowledge of homelessness ( $\beta = .23$ ,  $t = 3.18$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and perceptions of advocacy role ( $\beta = .21$ ,  $t = 5.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were both significantly related to school counselors' involvement in classroom and group interventions. Other independent variables such as knowledge of McKinney-Vento and self-efficacy were not significant variables predicting involvement in classroom and group interventions (see Table 17 for all variables).

Table 17

*Interventions: Group and Classroom Regression Analysis*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
				.358	.333
Years as school counselor	-.003	.006	-.025		
Amount of students at school	.000	.000	-.046		
Amount of homeless students	.002	.001	.074		

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Amount of training after graduate school	.089	.049	.106
Amount of training during graduate school	.094	.054	.076
School Level – Elem	.463	.088	.238***
School Level – Middle	.115	.103	.048
Region – South	.463	.447	.245
Region – West	.376	.451	.164
Region – Northeast	.403	.448	.167
Region – Midwest	.505	.448	.227
School Counselor Role as Liaison	-.053	.084	-.084
Specific knowledge of homelessness	.234	.074	.236**
Self-efficacy	.039	.064	.040
Knowledge of McKinney-Vento	.004	.073	.005
Perceptions of advocacy role	.211	.042	.230***

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*Note:* The reference category for Region is Other, School Level is High School, and for School Counselor Role is Not Homeless Liaison

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

***Involvement in collaborative relationships.*** The independent and background variables explained 28.1% of the variance, ( $R^2 = .31$ ,  $F(16, 404) = 11.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ), in involvement in collaborative relationships. For involvement in collaborative relationships, self-efficacy ( $\beta = .25$ ,  $t = 3.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and perceptions of advocacy role ( $\beta = .14$ ,  $t = 3.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were both significant predictors. Number of homeless students ( $\beta = .12$ ,  $t = 2.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was the only significant background variables predicting school counselors' involvement in collaborative interventions (see Table 18).

Table 18

*Interventions: Collaborative Relationships Regression Analysis*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
				.308	.281
Years as school counselor	.003	.006	.026		
Amount of students at school	-1.514E	.000	-.023		
Amount of homeless students	.003	.001	.112*		
Amount of training after graduate school	.052	.052	.062		



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Amount of training	.089	.056	.072
during graduate school			
School Level – Elem	-.021	.091	-.011
School Level – Middle	.186	.108	.077
Region – South	.553	.464	.292
Region – West	.503	.468	.220
Region – Northeast	.471	.464	.196
Region – Midwest	.305	.464	.138
School Counselor Role	-.069	.087	-.035
as Liaison			
Specific knowledge of	.149	.076	.150
homelessness			
Self-efficacy	.255	.067	.263***
Knowledge of	-.047	.076	-.049
McKinney-Vento			
Perceptions of	.141	.043	.153**
advocacy role			

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*Note:* The reference category for Region is Other, School Level is High School, and for School Counselor Role is Not Homeless Liaison

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

***Involvement in training interventions.*** The independent and background variables accounted for 47.3% of the variance, ( $R^2 = .47$ ,  $F(16, 405) = 24.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ), in involvement in training interventions. Training interventions is the only variable for which school counselors' role as a homeless liaison was a significant variable ( $\beta = .22$ ,  $t = 3.08$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This finding may be indicative of the role of the homeless liaison. An important responsibility of the homeless liaison is to ensure that students who are homeless have their needs met in the school. This requires them to provide information for faculty and staff, which in turn, may lead them to provide more training. Amount of training after graduate school was significantly related to school counselors' involvement in training interventions ( $\beta = .21$ ,  $t = 4.05$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The independent variables that were significantly related to involvement in training include self-efficacy ( $\beta = .16$ ,  $t = 3.16$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and knowledge of McKinney-Vento ( $\beta = .25$ ,  $t = 4.29$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This is the only variable where knowledge of McKinney-Vento was significant. This was expected considering that training others would require thorough understanding of McKinney-Vento. Those who are providing training would be expected to feel more comfortable with the provisions under McKinney-Vento and therefore may report higher levels of knowledge on these policies. Specific knowledge and perceptions of advocacy role did not have significant relationships with this variable (see Table 19).

Table 19

*Interventions: Training Regression Analysis*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
				.493	.473
Years as school counselor	.002	.004	.015		
Amount of students at school	.000	.000	.011		
Amount of homeless students	.001	.001	.021		
Amount of training after graduate school	.161	.040	.211***		
Amount of training during graduate school	.066	.044	.059		
School Level – Elem	.127	.071	.072		
School Level – Middle	.089	.083	.041		
Region – South	.255	.361	.148		
Region – West	.110	.364	.053		
Region – Northeast	.215	.362	.098		

Region – Midwest	.149	.361	.074
School Counselor Role as Liaison	.141	.067	.078*
Specific knowledge of homelessness	.008	.060	.009
Self-efficacy	.163	.052	.185**
Knowledge of McKinney-Vento	.252	.059	.288***
Perceptions of advocacy role	.054	.034	.064

*Note:* The reference category for Region is Other, School Level is High School, and for School Counselor Role is Not Homeless Liaison

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

### Summary

The analyses of the participant responses to the present study suggested several relationships between independent variables (i.e., specific knowledge of homelessness, self-efficacy to work with students who are homeless, knowledge of McKinney-Vento, and perceptions of advocacy role), background variables (i.e., number of students who are homeless, total student enrollment, region, school level, years of experience, amount of training after graduate school, amount of training during graduate school, school counselors' role in working with homeless students), and dependent variables (involvement in partnerships and involvement in recommended interventions). Factor analyses suggested that school counselors' involvement in both interventions and in

partnership practices could be broken down further into several types of involvement. For involvement in partnerships, these types include involvement in the community to support students who are homeless, involvement in the school to provide services for students who are homeless, and involvement in training and teaming to increase support for students who are homeless. For school counselors' involvement in recommended interventions, these types include involvement in individual and school-based interventions, in-group and classroom interventions, in collaborative relationships, and in training interventions. The relationships between these types of involvement, the independent, and background variables suggested that several variables may be related to involvement in interventions and in partnerships. The following section will further discuss these results.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that several important variables are related to school counselors' work with students who are homeless. The following section will begin with a discussion of the major findings of this study in light of the current research, followed by important implications for school counselor practice, preparation of school counselors, and future research. The section will conclude with a discussion of the limitations of the study.

### **Examination of Major Findings**

This exploratory study examined the variables that were related to school counselors' involvement in partnership practices and recommended interventions to support students who are homeless. The results indicated that there are several variables related to school counselors' involvement in practices to support students who are homeless. The variables that appear to be consistently related to school counselors' involvement in recommended interventions and partnership practices include school counselors' self-efficacy to work with students who are homeless, specific knowledge about homelessness, and perceptions of their advocacy role regarding students who are homeless. In addition, certain background variables: number of students who are homeless, amount of training after graduate school, and amount of training during graduate school demonstrated significant relationships with both involvement in partnerships and involvement in recommended interventions.

### **School Counselors' Involvement in Partnerships and Interventions**

Findings from descriptive analyses this study indicate that school counselors are engaging in some services to meet the needs of students who are homeless. Nevertheless,

they appear to neglect some equally important practices. School counselors reported involvement in interventions recommended in the literature on homelessness (Baggerly & Borkowski, 2004; Daniels, 1992; Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011; Grothaus et al., 2011; Strawser, et al., 2000) such as providing consultation to teachers and parents, academic support, individual counseling, and referrals to community agencies. These are all meaningful practices that support the needs of students experiencing homelessness. Additionally, the school counselors in this study reported involvement in various partnership practices to support students who are homeless as recommended in the literature (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007; Bryan & Griffin, 2010; Daniels, 1992; Grothaus et al., 2011). These practices include school-based services such as coordinating the integration of community services into the school, organizing student support programs, working with the school to reach out to the community, and teaming with school staff and the community to provide services.

Although school counselors reported involvement in several of the recommended practices, particularly school-based practices, to support students who are homeless, they reported less frequent involvement in several other recommended interventions and partnership practices. Many of the participants in this study reported low involvement in services that required more outreach and partnering outside of the school day and school walls. Despite the recommendation of the importance of school counselors' involvement in systemic partnerships that build connections between the school, family, and community (Bemak, 2000; Bryan, 2005; Bryan & Henry, 2008, 2012; Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Swick, 2000), many counselors in this study reported low involvement in visiting shelters, communicating with shelter staff, visiting homes, providing workshops

for teachers, and providing afterschool programs. These findings are consistent with general studies on school counselor involvement in partnerships (Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004, 2007; Bryan & Griffin, 2010). Additionally, school counselors reported low levels of involvement in collaborating with the community to increase access to services, training school staff to conduct shelter visits, training staff to build school-family-community partnerships, and training staff to understand the provisions under McKinney-Vento. Since homelessness impacts all systems in a student's life (Anooshian, 2005; Aviles & Helfrich, 2004; Daniels, 1992; Stronge & Victor-Reed, 2000), these types of partnership involvement are important practices that assist in building systemic support systems for students who are homeless. Although many school counselors may be reluctant to conduct shelter or home visits, this type of collaboration is important to gain a better understanding of the child's home life and to form stronger relationships with families, by connecting with them in an environment where they may be more comfortable (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007). Additionally, these visits may allow for school counselors to work with families and shelters to determine more opportunities for collaboration to support their specific needs. Unfortunately, many school counselors face large caseloads and may find it challenging to balance their required workload with increased caseloads. These barriers may lead them to have limited time to provide outreach programs to support children and families who are homeless.

After close examination of the types of involvement, there seemed to be four types of recommended interventions that school counselors reported being involved in to support students who are homeless. The first type of recommended interventions was involvement in individual and school-based interventions (e.g., academic support,



individual counseling, consulting with teachers, and referrals to the community). The second type was involvement in collaborative relationships, which included shelter visits, home visits, communication with shelter staff, after-school programs, and tutoring and mentoring. The third type was involvement in group and classroom interventions (e.g., classroom guidance, behavioral skills training, career exploration, and small group counseling). The last type of recommended interventions was involvement in training interventions (e.g., educating parents on the McKinney-Vento Act and providing training and workshops for teachers). Based on the findings in this study, school counselors seem to be more involved in individual and school-based services, and less involved in collaborative relationships and training interventions. It may be that school counselors are more prepared to provide individual and school-based services such as providing academic support, individual counseling, consulting with teachers, and referrals to community. They may also feel more comfortable providing interventions in their school, and less comfortable reaching outside of the school walls; at the same time, they may not feel that they have the time to collaborate with those in the community. However, school counselors who want to serve students who are homeless in a systemic manner will need to incorporate the types of interventions that reach beyond the school walls (Aviles & Helfrich, 2004; Nabors et al., 2004; Miller, 2009a, 2009b).

Regarding involvement in school-family-community partnerships, there appears to be three types of involvement in partnership practices to support students who are homeless. These items fell in somewhat similar structure to the intervention types discussed in the previous paragraph. These include school counselors' (a) involvement in the community to support students who are homeless, (b) involvement in teaming and

training, and (c) involvement in the school to provide services for students who are homeless. Involvement in the community includes partnerships that focus on collaborating with community members and coordinating programs in the community. Involvement in teaming and training includes items that focus on training parents and staff to support students who are homeless and teaming to work together to increase involvement. Finally, involvement in school-based partnerships includes those where collaborative relationships are formed within the school to support students who are homeless.

The partnership types to support students who are homeless in this study were somewhat different than those found in Bryan and Griffin's (2010) study, which used the same items to assess general school counselor involvement in partnerships. In Bryan and Griffin (2010), the items fell into three dimensions or types of involvement: school-home partnerships/collaboration, school-community collaboration, and collaborative teams/interprofessional collaboration. However, in the current study, the item structure was different. One reason that items from the current study may not have followed a similar pattern structure to the Bryan and Griffin (2010) study is the focus on homelessness in the current study. The SCIPS items were all adjusted slightly to focus on school counselors' specific involvement in partnership practices to support students who are homeless. Previous research using the SCIPS to examine school counselor involvement with linguistically diverse children and families support the notion that the dimensions underlying involvement in partnerships may be context-specific (Aydin, 2011).

The current study corroborates the findings of Gaenzle and Bryan's (2011) study that suggested that school counselors are more involved in school-based services such as individual counseling, academic support, referrals to community resources, consultation with teachers, consultation with parents, and career exploration to support students who are homeless. Across all types of involvement in recommended interventions or partnership practices to support students who are homeless, those types that require reaching outside of the school seem to result in lower levels of school counselor involvement than those that are school-based. As mentioned, these school-based approaches are important interventions that should be continued in the school to support students. However, integrating more collaborative and systemic approaches will assist in removing barriers faced by students who are homeless. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), systemic approaches are necessary because development occurs in systems and not just individually. Therefore to facilitate the healthy development of students who are homeless, involvement in systemic interventions, such as those practices outside of the school, are important to the success of students who are homeless.

### **Variables Related to School Counselors' Involvement in Partnerships and Recommended Interventions to Support Students who are Homeless**

Findings from this study revealed that several variables are related to school counselors' involvement in partnerships and in recommended interventions to support students who are homeless. The background variable, number of students who are homeless, had a significant relationship with nearly all types of school counselor involvement in recommended interventions and partnership practices. As anticipated, school counselors who reported having higher numbers of students who were homeless

on their caseload had greater involvement in recommended interventions and in partnership practices. Conversely, school level, region, and years of experience, were not significant predictors of involvement in recommended interventions and partnerships, suggesting that these variables may not play a major role in school counselors' involvement in recommended interventions and partnerships to support students who are homeless. There may be several reasons that region, and years of experience are not related to involvement. In cities across the country, the number of homeless individuals and families is increasing (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2011). Therefore, regardless of region, school counselors may be seeing students who are homeless entering their schools at similar rates, and may be struggling equally regardless of school level or years of practice to meet the needs of these students. Given that few school counselors appear to have been trained to work with students who are homeless, large numbers of school counselors may be working with these students without the requisite knowledge and skills. They may be struggling to determine what practices, whether individual, school-based, and collaborative approaches, work best to serve students who are homeless.

School level was a significant predictor of school counselors' involvement in classroom and group interventions. Elementary school counselors were more involved than high school counselors in group and classroom interventions and in partnerships in the school. This may be a reflection of the role of the elementary school counselor, who tends to spend more time on counseling-related tasks such as in the classroom and group setting and on school-wide interventions, than high school counselors, who may spend more time on non-counseling tasks that are more administrative in nature (Hardesty &

Dillard, 1994; Scarborough, 2005). Additionally, with the structure of the school day, it may be more challenging for a high school counselor to get into the classroom.

This study further suggests that years of experience did not have a significant relationship to any of the variables in this study. These findings were not supported by Gaenzle and Bryan's (2011) study, which suggested that years of experience and school level had a relationship with school counselors' knowledge of McKinney-Vento. Since this study includes an improvement on the earlier instrument used in Gaenzle and Bryan's study, it may provide a more accurate measure of the relationship between years of experience and interventions to support students who are homeless. However, this relationship will need further exploration.

**School counselors' preparation and knowledge to work with students who are homeless.** This study examined school counselors' preparation and knowledge pertaining to their work with students who are homeless. The variables measuring school counselors' knowledge and preparation comprised three factors or components: self-efficacy to work with students who are homeless, knowledge of McKinney-Vento, and specific knowledge about homelessness. Findings from this study support the notion that preparation and knowledge are important contributors to school counselors' involvement in practices to support students who are homeless and are corroborated by an earlier study (Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011). School counselors who reported higher specific knowledge about homelessness and self-efficacy to work with students who are homeless reported more frequent involvement on many of the recommended interventions and partnership practices. These results suggest that in order for school counselors to implement important interventions and partnerships to support students who are homeless, they need

to have specific knowledge about homelessness and feel self-efficacious about working with students who are homeless.

School counselor self-efficacy in working with students who are homeless was related to all of the types of involvement in partnership and recommended interventions. Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as the belief in one's capabilities. Self-efficacy in working with students who are homeless means that school counselors feel that they are prepared to address the needs of students who are homeless. School counselors who report higher levels of self-efficacy in working with students who are homeless, also report higher levels of involvement in partnership practices and in recommended interventions. This finding is supported by previous research, which indicated a similar relationship between school counselors' self-efficacy about partnerships and their involvement in partnership practices (Bryan & Griffin, 2010). In Bryan and Griffin's (2010) study, school counselors who reported higher levels of self-efficacy about partnerships, reported increased involvement in school-home partnerships, school-community collaboration, and overall partnership involvement.

Based on the results of this study, specific knowledge about homelessness such as knowing the definition of homelessness, the location of students who were homeless, and the role of the homeless liaison, seemed to be important in predicting involvement in recommended interventions and partnership practices. Knowledge about McKinney-Vento and its policies did not seem related to school counselor involvement in recommended interventions and partnership practices. It is possible that specific types of knowledge that comes with being directly connected with homelessness (e.g. knowing the liaison or location of shelteres) may be more important in serving the homeless than

knowing the policy. This finding may also suggest that counselors report knowing the policies under McKinney-Vento, but may not know them well enough to translate them into practice.

Preparation to work with students who are homeless is also an important predictor of school counselors' involvement in recommended interventions and partnership practices to support students who are homeless. These findings are corroborated by Gaenzle and Bryan's (2011) study that revealed that school counselors who reported having more training to work with students who are homeless, had higher engagement in advocacy and provision of services. Similarly, in the current study, school counselors who reported having more training during and after graduate school also reported more frequent involvement in recommended interventions and partnership practices to support students who are homeless. This finding further emphasizes the importance of preparation for school counselors in training as well as those already in the field in order to adequately address the needs of students who are homeless. Rogers et al. (2012) recommended that through training psychologists at the graduate level to work with individuals who were homeless, students developed the necessary skills to provide services for them. This finding can be applied to school counselors, who would benefit from working with students who are homeless during their graduate programs.

Despite the importance of preparation, the majority of school counselors in this study reported having no training to work with students who are homeless while in graduate school. More counselors reported receiving training after graduate school, but the numbers were still relatively low. The majority of counselors in the study reported that they wanted more training; yet, they also reported that they felt they were prepared to

work with students who are homeless. This discrepancy in school counselors' reports may be a reflection of socially desirable responses, that is, they may want the researchers to feel they were prepared to work with students who are homeless, despite not having training. Alternately, this discrepancy may also indicate that they are not aware of what preparation is necessary to work with this population.

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that school counselors may need more preparation and knowledge in order to implement the services that students who are homeless need. When school counselors are prepared during graduate school or receive training after they graduate, they seem more likely to be involved in recommended interventions and partnerships to support these students. The current study highlights the importance of a model of counselor preparation that incorporates knowledge and skills competencies on homelessness that enhance school counselors' self-efficacy to provide meaningful interventions and supportive systems to meet the needs of students who are homeless.

**School counselors' perceptions of their advocacy role in working with students who are homeless.** The ASCA (2010) position statement on school counselors' role in working with students who are homeless suggests that school counselors are advocates for students who are homeless. They work with students to help remove the barriers they face in their education. In their advocacy role, school counselors ensure that students are provided with transportation to and from school, enrolled without trouble into new schools if they transfer, and placed in the appropriate classes (ASCA, 2010). ASCA also suggested that school counselors provide information to families and staff on the McKinney-Vento policies and ensure that students receive the support they need. In



essence, they become a voice for students who are homeless and help students to develop their own voices in the school system.

In the current study, those school counselors who reported stronger perceptions of their advocacy role in working with students who are homeless (i.e., they reported stronger agreement that they were a voice for students who are homeless) reported significantly higher involvement on nearly every type of partnership practice. Additionally, school counselors' perception of their advocacy role was related to overall involvement in recommended interventions, collaborative relationships, and training to support students who are homeless. From these results, it seems that advocacy in working with students who are homeless is an important variable in school counselors' involvement in partnerships and practices that involve collaboration and teaming with others. Since being an advocate often requires school counselors to partner with others to provide supportive interventions to help students become empowered (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007), these findings may reflect the role of advocacy in collaborative practices. This finding may also suggest that school counselors, who perceive themselves as advocates, recognize the barriers and injustices faced by students who are homeless and are therefore more inclined to engage in services to ensure that they break down these barriers.

Since both the current study and the Gaenzle and Bryan (2011) study corroborate the findings that advocacy plays a role in school counselors' work with students who are homeless, it is imperative that school counselors become advocates and learn how to use their voices to remove barriers faced by students who are homeless. However, some factors, such as the number of homeless students on a school counselors' caseload, school

counselors' school type (elementary, middle, and high school), and amount of training may influence school counselors' ability to advocate and provide services (Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011). This again suggests the importance of counselor preparation that specifically prepares school counselors to advocate for students who are homeless.

### **Implications**

The results of this study suggest several implications for school counselors' practice and preparation when working with students who are homeless. The relationships between the variables in this study revealed that school counselors' involvement in recommended interventions and partnership practices to support students who are homeless was related to school counselors' self-efficacy, perceptions of specific knowledge of homelessness, perceptions of their advocacy role, and amount of training during and after graduate school. This research also suggests several implications for future research. Following is a discussion of the implications for school counselor practice, preparation, and directions for future research.

#### **Implications for School Counseling Practice**

This study highlights the need for school counselors to have specific knowledge on homelessness and to perceive themselves as advocates for students who are homeless. This information suggests that school counselors need to increase their knowledge and their advocacy practices to provide supportive services for students who are homeless. Further, these results reveal that school counselors have low involvement in collaborative practices to support students who are homeless. The findings suggest a need for counselors to step outside of the school walls and collaborate with the family and community stakeholders to provide systemic supports for students who are homeless.

Previous research has suggested the importance of school counselors having specific knowledge on homelessness and knowledge of McKinney-Vento to support students who are homeless (Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011). In order to reach out to other key stakeholders in the lives of students who are homeless such as parents, teachers, and administrators, school counselors need to know the specific barriers these students face, their role in providing services, and the policies under McKinney-Vento that impact these students' academically (Strawser, et al., 2000). Knowledge of these issues will help to facilitate relationships with stakeholders who can help to coordinate services for students. Through collaboration with stakeholders in the school, in the community, and with families, school counselors can provide information on the McKinney-Vento policies and specific issues faced by students who are homeless. They can help families understand their rights and help them to advocate for their children to receive the appropriate services.

**Advocacy and collaborative practices to support students who are homeless.**

As advocates and leaders in the school system, school counselors play an important role in supporting students. The current study suggests that school counselors perceptions of their advocacy role may be especially important in supporting students who are homeless, More specifically, school counselors who perceive themselves as advocates may be more likely to be involved in recommended interventions and partnership practices to support students who are homeless. Being an advocate requires taking a social justice approach to school counseling. In this type of approach, school counselors focus on the socio-cultural and environmental issues (such as homelessness) that impact students' achievement, challenge barriers and oppressive practices, change existing policies (such

enrollment policies that may hinder a student who is homeless to enter a school), build approaches that help students to become empowered, and provide interventions and services during school, after school, and in the evening or on weekends that all families can access (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). School counselors who are advocates also help students to recognize the barriers they face and be able to advocate for themselves (Lee, 2007). These types of approaches require school counselors to think systemically and to build partnerships with the school, family, and community.

Systemic approaches, such as school-family-community partnerships (Bryan & Henry, 2008, 2012), are important ways for counselors to span boundaries and build supportive interventions that help students who are homeless in all facets of their lives. The lack of school counselor involvement in these types of practices, as suggested by this study, highlight the importance of school counselors' increasing their involvement in systemic approaches when working with students who are homeless. When reaching out to the community, school counselors can start by first being aware of the resources available to families near their school (Grothaus, et al., 2011). School counselors may develop a community asset map that lists what resources exist in the school community. Through this approach, they will be able to refer families to various resources or collaborate with the organizations and support systems in the community to provide services within the school walls and outside in the community (Griffin & Farris, 2010). Community assets that benefit families experiencing homelessness may include shelters, health care centers, community recreation centers, libraries, food banks, day care, and job support. Having these resources on hand is an important way that counselors can reach out to families and build helpful relationships.

When providing services for students who are homeless, other staff, such as administrators, social workers, teachers, homeless liaisons, and families need to be involved (Miller, 2011). In order to provide comprehensive services for students who are homeless, it is particularly important for school counselors, who are not assigned the role themselves, to build a collaborative relationship with the school's homeless liaison. Since the homeless liaison is well-versed in the McKinney-Vento policies and is in charge of identifying students who are homeless and ensuring their rights are being met by the school (U.S. Department of Education, 2004), counselors should work with this staff member to coordinate programs to support students who are homeless. In this study, involvement in recommended interventions and partnership practices were related to school counselors' perceptions of specific knowledge of homelessness, which included knowledge of the role of the homeless liaison. This knowledge seems to have an important impact on school counselors' involvement in practices. By teaming with the homeless liaison, counselors will be better able to spread information regarding homelessness around the school, so that there is earlier identification of students who are homeless and teachers can tailor their practices to work with these students.

Another collaborative role for school counselors is to reach out to shelters and work with them to learn how to serve children and youth to provide academic support. As previously mentioned, many shelters are unable to provide the necessary services to support students who are homeless (Witkin, et al., 2005). School counselors can actively coordinate services in the school and community that are lacking in shelters, such as before and after school care, mentoring, tutoring, and academic support services (Hicks-Coolick, et al., 2003). School counselors who reported low levels of involvement in these

types of services should consider ways to coordinate and collaborate with the community to provide these types of interventions.

School counselors can also collaborate with shelters to provide information to parents on their educational rights (Miller, 2009). Counselors can provide workshops for parents to help them to become empowered by teaching them skills to navigate the school system and to provide academic support for their children. School counselors may have to go into the community to meet parents where they are in order to provide this information. Since this study and Gaenzle and Bryan (2011) suggested that many counselors are not providing these valuable services and visiting shelters, school counselors need to increase their involvement in these practices in order to build a stronger systemic network for students who are homeless.

When building relationships with stakeholders, counselors can facilitate open communication between parents and teachers. Building a cultural bridge where both parties feel comfortable being open and sharing is important to the academic success of students (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007). Amatea and West-Olatunji (2007) recommended that counselors mediate the cultural differences that can exist between the circumstances of a family experiencing struggles such as homelessness and the barriers they may face in the school. This may be challenging since both parties are coming from different viewpoints. However, school counselors can work with each side to help them to understand one another and work more effectively together.

School counselors with large case loads may not have the time to run programs outside of the school, but they can have an active role in coordinating these types of interventions. Coordination of programs and services is a vital role of school counselors

to meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness (Strawser, et al., 2000). To ensure that the McKinney-Vento Act is effective in schools, school counselors can coordinate services, such as transportation and enrollment processes. Under McKinney-Vento, schools are required to provide transportation for students to their school of origin, and may provide additional transportation to before and after school activities. School counselors can also coordinate registration and enrollment processes for students who are homeless. Although, they may not be responsible for registering and enrolling students themselves, they can ensure that the process is smooth for families experiencing homelessness. By having a clear enrollment process and coordinating record transfers from the student's previous school, counselors can play a large role in ensuring the transition is seamless. This may also include helping to coordinate the transition of records to the student's next school, if he or she moves again.

### **Implications for School Counselor Preparation**

School counselor preparation was an important variable in this study that led to more frequent involvement in nearly all involvement practices to support students who are homeless. There is only one study to date that specifically addresses school counselor preparation for working with students who are homeless (Gaenzle & Bryan, 2011). Both the Gaenzle and Bryan (2011) study and the current study indicated that school counselors were underprepared to work with students who are homeless. Since the majority of the participants in the current study (63.8%) reported not having any training to work with students who are homeless during graduate school and the majority of the participants reported that they wanted more training to work with students who are homeless (78.9%), this appears to be an important topic that should be integrated into

counselor education programs and professional development in the field. Since preparation leads to a stronger understanding of the issues faced by students who are homeless and the policies and interventions that can help support them, school counselor preparation to work with students who are homeless is an important way to help students who are homeless. School counselors who have more training may feel more empowered to be involved in recommended interventions and practices.

One suggested approach for counselor preparation to work with students who are homeless comes from the training of psychologists. In one study, graduate students in psychology assisted in conducting research with individuals who were homeless in a faith-based homeless organization (Rogers et al., 2012). In this approach, doctoral level students provided brief assessments with these individuals and were provided with supervision throughout the process. This experience exposed the students to the realities and challenges of being homeless and the opportunity to build a collaborative relationship with a community organization. A similar approach may also be successful in preparing school counselors to work with students who are homeless. Universities can form collaborative partnerships with agencies that provide supports for families who are homeless, and be able to provide mutually beneficial services, such as individual and group counseling or mentorship services. Students can be required during their pre-practicum semester to volunteer in such programs.

School counselor preparation programs can also integrate education on homelessness into coursework, such as a multicultural class. During this class, professors can educate counselors-in-training on the culture of poverty and the experience of oppression by those without sufficient income. Students can learn how poverty impacts



other cultural elements, such as race, gender, and disability status. Through the integration of this topic into other coursework, students will gain better insight on the experience of families and on their own privilege so that they can be more effectively prepared to serve students living in poverty and experiencing homelessness.

Since specific knowledge and advocacy are both important factors in providing services for students who are homeless, counselor preparation programs need to include education on understanding policy. School counselors need to be aware of the policies under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in order to better serve students who are homeless (ASCA, 2010; Grothaus et al., 2011; Strawser et al., 2000). By understanding the definitions of homelessness and the requirements under McKinney-Vento, they will be able to ensure that students who are homeless receive the services that they deserve. Learning about the McKinney-Vento policies may be included in practicum, internship, and/or supervision in order for students to see first-hand how the act is implemented within a school setting.

Counselor education programs need to integrate education on how to work with families from lower socioeconomic statuses (Baggerly, 2006). This can be taught across the curriculum in introductory courses and through multicultural counseling classes. Additionally, school counselors in training should be exposed to various settings during internship and practicum or required service learning (Baggerly, 2006) where they work with students from a range of backgrounds. While at these sites, students will receive regular supervision and can process their experience of working with students who are from lower SES backgrounds and learn ways to help them work through the barriers they face in the school system. This topic can also be integrated into career counseling and

human growth and development classes, where the instructor can discuss how children and youth are impacted throughout their development by their family's economic situation.

One of the major areas of involvement lacking in this study was involvement in collaboration and partnerships outside of the school to meet the needs of students who are homeless. Training for school counselors on how to provide collaborative partnerships is lacking across counselor education programs (Bemak, 2000). Since many of the academic issues that students who are homeless face are related to their experiences outside of the school, school counselors should provide systemic services that involve the school, family, and community. School counselors should learn leadership skills that allow them to collaborate and build interdisciplinary partnerships when they are in the school setting during their graduate program (Bemak, 2000). In order to learn how to build partnerships, school counseling students need to be exposed to curricula that provides them with the knowledge and skills to develop partnerships in schools (Bryan, 2003; Bryan & Griffin, 2010). This may include assignments that require them to identify community resources or build an evidence-based intervention where they reach out to the community to provide a service.

Through being prepared with the important information to work with students who are homeless, school counselors can appropriately provide services that meet students' needs. When school counselors feel they are prepared, they will gain a sense of self-efficacy in their preparation to work with students who are homeless. Self-efficacy in preparation to work with students who are homeless was a variable that had a significant relationship with involvement in interventions and partnerships. One study suggested that

self-efficacy was linked to higher awareness of the achievement gap and reporting narrowing of this gap (Bordenhorn, Wolfe, & Airen, 2010). Bryan and Griffin (2010) also indicated that self-efficacy was linked with involvement in partnerships. This suggests that although preparing counselors to work with students who are homeless is important, it is imperative that they feel prepared. Simply providing training may not be sufficient for school counselors to feel confident in ensuring that appropriate services are available to help students who are homeless. The preparation that they receive should be high quality and allow them to learn the policies and be able to practice applying effective interventions.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Since this study is exploratory in nature, one of the purposes is to guide future research. The results of this study lead to several other research questions and areas to examine. First, since school counselor preparation was a significant variable related to involvement in partnerships and interventions to support students who are homeless, further research needs to be conducted on the current preparation practices of counselor education programs and the training that is currently being provided for counselors already in the school setting. Information is needed on the effectiveness of the preparation and whether the practices lead to increased support for students who are homeless. In particular, it seems that many counselors are not frequently engaging in collaborative systemic practices to support students who are homeless, so it is important to see how counselors are being trained in partnership and collaborative practices and if these interventions are effective. More specifically, partnership practices that reach out to shelters or other housing locations should be further examined, as well as the role of the

school counselor in leading these collaborative practices. Moreover, mentorship, tutoring, and other after-school programs to support students who are homeless need to be explored.

Empirical evidence is needed on the effectiveness of specific programs implemented by school counselors. Baggerly and Borkowski (2004) demonstrated that interventions such as classroom lessons, small groups, and individual counseling decreased problematic behavior for a student who was homeless, but more research needs to be conducted on these specific practices and others to determine their effectiveness in supporting students who are homeless. Mixed methods research may be effective in looking at specific programs and determining how they are functioning within the school setting while gathering data on more specific programs that are being run in schools.

Along with specific interventions, school counselor advocacy practices to work with students who are homeless should be further examined. Since school counselors who perceived themselves as advocates for students who are homeless were more involved in partnership practices and interventions, advocacy may be a critical piece of school counselors' role in working with students who are homeless. Finally, school counselors' attitudes towards students who are homeless would be a potential area of exploration.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study. As anticipated, despite being sent out 12 times, the survey received a low response rate that was under 20% (N = 431). There may be a few reasons why this survey elicited a low response rate. First, the researcher received several emails from selected participants reporting that they were retired and

therefore not eligible for the study. This suggests that despite being selected to participate in the study, they were not able to respond to the items that required a counselor to currently be practicing and therefore chose not to fill out the survey. This may also indicate that although the directory stated the selected contact was an elementary, middle, or high school counselor, the listing may not have been updated at that time and the individual may not be currently in that position and therefore chose not to participate in the study. Further, several school counselors replied to the researcher stating that they did not have any students who were homeless on their caseload and therefore determined that they were not eligible for this study. After receiving a few emails like this, the researcher adjusted the invitation email stating that counselors who had no students who are homeless were encouraged to take this survey. However, this adjustment was made later in the data collection process, after several rounds, and selected participants may already have opted out of the survey.

Another limitation to this study is generalizability to all school counselors in the United States. Since the sample selected for this study was only school counselors who were listed in the ASCA directory, the results of this study may not be generalizable to the whole population. Those counselors included in the directory may be more active and informed because they are a member of a professional organization focused on school counseling. ASCA has also put out a position statement on school counselor's role with students who are homeless, so those in the organization may be engaging in those practices. However, as mentioned previously, school counselors were represented from nearly every state across the country, so the sample may be representative of regional

practices. Since this is an exploratory study, these results are still very important to the literature and should inform future research on this topic.

The lack of prior research available on this topic is also a limitation. The survey used in this study was based on limited data currently available on children and youth who are homeless and theory on child development, but it may not accurately reflect what is actually occurring in the school system or the role of the school counselor who works with students who are homeless. The survey may have missed critical aspects of practice to support this population. This is also only the second study that KSHSS survey was used, which makes it challenging to determine the validity and reliability of the instrument. Additionally, the addition of the SCIPS items was not included in the previous study using the KSHSS, and the SCIPS items were slightly adjusted from the original version of the instrument to focus on partnerships to support students who are homeless.

These results are based on self-report, which may lead to a bias in responses. Participants may view their knowledge and preparation as higher than it actually is to work with the homeless population. Additionally, participants were asked to report their involvement in interventions and partnerships. They may have been more inclined to report higher ratings on involvement to provide more socially desirable responses for the researcher than what they are actually doing in the school.

Finally, school counselors' advocacy role in working with student who are homeless was significant in many of the variables in this study. Despite this important finding, these results were only based on one item in the survey (I am a voice for students

who are homeless). In the future, a multi-item measure of school counselors' advocacy role may produce more reliable results.

## APPENDIX A

### Knowledge, Skills and Practices for Working with Students who are Homeless: Survey for School Counselors

Why is this research being done?

This is a research project being conducted by Stacey Gaenzle, for the purposes of her dissertation, with support from her advisor, Dr. Julia Bryan, at the University of Maryland, College Park. As a school counselor, we are inviting you to participate in this research project so we can find out ways to better improve school counselor's work with students who are homeless. Currently there is little information on school counselors and their work with students who are homeless. This study is attempting to fill in that gap and provide information for school counselors.

What will I be asked to do?

In order to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer a series of scaled, multiple choice and fill in the blanks questions. Participation in the survey is voluntary and should take 20 minutes to complete. When you begin the survey, you will be asked to answer several questions related to students who are homeless in schools. You will be asked to answer the questions to the best of your knowledge. You may stop at any time throughout taking the survey.

What are the risks of this research? What about confidentiality?

In order to protect your confidentiality, you will not be asked to provide any identifiable information that can be connected to your survey responses. When you clicked on the Survey Monkey link, it was not connected to your email address. Therefore, all of your responses will not be connected to any identifiable information. In order to minimize the risk of confidentiality breaches, the researcher will not be recording any identifying information (e.g., names) from the ASCA data base, where the researcher got your email address.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, however, your participation will help the researcher learn more about homelessness and the intervention and knowledge of school counselors who work with homeless students. We hope that in the future, other school counselors and children will benefit from this study.

Do I have to be in this research? May I stop participating at any time?



Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

What if I have questions?

The research is being conducted by Stacey Gaenzle in the Counseling and Personnel Services Department at the University of Maryland, College Park. If you have any questions about the study itself, please contact Dr. Julia Bryan at [jabryan@umd.edu](mailto:jabryan@umd.edu) 3214 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20740..

This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

## APPENDIX B

**Knowledge, Skills and Practices for Working with Students who are Homeless:****Survey for School Counselors**

DIRECTIONS: The following survey is on the topic of students who are homeless. Please take some time to answer each item. The survey should take you 15-20 minutes to complete. You will not be asked for any identifying information. Therefore, all responses to this survey are anonymous.

DEFINITION: This survey is about your work with students who are homeless. For your information, the following is the definition for students who are homeless:

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (2004) defines children and youth who are homeless as those who are sharing housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (sometimes referred to as doubled-up); living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; living in emergency or transitional shelters; abandoned in hospitals; or awaiting foster care placement (p. 2). This additionally includes children or youth who reside in a location that is not suitable for humans and those that live in places such as in cars, substandard housing or places like bus or train stations and migratory children who fall into any of the above descriptions (McKinney-Vento, 2004).

## Background Information

1) In what school level do you currently work? (please select the level that fits best)

Elementary

Middle

High

2) How many years have you been a school counselor? (Numeric Entry)

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3) Approximately how many students attend your school? (Numeric Entry)

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4) Approximately how many students who are homeless attend your school? Note: If no students who are homeless attend your school, please write in "0".

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5) In what state is your school located? (Drop-down menu of states)

6) Approximately how much preparation or training have you received to work with students who are homeless AFTER GRADUATE SCHOOL?

- No preparation/training 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- Extensive preparation/training 5

7) What type of preparation or training have you received to work with students who are homeless AFTER GRADUATE SCHOOL? (If you have not received training, please mark the box for "I have not received training")

- Received in-service training on homelessness while at my school
- Attended required professional development outside of school
- Attended voluntary professional development outside of school
- Participated in a webinar
- Other
- I have not received education or training to work with students who are homeless.

8) Approximately how much preparation or training did you receive work with students who are homeless WHILE YOU WERE IN GRADUATE SCHOOL?

- No preparation/training 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- Extensive preparation/training 5

9) What type of preparation or training have you received to work with students who are homeless DURING GRADUATE SCHOOL? (If you have not received training, please mark the box for "I have not received training")

- Learned on-site during internship/practicum
  - Received in-service training while at internship/practicum on homelessness
  - Attended required professional development
  - Attended voluntary professional development
  - Participated in a webinar
  - Learned about homelessness in class
  - Other
  - I did not receive training or preparation to work with students who are homeless while at graduate school
-

Please Define your Role with Students who are Homeless in your School:

10) Who is primarily responsible for enrolling students who are homeless at your school?

(check all that apply)

- School Counselor
- Social Worker
- School Psychologist
- Homeless Liaison
- Principal or Assistant Principal
- Secretary
- I don't know
- Other

11) Who is the homeless liaison for your school?

- School Counselor
- Social Worker
- School Psychologist
- Homeless Liaison
- Principal or Assistant Principal
- Secretary
- I don't know
- Other

12) Who is the main person responsible for addressing the needs of students who are homeless in your school?

- School Counselor
- Social Worker
- School Psychologist
- Homeless Liaison
- Principal or Assistant Principal
- Secretary
- I don't know
- Other

### Knowledge

13) Please indicate your knowledge on the following items:

	<b>No Knowledge 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Extensive Knowledge 5</b>
I know the general requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I know the school enrollment requirements for students who are homeless	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I know the transportation requirements for students who are homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

I know where students on my caseload, who are homeless, reside.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I know the various definitions of homelessness	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I know the role of the homeless liaison for my school	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

**Training**

14) Please respond to the following items:

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither Agree or Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
I have had sufficient training to work with students who are homeless	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I have received sufficient education during graduate school to work with students who are homeless	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I am prepared to ensure the McKinney-Vento Act requirements are being met at my school	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I am prepared to work with students who are homeless at my school	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

I have received sufficient training to implement school-family-community partnerships to support students who are homeless	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I would like more training to work with students who are homeless	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
I am a voice for children who are homeless to ensure that the school meets their needs	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

### Partnership Practices

15)

For each partnership practice below, please indicate your frequency in engaging in the practices with children and families who are homeless:

	<b>Very Frequently</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Moderately</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Not at All</b>
Collaborating with school, family, and community members to organize student support programs for students who are homeless (e.g., tutoring, mentoring, enrichment programs)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )



Coordinating with school-community outreach efforts to involve the community in the school to support students who are homeless (e.g., reaching out to local church and business leaders, police/fire officers)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Coordinating the integration of community services into the school to support students who are homeless (e.g., mental health and social services housed in school)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Coordinating programs to help school staff understand the needs of families who are homeless the community (e.g., in-service training)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Coordinating programs to help families who are homeless and community members understand the school (e.g. family resource center, parents and family seminars)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Teaming with teacher, school social worker, or a parent liaison to conduct visits to shelters or other community locations where families who are homeless reside	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Collaborating with family and community members to deliver services to students who are homeless (e.g., parent volunteers and business professionals provide career guidance)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Collaborating with local businesses and industries to provide enrichment experiences for students who are homeless (e.g., mentoring, tutoring, job shadowing)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Collaborating with community members on working committees to support students who are homeless (e.g., community task force, advisory committee)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Coordinating parent education workshops to enhance parent skills and knowledge for families who are homeless	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Collaborating with community agency professionals to increase access to services for students who are homeless (e.g., invite family/community counselors to lead groups or counsel students)	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

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### Partnership Practices (cont)

16)

For each partnership practice below, please indicate your frequency in engaging in the practices with children and families who are homeless:

	<b>Very Frequently</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Moderately</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Not at All</b>
Training staff to build effective school-family-community partnerships with resources to support students who are homeless	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Teaming with staff, family, and community members to increase parents' involvement in their children's learning for families who are homeless (e.g., partnership planning team, action team)	()	()	()	()	()
Teaming with school staff, family, and/or community professionals to provide services for students who are homeless (e.g., school mental health team)	()	()	()	()	()
Training teachers, school social workers, or parent liaisons to conduct visits to shelters	()	()	()	()	()
Training staff to understand the provisions under the McKinney-Vento Homeless assistance act	()	()	()	()	()
Training staff to work collaboratively with families who are homeless	()	()	()	()	()

Training parents and students who are homeless to access services in the school and community	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
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**You're almost finished!!**

17) For the following items, please rate the frequency in which you engage in the following services for STUDENTS WHO ARE HOMELESS in the current school year.

	<b>Very Frequently</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Moderately</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Not at All</b>
Consulting with parents	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Educating parents on McKinney-Vento	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Consulting with teachers	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Community partnerships	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Mentoring program	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Academic support	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Small group counseling	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Individual counseling	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Communication with shelter staff	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Shelter visits	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Home visits	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
After-school	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

programs					
Tutoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Referrals to community resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provided workshops/training for teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom guidance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Career exploration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Behavioral skills training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18) If you have any further information or comments that you would like to share with the researcher, please comment (additionally, if you are interested in taking part in other studies regarding this topic, please leave your name and contact information (your contact information will not be shared with others or be contacted with your responses):

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19) If you would like to be entered in a raffle to win a \$25 gift card from Amazon, please leave your email address (it will not be connected to your responses or used for any other purpose):

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Thank you for taking this survey. Your response is very important!

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