Experiences of LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness: Implementation of The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

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Experiences of LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness:
Implementation of The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

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December 1, 2023
APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION

This Dissertation by Jonathan Carter Lee has been approved by the committee members below, who recommend it to be accepted by the faculty of Claremont Graduate University in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Education with a concentration in Policy, Evaluation & Reform

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ABSTRACT

Experiences of LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness:
Implementation of The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

By
Jonathan Carter Lee
Claremont Graduate University: 2023

The hearts and minds among U.S. legislators need to change about homelessness. While homelessness is certainly a big current issue that many Americans feel that needs to be addressed by our elected leaders, in reality, there are still many debates in Congress about who should be included to receive such funding. Among them, there is bipartisan support in the U.S. Congress for homeless veterans. However, when it comes to LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness, the bills are introduced by the most progressive left and is quickly defeated. A large body of existing literature exist about LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. However, few research literatures address the intersection of McKinney-Vento and LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness. This study fills the gap of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness in relation to the McKinney-Vento Act, the only federal legislation specifically designed to assist K-12 students who are homeless, by looking into their experiences and description of McKinney-Vento. This research is critical for tackling LGBTQ youth homelessness in Los Angeles, which can serve as a blueprint for looking at LGBTQ youth across the United States, as well as looking at gaps in LGBTQ Education Policy at the federal level because it looks at the strengths and failures of McKinney-Vento by the LGBTQ homeless target audience as well as looking into the
services they wished they received under the McKinney-Vento Act. At the local level, McKinney-Vento liaisons need clarity on what their day-to-day roles are besides just having toothbrush and toothpaste in a drawer.

Twenty-one individual participants in Los Angeles from two different homeless youth shelters participated in an hour-long interview. Participation was completely voluntary. Participants were compensated for their time with a $20 gift card after each interview. About half of the participants identified as cis-gender bisexual or cis-gender gay, and the other half identified as trans non-binary, or bisexual and non-binary. Eight of the twenty-one participants attended schools in California while the rest attended schools throughout the United States.

With intersectional minority stress theory and risk amplification theory as the two conceptual frameworks, this was a qualitative exploratory study of young LGBTQ adults who experienced homelessness to better understand LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness and the services they are or should be receiving under McKinney-Vento.

Four findings confirmed the literature and show that not one of the 21 participants were aware of their rights under McKinney-Vento, and all 21 participants experienced difficulties advocating for themselves. First, the findings of higher risk, mental health, and safety among LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness in my research matches the research from Tierney & Ward (2017). Second, the lived experiences of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness attest they felt invisible and ignored by adults at school. Third, there is a gap in literature about LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness and how K-12 schools are addressing their needs. Fourth, participants reported that schools were using a one-size fits all approach in addressing
homelessness among youth. My research goes beyond quantifying levels of higher risk, mental health, and safety; it delves into the daily realities faced by LGBTQ youth grappling with homelessness. By exploring how these individuals perceive and experience risk, as well as understanding 21 unique lived experiences, my study brings forth rich discussions about a vulnerable understudied population, and mitigating the identified risks faced by LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.

*Keywords:* LGBTQ, homelessness, youth, McKinney-Vento, services, experiences, description, risk amplification, intersectional minority stress
DEDICATION

I have dedicated this work over the last six years, first and foremost, to my mother, Naomi Lee, who dedicated her life so I can pursue my educational dreams. She was a single Korean American mom who without her unwavering support, is why I was able to finish my doctorate degree even though there were long nights when I wanted to give up in the face of defeat. Because of her sacrifice, I am where I am today. I want to thank my School of Educational Studies faculty and committee members Dr. Garrison, Dr. Luschei, Dr. Hilton, and Dr. Drew. Special thanks to Dr. Brandon Robinson, Associate Professor at University of California Riverside, who supported me throughout my academic journey here at Claremont Graduate University. Their expertise helped me pursue my research and guided me in my academic journey through twists and turns. I want to thank my friends at Claremont Graduate University, namely Romi Kim and Iraise Garcia who have shown compassion and empathy. We were able to support one another through trials and tribulation. I also want to thank the Gates Millennium Scholarship/APIA Scholars who supported me financially since college culminating in getting my Ph.D. in Education. Without their generous support, I would not have been able to pursue postsecondary education at elite private institutions.

Lastly, I want to thank my interview participants, who truly without their courage and resilience, I would not have been able to conduct this research. I dedicate this work to them in the hopes that this research can one day make changes for McKinney-Vento and LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Each year, according to the Center for American Progress, it is conservatively estimated that between 320,000 and 400,000 LGBTQ youth, ages 18-25 years old, encounter homelessness in the United States (Tierney & Ward, 2017; Morton et., 2018). They account for 20% to 40% of all homeless youth (McCandless, 2018). While more than 1.5 million students in the United States experience homelessness (U.S. Department of Education, 2019), research shows higher incidence of homelessness among LGBTQ youth compared to other youth. Estimates suggest that LGBTQ youth are anywhere from 2 to 13 times more likely to experience homelessness compared to heterosexual and cisgender youth (Coolhart & Brown, 2017). LGBTQ youth constitute approximately 40% of the homeless youth population served by homeless organizations (Pearson et al., 2017), but they represent approximately only 3.8% of the youth population in the United States (Gates, 2012).

LGBTQ adolescents are also more likely to be victimized and abused, as well as stigmatized for being both homeless and a sexual or gender minority (Quintana et al., 2010). Furthermore, there are additional stressors experienced by LGBTQ youth compared to other youth. These include the following: bullying, harassment, and family rejection (Kosciw et al., 2013; Wright and Smith, 2013). LGBTQ youth reported more isolation and few role models in schools (Wright and Smith, 2013). As a result, identity-based bullying is so common that simply being viewed as having a non-cisgender identification, which indicates that one's birth sex does not match their personal identity, increases one's chances of being bullied (Tierney & Ward, 1).
In addition, straight allies to their LGBT peers also face bullying (Cooper & Blumenfeld, 2012). Bullying includes being called homophobic slurs (Poteat & Rivers, 2010), which is more prevalent for LGBTQ victims (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009). The goal of this research is to investigate the description and experiences of young LGBTQ adults who experienced homelessness during their youth in relation to the McKinney-Vento Act, the first and only federal legislation that significantly addressed homeless youth. This research also gives space for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness to describe their concerns in their own words. The issue under examination is the higher rate of homelessness among LGBTQ youth, as well as the added pressures that come with it, when compared to their non-LGBTQ homeless peers. Given the widely acknowledged problem of homelessness in the United States, emerging strategies to reduce its incidence, and additional challenges faced by LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness, it is critical to know whether existing homeless services reach LGBTQ homeless youth and, if so, to what extent these services recognize and address the population's unique challenges. Such knowledge could equip policymakers with the evidence they need to decide whether and how to adjust present mitigation measures, or whether more research is needed to make such judgments.

**Importance of the Research for Theory, Practice, and/or Policy**

McKinney-Vento is the only federal legislation that addresses youth homelessness in K-12 public education. It is from this federal policy perspective in which I like to see how LGBTQ issues are being addressed or not as described and experienced by LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Specifically, I sought to address the following three research questions.
1. How can the perception of K-12 school by LGBTQ young adults under The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in Los Angeles tell us about the strengths and failures of this act?

2. How can the experiences of K-12 school by LGBTQ young adults under The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in Los Angeles tell us about the strengths and failures of this act?

3. What are the services LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness wished they have received under The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in Los Angeles?

My research on McKinney-Vento helps better learn if services are reaching LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness as intended by policymakers. The services they should be receiving under McKinney-Vento include right to immediate school enrollment even if documents are missing, right to stay in the student's original school if it is in the student's best interests, right to transportation to and from the student's original school, and the right to get academic assistance (National Center for Homeless Education, 2021).

My study entitled, *Experiences of LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness: Implementation of The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act*, explained the problems I identified by conducting a qualitative exploratory interview of 21 young LGBTQ adults who experienced homelessness to better understand LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness and the services they are or should be receiving under McKinney-Vento. Without first-hand knowledge of experiences and perceptions from young LGBTQ adult themselves, policymakers and researchers lack knowledge of the unique challenges of being a LGBTQ youth experiencing
homelessness in K-12, and the growing LGBTQ homeless population - compounding challenges of solving homelessness in general.

Students who are homeless face challenges that include dealing with the social stigma that comes with housing uncertainty. They must also deal with the pressures that come with identifying as LGBTQ. When homophobic insults are used in the classroom, it creates a hostile environment for students, teachers, and staff. While some factors, such as having a large and active GSA (Gay Straight Alliance), having access to supportive adults, or having members of the school community openly identify as LGBTQ, are linked to higher academic achievement, bullying, harassment, and isolation are linked to lower academic achievement and higher levels of psychological distress in LGBTQ students (Tierney & Ward, 2017, p. 502). LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness face issues specific to the population such as the following: substance use, mental health, sexual abuse, discrimination, stigma, family rejection, survival sex, sex work, physical-health deterioration, HIV, and shelter inaccessibility (Fraser et al., 2019, p. 2). These challenges, intersected with poverty, ethnicity, and race, make homelessness more complicated for LGBTQ youth.

LGBTQ individuals who are homeless and alone, for example, are more likely to have been driven out of their home or to have fled away because of family arguments regarding their identity (Cochran et al., 2002; Durso & Gates, 2012; Whitbeck et al., 2004). LGBTQ homeless youth are distinct from their heterosexual peers in this regard. LGBTQ youth may come from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds since they are more likely to be forced out of their house because of their sexual orientation or gender identity rather than being homeless with their
families due to economic situations like their heterosexual counterparts. In this way, they are like heterosexual female teenagers who leave home after becoming pregnant and having their families reject them. Rejection, discrimination, and mistreatment based on gender identity or sexual orientation are among the issues that youth confront. The youngsters' relatives, foster families, social workers, shelter employees, and people they meet on the streets are all capable of discrimination (Tierney & Ward, 2017, p. 501).

According to the California Department of Education’s resources for homeless children, there are potential risks to parents and children if their homelessness and similar data are disclosed to another entity, such as a child welfare or law enforcement agency. One benefit is allowing these children and parents to have more direct and efficient access to services (California Department of Education, 2021). However, the risks outweigh the benefit as LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness are less likely to repair family relationships and communication due to the discrimination they face from their family, and negative stereotypes towards their LGBTQ identity as risks referred to above. These family dynamics are a strong driver of homelessness unique for the LGBTQ community (Fraser et al., 2019, p. 6). As noted in the importance of the research, policymakers need to make a conscious effort to address K-12 LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness in federal homeless legislations such as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act because research needs to better understand if services are reaching LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness as intended by policymakers. The inclusion of LGBTQ youth into federal homeless legislation for K-12 students often requires an evidence-supported theoretical basis for interventions, and the proposed study may contribute to this much needed evidence base.
**Researcher Positionality**

My research background and perspectives may influence data collection, analysis, and interpretation of results. In relation to qualitative research, the issue of bias must be addressed to promote the ideal of trustworthiness. As an educator, I’m seeing homeless students in the classroom and how I can help them socioemotionally and academically. I also want to identify LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness as a LGBTQ person as a housing advocate.

I am a 33-year-old Korean American cisgender male who is working toward a doctorate in Education Policy, Evaluation & Reform. I identify as gay, and I am a full time Special Education Coordinator at a large urban TK-8 charter school in a large school district. I am actively involved in politics and would like to publish a paper on homelessness and LGBTQ youth. I am at a level of complete disclosure within my school organizations. I have been involved with the interest area of LGBTQ homeless youth for 4 years having seen the rise of the homeless population living in the City of Los Angeles in the following neighborhoods - East Hollywood, Koreatown, and Granada Hills. I am a Gates Millennium Scholar and a member of Alpha Phi Omega, a fraternal organization that emphasizes volunteer service. I hold the belief that progressive leaders ranging from elected officials and civically engaged leaders in business and industry have the potential to be beacons of acceptance for LGBTQ individuals. However, this belief exists in that the potential for acceptance has rarely been met. I have experienced homophobic, body shaming, racial insults, and derogatory jokes from within my own family as well as others academic institutions, parent stakeholders, and within the gay community. These experiences have led to the occasional belief that the American public education system does not represent itself in an acceptable manner to incoming sexual-minority students. Along with what I
have witnessed and experienced, I also recognize the acceptance I have gained from most of the
other people in my respective organizations.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding the statistics of youth experiencing homelessness is critical for policymakers to act with haste. The subgroups that are at most risk and how the number of youths experiencing homelessness is currently problematic. Then a discussion transitioning to educational policies towards youth experiencing homelessness, and the educational problems faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth experiencing homelessness is warranted. LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness encounter unique challenges such as scoring significantly below grade level, repeating grades, and having poor attendance (Tierney & Hallett, 2012, p. 53).

Furthermore, I outlined the iterations of the McKinney-Vento Act to trace the lineage of how we got to where we are today regarding policies towards homeless youth. Finally, I moved on to the solutions offered by researchers in addressing homelessness among youth. These include challenges addressing LGBTQ youth, and the unique problems LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness face. These unique problems delve further into a discussion on stigma, trauma, discrimination, family relations, the role of non-profit organizations, and the unevenness of McKinney-Vento services. All of this serves to imply that LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness are not included from McKinney-Vento services.

Statistics of Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Homeless youth comprise between three and four million individuals experiencing some form of homelessness over a one-year period in the United States (Tierney & Ward; 2017; Tierney & Hallett, 2012). Annually, nearly 4.2 million youth experience homelessness. LGBTQ
youth are 120% more likely to experience homelessness than their non-LGBTQ counterparts. (Waguespack & Ryan 2019). An estimated 320,000-400,000 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth encounter homelessness in the United States (Tierney & Ward, 2017). LGBTQ youth face greater risk of victimization and abuse and face stigmatization for being both homeless and a sexual or gender minority (Quintana et al., 2010; Choi et al., 2015).

According to Waguespack & Ryan (2019), 1,277,772 kids enrolled in public schools experienced homelessness during the 2019-2020 school year. The scarcity of low-income and subsidized housing is one reason for the rise in the number of families suffering from homelessness (Tierney & Hallett, 2012). Between 2008 and 2009, four key variables linked to homelessness deteriorated “(1) housing affordability for the poor, (2) unemployment rates, (3) low-wage workers' salaries, and (4) foreclosure status” (Tierney & Hallett, 2012, p. 51).

The numbers fail to provide an accurate picture of the problem of youth homelessness in America because it is difficult to identify youth experiencing homelessness and the problem is largely hidden (National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, 2017). Public schools are seeing an increase by at least 21% in unaccompanied students experiencing homelessness from 2012 to 2015 (National Center for Homeless Education, 2015).

In a typical high school classroom of 30 students, at least one student is experiencing homelessness (Morton et al., 2017). Latinx teenagers make up 33% of those who are homeless between the ages of 18 and 25. African American youth are disproportionately overrepresented in homelessness, with an 83 percent higher risk than youth of other races or ethnicities. African American LGBTQ youth, particularly young men aged 18 to 25, had the highest rates of
homelessness. Nearly one in every four African American young males between the ages of 18 and 25, who identify as LGBTQ, reported homelessness in the previous year, and this does not include those who just couch surfed. These findings are in line with the discrepancies reported in school suspensions, incarceration, and placement into foster care (Morton et al., 2018).

**LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness**

When compared to non-LGBTQ youth, LGBTQ youth are much more likely to experience homelessness owing to family conflict (62% vs 46%) and significantly less likely to be homeless due to family homelessness (5% vs 10%) (Rabinovitz et al., 2010). Furthermore, when policies lack gender neutrality and there are no procedures that deal with sexual orientation, LGBTQ youth are at a higher risk of injury, impaired physical health, and additional psychological harm from other residents and employees at homeless shelters (Rice et al., 2013; Hunter, 2008). However, with such many youths who encounter homelessness, negative attitudes towards LGBTQ are common and exist even among teachers and administrators (Tierney & Ward, 2017). While there is a multitude of studies on homelessness in education, there is a gap in research that looks only at the intersection of homelessness and the LGBTQ population (Tierney & Ward, 2017). These issues pose an immense challenge and responsibility for school leaders and policymakers who lack information.

**Educational Gaps in Policies Directed Towards Youth Experiencing Homelessness**

Only in the last three decades there is a growing number of studies on the issue of youth homelessness in general (e.g., Lifson & Halcon, 2001; Rafferty & Shinn, 1991; Whitbeck, Hoyt, & Yoder, 1999, as cited in Tierney & Hallett, 2012 p. 50), few researches exist on the education of homeless youth, and even fewer researchers cover the intersection of LGBTQ youth and
homelessness (Mawhinney-Rhoads & Stahler, 2006; Quint, 1994, as cited in Tierney & Hallett, 2012, p. 50). For homeless youth, there are a variety of educational risk factors. For example, approximately two-thirds of homeless high school students are not proficient in math and English (National Center for Homeless Education, 2007). In comparison to their housed peers, they score significantly below grade level, repeat grades, and have poor attendance (Rafferty & Shinn, 1991).

 tierney and hallett (2012) investigated a school district in Los Angeles for 18 months as a case study. They spoke with 120 homeless youths, most of them were between the ages of 14 and 18. They went to five public high schools and eight youth-serving organizations to observe and interview the children and teenagers they served. Interviews lasted about an hour, and 30 young people were questioned several times throughout the experiment to see how their experiences and viewpoints changed over time. They also spoke with 45 policymakers, school staff, and persons involved in the lives of homeless adolescents to gather insight into the policies that need to be implemented to improve their educational prospects. The premise of this study was that to develop equitable policies, the authors needed several perspectives, including those of those who would be directly impacted – homeless adolescents – and those who would execute the policy at the local level – school workers. Tierney and Hallett (2012) examined the systematic functioning of policies based on the data obtained (see Tierney, Gupton, & Hallett, 2008; Tierney & Hallett, 2010 for a more detailed description of the theoretical framework used to guide this study and youth's experiences).
The federal and state governments, according to Tierney and Hallett (2012), believe that mainstreaming homeless youth is the best option. Mainstreaming means all students are in a general education setting. However, treating homeless youth equally to non-homeless youth is a grave disservice because what is needed for homeless youth is equity and not equality. Scaffolds need to be in place to help homeless youth attain the same level of education as their non-homeless counterparts. The development of "separate but equal" facilities is anathema to McKinney-Vento's core belief that mainstreaming is ideal (p 66).

Tierney & Hallett (2012) argue that if homeless youth lobbied for help at the school level, they may be accommodated, but they are not. As a result, subpopulation-based initiatives may be advantageous to homeless youth. If a homeless youth is gay, he or she could join a LGBTQ group; if he or she is undocumented, a discussion on how to pay for college might be appropriate. However, the student must seek out these opportunities and have the time and means to take advantage of them. Unfortunately, most of the youth they questioned do not receive appropriate extracurricular assistance (Tierney & Hallett, 2012, p. 63). The government puts the onus on the youth experiencing homelessness to get out of homelessness, which is problematic.

Tierney and Hallett (2012) suggest, in summary, that mainstreaming all homeless youth presents unique issues for one of America's most vulnerable populations. Instead, they advocate for a shift in educational policy that recognizes the unique issues that youth experiencing homelessness experience in general, as well as specific communities of youth experiencing homelessness. To enhance outcomes for a student population that has historically been underserved, federal, state, and local officials should explore how to offer alternative educational
options, mentoring programs, and closer working links between shelters and educational institutions (p.75).

**Implications for Research**

Similar research on youth homelessness also echoes the same sentiment. These findings provide a roadmap for McKinney-Vento students who are LGBTQ, and how they can be better served by schools. Ausikaitis et al. (2015) observed that many of the study's participants, youth experiencing homelessness, were generally unaware of the services available under the McKinney-Vento Act to discuss their homeless status. This research will look at the description, experiences, perceptions of McKinney-Vento, and the services received under McKinney-Vento by LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. This was due to their perception of the stigma on homelessness, and how it would affect them socially in high school (p. 722). This research fills the important gap of including LGBTQ youth who are homeless, according to the authors.

**Definition of Key Terms**

In examining McKinney-Vento services to LBGTQ homeless youth, it is important to conceptualize homelessness as not defining these students but as episodic, transitional, and often not a permanent state (Robinson, 2020). Calling “homeless LGBTQ youth” is problematic. Rather I borrow the term used by Robinson (2020) and describe LGBTQ homeless youth as “LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness” as more appropriate to describe their transitional state and placing emphasis on their identity over their homeless status. The following are useful definition of terms to understand the context of homeless LGBTQ youth.
**Cisgender:** term denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex.

**Gender Dysphoria:** feeling of discomfort or distress that can occur in people whose gender identity differs from their assigned gender or gender-related physical characteristics at birth.

**Homeless:** Being homeless is defined by the federal government as shelter youth, both emergency and long-term shelters, disconnected youth (e.g., those living in cars, abandoned buildings or campsites), those living in hotels, couch surfers, doubled up families (i.e., multiple families living in a dwelling designed for one), and youth living on the streets (Tierney et al., 2008).

**HRT:** Hormone Replacement Therapy

**LGBTQ2S:** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit. Those who identify themselves as such are LGBTQ. Two-spirit means someone who identifies as having both a masculine and feminine spirit living inside their body.

**McKinney-Vento:** The McKinney-Vento Act (MV) is a federal law enacted in 1987 as a broad legislative response to rapid growth in homelessness (USC Price, 2020). Formally known as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, (MV) was created to support the enrollment and education of homeless students.

**Minority:** The definition of minority is from Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which includes Black, Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Islander, American Native or Alaskan
Native. Sexual minorities are not included in state and federal education, housing, or employment statistics.

**History of the McKinney-Vento Act of 1987**

The history of the McKinney-Vento Act has had several reiterations over the past three decades from several presidential administrations. McKinney-Vento refers to the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 11431 (Waguespack & Ryan, 2019). The McKinney-Vento Act (MV) is a federal law enacted in 1987 as a broad legislative response to rapid growth in homelessness (USC Price, 2020). Formally known as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, (MV) was created to support the enrollment and education of homeless students. The definition of homeless under McKinney-Vento (McKinney-Vento Act, 1987) is as follows

*The term “homeless children and youth”—*

*A. means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence…; and*

*B. includes —*

   *i. children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;*
ii. children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings…;

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

iv. migratory children…who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

In 1986, both houses of Congress introduced the Homeless Persons’ Survival Act. This act included short-term relief, long-term prevention, and long-term remedies to homelessness. However, just a minor portion of this idea was adopted into law. Permanent address restrictions and other impediments to existing programs such as Supplemental Security Income, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Veterans Benefits, Food Stamps, and Medicaid were lifted by the Homeless Eligibility Clarification Act of 1986 (William & Mary School of Education, 2022). The Urgent Relief for the Homeless Act was passed in 1987 after a long campaign of advocacy. The act was renamed the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act after the death of its principal Republican proponent, Representative Stewart B. McKinney of Connecticut (P.L. 100-77). On July 22, 1987, President Ronald Reagan signed it into law. $712 million was appropriated for McKinney-Vento programs in 1987-1988 (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006).
The homeless population was rapidly growing during the late 1980s through the early 1990s, and there were early signs that the demographics were shifting, with women and children making up a growing share of the population. Recognizing the growing diversity of the homeless population, Congress inserted provisions in the Act requiring states to ensure that all homeless children have the same right to a free and appropriate public education as children who are not homeless. Additional measures were added by Congress, requiring states to evaluate and amend residence criteria for school attendance to ensure that homeless children were not delayed in enrolling in school. Congress granted funds to help states satisfy the new standards by allowing them to create or designate an office of coordinator for the education of homeless children and youth. The state coordinator's office was granted responsibility to collect data on homeless children in the state and establish a state plan to provide for their education, among other matters (William & Mary School of Education, 2022).

**McKinney-Vento Second Reauthorization (1990)**

Congress took another significant step toward enhancing educational possibilities for the nation's homeless children and youth in 1990. Congress modified the McKinney Act (P.L. 101-645) to express its opposition to any barrier that prevents homeless children and youth from enrolling in school. Furthermore, Congress recognized that the fundamental difficulty was not merely enrolling homeless children in public schools, but also promoting their academic achievement. States were also expected to take the lead in ensuring that local education agencies review and update regulations and processes that could obstruct homeless children and youth's access to a free and appropriate public education (William & Mary School of Education, 2022).

**McKinney-Vento Third Reauthorization (1994)**
States were forbidden from utilizing McKinney funding to conduct direct educational services prior to the 1990 revisions. Since 1990, states have been allowed to offer subsidies to local education agencies (LEAs) for a variety of educational and support services in response to the needs of homeless students, subject to certain limitations. Schools that apply for and receive McKinney funds can now use the funds to provide before and after school programs, tutoring, referrals to medical and mental health services, pre-school programs, parent education, counseling, social work services, transportation, and other services that would not otherwise be available through the public-school system. In 1994, as part of the reauthorization of the Improving America's Schools Act, Congress revised the McKinney Act once more (P.L. 103-382). In addition, Congress added safeguards requiring states to ensure that school districts honor a parent's or guardian's request to enroll a homeless student in a specific school, to the extent that such a request is possible (William & Mary School of Education, 2022). Congress appropriated $1.49 billion to McKinney-Vento programs in fiscal year 1995 (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006).

McKinney-Vento Fourth Reauthorization (2001)

The McKinney Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program was reauthorized by Congress in 2001 as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act (P.L. 107-110), which was signed by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002. The Office of State Coordinator would be required to expand state support to all school divisions by coordinating with local liaisons to ensure accountability, more flexibility in using McKinney-Vento money, and more financing, among other changes. Congress reauthorized the McKinney-
Vento Homeless Assistance Act as Title X, Part C of the No Child Left Behind Act, H.R. 1 (Public Law 107-110) on July 1, 2002 (William & Mary School of Education, 2022).

**McKinney-Vento Fifth Reauthorization (2015)**

President Obama signed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) on December 10, 2015, to replace the No Child Left Behind Act. The majority of ESSA’s McKinney-Vento Act provisions took effect on October 1, 2016. ESSA expanded the focus on services for preschool-aged children who are homeless, who make up the bulk of the overall number of homeless children, according to data (SchoolHouse Connection, 2021). ESSA also highlighted the importance of secondary school students who are homeless being college and career ready, as well as the critical role that school employees, particularly school counselors, play in the transition to higher education. Under ESSA, the McKinney-Vento Act placed a greater emphasis on the special needs and services of unaccompanied homeless youths. Under ESSA, capacity was added to McKinney-Vento for state coordinators and local homeless education liaisons to execute legislative mandates (William & Mary School of Education, 2022; Lee, 2022). In fiscal year 2022, McKinney-Vento saw a 37.5% increase to a $146.5 million-dollars funding from its previous fiscal year appropriation in 2021 (SchoolHouse Connection, 2021).

To summarize, McKinney-Vento is intended to provide homeless students the same educational opportunities as housed students by removing as many barriers to learning for homeless students as possible (Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness, 2021). Some of the resources that are afforded to students and school districts through McKinney-Vento include transportation to and from school and extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, etc. free of charge. McKinney-Vento services provide busing for homeless students so they can stay at the
school they were attending before they became homeless; ensure children experiencing homelessness have the right to attend their school of origin (the school they attended when they first became homeless) even if they are not residing in the area anymore, and immediate enrollment even if they lack normally required documents, such as immunization records or proof of residence. States designate a statewide homeless coordinator to review policies and create procedures that affect homeless students, and local school districts appoint Education Liaisons (aka McKinney-Vento Liaisons) to ensure that school staff are aware of these rights, to provide public notice to homeless families, and to facilitate access to school and transportation services. MV Funds can be used to assist students with resources including but not limited to the following tutors or other academic supports, basic school supplies, transportation to and from school and extracurricular activities, and specialized training and professional development for teachers and other school staffers (Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness, 2021). However, it does not identify LGBTQ youth as a category of homeless youth, and this study helps to fill the gap and contribute to how LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness can benefit under McKinney-Vento is still underway.

**Legislations Proposed Regarding LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness**

One of the reasons why LGBTQ youth experience greater homelessness than their non-LGBTQ homeless youth counterpart is because of lack of bipartisan support. In 2022, addressing the needs of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness is a politically controversial debate in US Congress. A recent Senate Committee on Appropriations released its fiscal year spending bills to increase education, homelessness, and housing programs on October 18, 2021. One of the Senate-proposed spending bills include “language reminding service providers of the
overrepresentation of various subgroups among homeless youth, including LGBTQ+ youth and youth who were involved in the juvenile justice system, and particular challenges they may face” (SchoolHouse Connection, 2021). The U.S. House Committee on Appropriations passed its version of the FY2022 budget in July 2021. The House spending bill include “report language to improve the quality and kind of data on homelessness reported by the Office of Childcare, and report language to improve the amount and uses of Title I Part A set asides for children and youth experiencing homelessness.” However, bills that focus on homeless youth never make it after introduction and do not pass either the House or Senate in the 117th Congress (2021-2022) (i.e., H.R. 6287, H.R. 3772, S.1469, H.R. 2028, S. 4795, S. 3350, H.R. 6666, S. 3616).

Legislations proposed expanding definitions of homeless youth come mostly from the Democratic Party.

Blumenauer, Earl [D-OR-3], Rep. Garcia, Jesus G. "Chuy" [D-IL-4], Rep. Torres, Ritchie [D-NY-15], Rep. Lee, Barbara [D-CA-13], Rep. Hayes, Jahana [D-CT-5], Rep. Jones, Mondaire [D-NY-17], and Rep. Kahele, Kaiali'i [D-HI-2] (Housing is a Human Right Act, 2021). Housing is a Human Right Act is the only bill that addresses LGBTQ people and acknowledges LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness as a population at higher risk of homelessness and included population (See Section 10-C). It also empowers LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness to self-advocate and vote by providing grants (See Section 402) to facilitate voting by homeless and housing-unstable individuals and prioritizes selection of nonprofit corporations to receive such grants (see subsection C4) that have “a proven history of successful engagement with a population at higher risk of homelessness, as defined in section 2 of this Act, including— (A) LGBTQ persons”

According to SchoolHouse Connection, a national watchdog on youth homelessness, to achieve educational equity, it is crucial that programs that assist these historically underserved populations are consistently and adequately funded. They argue students of color, students with disabilities, English language learners, and LGBTQ students are disproportionately represented among students who are experiencing homelessness. Family and youth homelessness are anticipated to rise in the aftermath of COVID-19 and the eviction crisis, particularly for students of color, students with impairments, and English language learners who are simultaneously facing homelessness. These kids struggle to participate in any other federal education investment or program without the rights and safeguards of the EHCY program (SchoolHouse Connection, 2021).
**The Responsibilities and Role of the McKinney-Vento LEA Liaison**

Every local educational agency (LEA), including school districts, county offices of education, charter schools, and special education local plan areas, is required by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act (McKinney-Vento Act) to designate an appropriate person as a liaison for children and youth experiencing homelessness (LEA liaison). LEA liaisons collaborate with other school officials, community members, and state agencies to identify students who do not have a fixed, regular, or suitable nightly residence and to provide educational and related services to them (National Center for Homeless Education, 2017). Under paragraph (1)(J)(ii), each LEA liaison for homeless children and youths must guarantee the following:

1. *Homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies;*

2. *Homeless children and youths are enrolled in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in, schools of that LEA;*

3. *Homeless families and homeless children and youths have access to and receive educational services for which such families, children, and youths are eligible, including services through Head Start programs (including Early Head Start programs) under the Title 42 United States Code Section 9831 (42 U.S.C. Section 9831) et seq. early intervention services under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1431 et seq.), and other preschool programs administered by the LEA;*

4. *Homeless families and homeless children and youths receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services;*

5. *The parents or guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;*

6. *Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated in locations frequented by parents or guardians of such children and youths, and*
unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians of homeless children and youths, and unaccompanied youths;

7. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with paragraph (3)(E);

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

9. School personnel providing services under this part receive professional development and other support; and

10. Unaccompanied youths—(I) are enrolled in school; (II) have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards as the State establishes for other children and youth, including through implementation of the procedures under paragraph (1)(F)(ii); and, (III) are informed of their status as independent students under section 1087vv of Title 20 and that the youths may obtain assistance from the LEA liaison to receive verification of such status for purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) described in section 1090 of Title 20


LEA liaisons also have a special responsibility to assist homeless children and teens who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian (unaccompanied youth). LEA liaisons must assist unaccompanied youth in choosing a school, obtaining transportation to and from the school of origin, and resolving any conflicts quickly and fairly. Unaccompanied youth must also be informed of their position as "independent" students to apply for FAFSA and have their status verified by LEA liaisons. The McKinney-Vento Act mandates that LEA liaisons be capable of carrying out the law's requirements. A comprehensive examination of all the obligations outlined in the law indicates how difficult it would be for a single employee to perform all of them without significant assistance (California Department of Education, 2019).
Designating school site liaisons, according to SchoolHouse Connection, a nationwide homeless education group, is a highly effective best practice for identifying children and youth who are experiencing homelessness and assuring full compliance of the McKinney-Vento Act. Similarly, the National Center for Homeless Education, a technical assistance center for the US Department of Education (ED), recommends this best practice to ensure that school-level staff are aware of the needs of homeless students and their rights under the McKinney-Vento Act, allowing them to work more effectively with them (National Center for Homeless Education, 2017).

In fact, most California schools have already begun to implement this highly effective strategy. According to a recent poll of over 500 LEA liaisons in California, the clear majority (84 percent) of LEAs in the state have implemented this common-sense solution and designated liaisons at each school site. Even the LEAs with the fewest children in California, such as county offices of education and charter schools, designated school site liaisons in three-quarters (75%) of cases.

**The Responsibilities and Role of the McKinney-Vento School Site Liaison**

In addition to this district-level position, several California LEAs provide a staff member to each school site to identify and assist homeless students (school site liaisons). A widely recognized best practice for identifying and supporting adolescents experiencing homelessness and properly executing the McKinney-Vento Act is to designate school site liaisons (California Department of Education, 2019). The responsibilities and role of the school McKinney-Vento
(school site) liaison is critical in implementing the services of the McKinney-Vento Act. The McKinney-Vento Act also states the following regarding the role of the local liaison

(A) NOTICE - State Coordinators established under subsection (d)(3) and local educational agencies shall inform school personnel, service providers, and advocates working with homeless families, parents and guardians of homeless children and youths, and homeless children and youths of the duties of the local educational liaisons and publish an annually updated list of the liaisons on the State educational agency’s website.

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

(C) HOMELESS STATUS. – A local educational agency liaison designated under paragraph (1)(J)(ii) who receives training described in subsection (f)(6) may affirm, without further agency action by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, that a child or youth who is eligible for and participating in a program provided by the local educational agency, or the immediate family of such a child or youth, who meets the eligibility requirements of this Act for a program or service authorized under title IV, is eligible for such program or service.
(42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6))
Figure 1

Flow of McKinney-Vento from Federal, State, Districts, to Individual School Sites

Note. This is a graphic of implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act from the federal to state, school district, and liaison levels that leads to different outcomes for LGBTQ youth vs non-LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.

The sheer amount of work for the school-site liaison can be daunting. The homeless liaison toolkit devotes a whole chapter in managing the work of the local liaison (NCHE, 2022). In section 15.1, the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) looks at identifying the level of urgency using Stephen Covey’s *Seven Habits of Effective People* (Free Press, 1989 as cited in NCHE, 2022). The NCHE is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and operates as the Department’s technical assistance center for the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program, suggests that the school site liaison’s work can be categorized into four quadrants, as illustrated in Figure 2 of Covey’s Quadrants.
Researchers have used McKinney-Vento homeless liaisons to examine various ways for identifying more homeless youth. Shephard et al. (2021) conducted a randomized controlled trial...
of increased email communication incorporating behavioral insights targeting homeless liaison staff to increase the identification of homeless students versus a control group that received standard business as usual emails across 1,732 local education agencies in New Jersey, New Mexico, and New York. During the second semester, a low-cost, low-intensity behavioral intervention discovered over 3,000 additional homeless students in their sample. According to this study, increasing the use of regular, brief, and behaviorally informed emails can have a significant impact on the work of homeless liaisons.

Scholars have found that in addition to the McKinney-Vento Act, housing policies should rapidly connect youth experiencing homelessness into stable housing. Addo & Gerstenblatt (2021) found that the housing first (HF) policy in the context of Homeless Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH), passed in 2009 as an amendment to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, should consider broader definitions of homelessness such as macro factors. Such macro factors include the following: social, economic, and psychological aspects of homelessness and not just personal deficits that require individual interventions. HF policy looks at homelessness from a feminist ethic of care framework from both a rational and moral considerations. However, Addo & Gerstenblatt (2021) emphasize that more studies examining diverse paradigms are needed to improve the impact and effectiveness of HF policy, and that it must address both rational and moral issues. Finally, the authors recommend that community organizing, homeless education, and participatory change tactics be incorporated into HF policy implementation at the community level to enable the homeless to be a part of the ongoing homeless policy conversation. Like the policy recommendations for youth experiencing homelessness, Tierney and Ward (2017) argue that increased training, more comprehensive
outreach efforts, and more inclusive policy making are three effective approaches to closing achievement gaps of LGBTQ students.

**Challenges Addressing LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness**

As mentioned previously in the statistics of homeless youth, there are between 320,000 and 400,000 lesbian, homosexual, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth experiencing homelessness. LGBTQ youth are more likely to be victimized, abused, and stigmatized for being homeless and belonging to a sexual or gender minority (Quintana et al., 2010; Choi et al., 2015). Tierney and Ward (2017) provide us with directions to explore new areas and next steps but also describe a few major challenges and obstacles. The biggest obstacle being, “how does one define accuracy for a transient population whose identities are in constant definition and redefinition?” (p. 504). Tierney and Ward (2017) argue that residential mobility, absenteeism, and varied definition of homelessness are all problematic for accurately counting LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness, and the self-descriptions with which young people define themselves. But the rekindling of the use of quantitative data, namely geography information system (GIS) mapping, for critical purposes may produce “the numbers” requisite for policymakers to act. In other words, financial resources can only go to LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness if they are located, counted, and then targeted for outreach.

Tierney and Ward (2017) argue the most pragmatic approach is a mixed-method study to shine the light and tell the stories of LGBT homeless youth while producing politically salient quantitative data. Tierney and Ward (2017) acknowledge limitations of methods but overall lay out a very solid research and policy agenda for LGBTQ homeless students. They assess the importance of the findings and factor in the diverse backgrounds and identities of LGBTQ youth
experiencing homelessness when studying their life experiences, including intersectionality and fluidity of gender and queer identity.

Other studies included an examination of the federal response to gay and transgender homeless youth (Quintana et al., 2010), which looked at overall numbers of homeless youth who are LGBTQ. There has been research done on homeless youth, mainly qualitative interviews, but little that looks at the intersection of LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) youth. Past studies on youth homelessness specifically looked at neighborhoods such as Hollywood (Rabinovitz et al., 2010) or San Francisco (Reck, 2009), where there are sizeable LGBTQ populations. Others looked at homelessness and sexuality among middle school students in the Los Angeles Unified School District (Rice et al., 2015). Some looked at transitions to adulthood for homeless adolescents (Tierney et al., 2008). The most current research (Tierney & Ward, 2017) examined policy and research agendas for LGBTQ homeless students, and conditional families and LGBTQ homelessness (Robinson, 2018). While Quintana and Tierney and Ward’s studies are quantitative, surveying homeless youth (Quintana et al., 2010; Tierney & Ward, 2017), the latter approach by Rabinovitz and Robinson’s studies are qualitative, interviewing homeless youth (Rabinovitz et al. 2010; Robinson, 2018). These studies all found that homeless LGBTQ youth are an invisible population from the research and practice/policy perspective. Notably, LGBTQ youth make up about 5-8 percent of the total youth population in the United States, but they account for at least 40% of the homeless youth population (Durso & Gates, 2012; Ray, 2006; Robinson, 2017). They are disproportionately homeless among the youth homelessness population (Durso & Gates, 2012; Ray, 2006). Moreover, they are less likely
to seek help from authority figures, or disclose they are homeless out of fear, for example, because the police arrest them as vagrants and criminals rather than aiding and providing services they need (Durso & Gates, 2012; Ray, 2006).

Looking to our Canadian neighbors, Abramovich’s literature review focuses on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) homeless youth in Canada, especially focusing on the city of Toronto. LGBTQ homeless youth are overrepresented in the homeless youth population in North America. This review brings together the literature on the topic of LGBTQ youth homelessness and provides a comprehensive overview of the unique needs of this population, as well as gaps and barriers to support. Literature reveals that LGBTQ youth avoid support services and shelters due to ongoing violence and discrimination they are subjected to, which suggests homophobia and transphobia that is segregating youth from much needed homeless services (Abramovich, 2012, p. 46-47). Formal institutions drive LGBTQ youth away from receiving critical services they need. The review culminates in recommendations for support services and further research on this topic. This review should be particularly useful for youth shelter and service providers, and policy makers to respond to the needs of this population and to enhance knowledge in this area more broadly (Abramovich, 2012).

Furthermore, another literature review by Abramovich (2012) examined the experiences that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and two-spirit (LGBTQ2S) homeless youth have in shelters and the disjunctions that occur for this population in Toronto’s shelter system. “Two-spirit” refers to a person who identifies as having both a masculine and a feminine
spirit and is used by some Indigenous people to describe their sexual, gender and/or spiritual identity (University of Toronto and Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2021).

Abramovich (2012) also explored the attitudes and behaviors of shelter workers and management toward LGBTQ2S youth. A critical action research approach, informed by critical ethnography and institutional ethnography was employed. Thirty-three people participated in this study in the Greater Toronto Area. The study triangulated data from interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis. This study found that the systemic enactment of homophobia, transphobia, and hegemonic masculinity are often normalized in shelters and create significant barriers to safe, accessible, and supportive services for LGBTQ2S youth. Excessive bureaucratic regulation and the lack of necessary bureaucratic regulation in highly significant areas (i.e., inadequate, invasive, and otherwise problematic rules) that play a key role in creating the disjunctures that occur for LGBTQ2S youth in shelters (Abramovich, 2017). A disjuncture can be described as people having different experiences of the same event, and a disconnect between what is actually happening versus what is supposed to be happening (Campbell & Gregor, 2008). These disjunctures can help researchers understand the perceptions and experiences that LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness towards McKinney-Vento. Because these disjunctures are commonly felt by LGBTQ youth, they feel not included from McKinney-Vento and other forms of formal institutions because they lack services that require competency and sensitivity towards LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. My research questions will help address this gap.

What Unique Problems Are Faced by LGBTQ Experiencing Homelessness?
LGBTQ youth have "more than twice the risk of being homeless than their cisgender or heterosexual peers." (National Conference of State Legislatures [NCSL], 2019). Cisgender is a term denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex. A long history of discrimination and a lack of sufficient policies in the United States, LGBTQ have produced unique housing challenges in comparison to their non-LGBTQ counterparts. The LGBTQ community makes up a significant portion of the homeless population. (Huang et al., 2020). Unique housing challenges faced by youth who are homeless, and LGBTQ include higher rates of depression, sexual molestation and rape, forcible sex for survival, prostitution (Morton et al., 2018). These problems will be categorized through the following subsections - stigma, trauma, discrimination, and family relations.

**Stigma**

Previous research on the intersectional topic of LGBTQ youth homelessness is limited since this is a new topic in academia that scholars are focusing on in education. According to Tierney and Ward (2017), each year, it is estimated between 320,000 and 400,000 LGBTQ youth encounter homelessness. They account for 20% to 40% of all homeless youth (McCandless, 2018). LGBTQ youth constitute approximately 40% of the homeless youth population served by homeless organizations (Pearson et al., 2017), but they represent approximately only 3.8% of the youth population in the United States (Gates, 2012). LGBTQ youth face greater risk of victimization and abuse and face stigmatization for being both homeless and a sexual or gender minority. LGBTQ youth are more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to become homeless after being forced out of their homes by their parents. Consequently, it is important to consider the myriad of backgrounds and identities of LGBTQ homeless youth “when studying
their lived experiences and creating public policies and tools to help them succeed.” (Tierney & Ward, 2017, p. 501).

**Trauma**

LGBTQ youth had over twice the rate of early death among youth experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, LGBTQ youth are at more than double the risk of homelessness compared to non-LGBTQ peers. Youth who identified as both LGBTQ and black or multiracial had some of the highest rates of homelessness. Among youth experiencing homelessness, LGBTQ young people reported higher rates of trauma and adversity. Transgender youth often face unique and more severe types of discrimination and trauma (Morton et al., 2018).

**Discrimination**

In Conditional Families and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth Homelessness: Gender, Sexuality, Family Instability, and Rejection, Robinson’s (2018) approach is more qualitatively focused. Robinson conducts forty in-depth interviews with LGBTQ homeless youth in San Antonio and Austin, Texas. Robinson emphasizes that the one size fits all approach to understanding LGBTQ youth is misguided, and in academia there is a void within the literature striving for scholarly understandings of LGBTQ youth and familial life (Robinson, 2018, p. 384). Robinson argues that “statistical surveys, however, often limit people to marking their one cause of homelessness from a list of categories presented to them, eclipsing the structural, interpersonal, and individual factors” (Robinson, 2018, p. 383). When scholars do not research the how’s and the why’s of practices around familial rejection of LGBTQ youth’s gender and sexuality in a qualitative fashion, there is a risk of pathologizing the families of youth as homophobic or transphobic. A practice among certain families who reject LGBTQ youth is to
control and discipline gender expression more than sexuality because gender is often a more public display than sexuality. People often make assumptions of gender and sexuality being the same thing and do not delineate between the two. Expression of being queer is rejected in favor of cisgender behavior (i.e., masculine behavior and traits of males vs. feminine behavior and traits of females). Therefore, Robinson argues that negative family reactions toward gender expression, and to a lesser extent sexuality, lead to familial conflict and abuse that shape pathways into homelessness.

*Family Relations*

Robinson introduces “conditional families” as a framework to understand how LGBTQ youth navigate the social processes of poverty and family instability that shape the conflict surrounding the families’ rejection of the youth’s gender and sexuality. Conditional families only show love based on certain conditions, for example, when the youth’s gender is not a “disgrace” (Robinson, 2018, p. 388). When familial support and acceptance become conditional, LGBTQ youth experience ambivalence towards their family.

Statistical surveys limit people to identifying a single cause of homelessness, and they overlook the institutional, interpersonal, and individual elements that converge to cause specific people to become homeless. It obscures the processes and conditions that led to the youth's familial rejection, as well as the youth's own narratives about managing gender and sexuality within the family (Robinson, 2018, p. 383-384).

Given that LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness are disproportionately young people of color and from low-income families, Robinson is concerned that research may "pathologize families of color and poor families as being more homophobic and transphobic than
White, middle-class families” if researchers do not inquire into the how and why of specific
Instead, Robinson believes that the focus should be on how poverty and insecurity affect social
processes around gender and sexuality, which determine why some parents reject their children.

Robinson (2018) notes a paradox when LGBTQ youth must negotiate practice of gender
and sexuality within their families, especially when they are coming out at a younger age and
when there is increased LGBTQ visibility and acceptance in society. LGBTQ acceptance in
society at large seems to be trending in popular culture. However, it is not the case for every
family, where rejection, silence, or even the utterance of the word “LGBTQ” is a taboo subject.
Therefore, LGBTQ youth walk a very fine line between what is acceptable outside the home
versus what is acceptable inside the home (Ocobock, 2013).

Results from the literature show that the role of family and family abandonment have a
high impact on LGBTQ youth. LGBTQ youth face several hurdles before they become
homeless. Family abandonment is not instant but is a gradual tension between the LGBTQ youth
and parents. The hurdles that the LGBTQ youth overcome include intersection of other factors
such as domestic violence in the household, drug use, sexual molestation, rape, financial
insecurities, unemployment. Sometimes the parent relationship may be strained with their
LGBTQ child, but they may have a better relationship with grandparents who can be more
accepting of the child’s sexual identity and orientation (Morton et al., 2018).

Robinson’s (2018) discussion section gives us a good overall picture of why the topic of
LGBTQ youth homelessness is important. He believes that the conditional families paradigm
advances the narrative and literature by concentrating on how certain family environments might impact LGBTQ youth's gender and sexual identity experiences and discussions. Robinson opposes the idea of race and class as separate elements. Instead, he focuses on poverty, instability, and the violence of marginalization, as well as their links to familial stress, to better understand how rejection, homophobia, and transphobia can manifest in under-resourced households (p. 393). As such, Robinson is avoiding a narrative that posits that rejection, homophobia, and transphobia occur more frequently in black environments because they are poor and black.

The Homeless Education Office (HEO) of the Los Angeles Unified School District currently provides services to homeless students and families in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (LAUSD, 2021). HEO workers, according to its website, collaborate with school personnel and community service agencies to increase access to diverse educational, social, and enrichment programs that enhance academic performance and student progress (LAUSD, 2021). The HEO's goals are to provide ongoing training, technical assistance, and advocacy district-wide to ensure that federal statutes and district policy regarding homeless students in the LAUSD are followed. This is done by removing barriers to academic success for McKinney Vento eligible students by providing needed supplies such as backpacks, school supplies, clothing, transportation, and other items. Furthermore, HEO's goal is to educate students and parents on their educational rights and promote parent participation.

McKinney-Vento’s Implementation in Los Angeles Schools

McKinney-Vento programs must go beyond backpacks and bus tokens, according to Hallett, Low, and Skrla (2015), who also set out next steps for district homeless student
initiatives. Homelessness should be examined alongside other subgroups that are tracked for equity and access, increasing homelessness awareness throughout a school district, and the process of integrating the political, administrative, and professional systems within a school district are all examples of these. School districts have a critical role in increasing attention to homeless and high-mobility students (p. 711).

School districts are still trying to make sense about the acceptance of LGBTQ youth into the overall school vision and mission statement (Rice et al., 2015). Other school districts in the Los Angeles area offer similar but simplified resources to links and provide a bulleted list of rights under the McKinney-Vento Act (LBUSD, 2021; La Habra City School District, 2021). The issue of rising homelessness is an altogether separate issue for school districts. School districts have yet to focus on the unique challenges that LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness face. While there are some LGBTQ student resources/supports on the district websites, bringing in a third party to discuss LGBTQ sexual health, or paltry affirmations of diversity and inclusion (LAUSD, 2021; Mehrtash et al., 2021; GUSD, 2021), non-profit organizations take leadership in this area to directly help LGBTQ students experiencing homelessness (Huang et al., 2020). In short, there is not a wide array of policy-based services, particularly through schools, targeted at LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness, particularly in the Los Angeles area.

Non-Profit Organizations

The Los Angeles LGBT Center provides the most services to the LGBTQ community in the Los Angeles area, including temporary housing or housing referrals, breakfast, lunch, dinner,
snacks, showers, clothing and laundry services, education program, HIV testing and counseling, addiction recovery services, employment program, computer lab, recreational activities, art/music groups, and counseling and support groups, as well as directly to LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness (Los Angeles LGBT Center, 2021). While not a school and therefore ineligible to receive McKinney-Vento funds, the center has a strong track record of partnering up with schools to offer education related services to LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.

Another non-profit organization, Volunteers of America of Los Angeles, provides shelter and social services for youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, sexually exploited/sex trafficked minors, runaways, and children who have aged out of foster care and/or have been previously incarcerated. Depending on the needs of the youth, housing can be short-term or long-term. Counseling, advocacy, mental health treatments, education services, job development, and life skills training are all provided (Volunteers of America Los Angeles, 2021).

**Unevenness of McKinney-Vento Services**

Spaces, places, and policies matter when it comes to McKinney-Vento implementation (Pavlakis, 2018). These services are uneven depending on the area one lives in whether it’s urban, suburban, or rural (Pavlakis, 2018). Particularly in the Los Angeles area, there is a lot of commitment by school districts to be LGBTQ inclusive, as well as providing services to students experiencing homelessness, but there is no data to related to the implementation fidelity of McKinney-Vento to LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness (Rice et al., 2015). To make matters worse, federal reports indicate that each student experiencing homelessness, on average
received only an additional $76.50 through McKinney-Vento funds in School Year 2017-2018 (National Center for Homeless Education, 2020). This level of funding prompted a 2020 policy report from USC’s Homelessness Policy Research Institute, which recommended that LAUSD do the following: (1) hold bi-annual in-person trainings for homelessness liaisons that address their role and clarify how they can identify students who qualify for McKinney-Vento accommodations; (2) re-examine funding streams for transportation of students covered by McKinney-Vento, and revise requirements around who must accompany youth; and (3) train liaisons an emergency response plan. Schools’ community and reduce school absences (USC Price, 2021). The staggering role of non-profits and the unevenness of McKinney-Vento services reflects the current inadequate funding of McKinney-Vento services, particularly in Los Angeles-area schools. The multiple proposed and stalled legislations on homelessness in Congress never reaches the desk of the President to sign into law. Most, if not all, the legislations on homelessness are introduced by Congressional Democrats in the 117th Congress, such as the Housing is a Human Right Act, H.R. 6287, H.R. 3772, S.1469, H.R. 2028, S. 4795, S. 3350, H.R. 6666, S. 3616. This highlights the disparity of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness through the politicization on the issue of homelessness, and thus lack bipartisan support. The only exception being homeless veterans who passed the House (H.R. 240, H.R. 1257) but not the Senate.

California, on the other hand, is the only state that has passed legislation explicitly safeguarding LGBT youth in foster care. The California Welfare and Institutions Code provides numerous rights to children in California’s foster care system based on their identities. Regardless of “actual or perceived race, ethnic group identification, ancestry, national origin,
color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical impairment, or HIV status,” youth shall have fair and equal access to the statute’s services and benefits (Page, 2017, p. 43). However, this statute is for foster care, not always practiced at schools, and does not address LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.

Summary

The road is blocked for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. The extent to which policy efforts addressing LGBTQ homeless youth’s unique circumstances sorely lacks through McKinney-Vento services for schools. It does not specify LGBTQ youth as a subset of homeless youth, and research is yet to develop how LGBTQ homeless youth can benefit under McKinney-Vento. Once they leave home LGBTQ youth experience higher rates of violence, physical and mental health degradation, and exploitation when compared to other youth experiencing homelessness. They become invisible. Given this disparity, housing researchers, policymakers, and service providers should pay special attention to this sub-group of the population experiencing homelessness to effectively combat their distinct outcomes (Choi et. Al, 2015).

Sub-groups such as pregnant teens have separate schools and resources allocated by the district. While there are special schools for pregnant teens, there are no special schools for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness have severely inadequate policy-based services, particularly through schools, in the Los Angeles area compared to other youth experiencing homelessness, for whom services are also inadequate. An array of policy-based services for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness primarily come from non-profit organizations dedicated to serving the LGBTQ community. Furthermore, McKinney-Vento services are limited in funding and scope and leave out LGBTQ youth.
According to the Homeless Research Policy Institute, homelessness is more common among LGBTQ youth than among heterosexual, cisgender youth. In comparison to heterosexual, cisgender youth experiencing homelessness, a higher percentage of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles are unsheltered. This demonstrates LGBTQ youth’s aversion to seeking shelter, as well as shelters’ failure to provide accessible, safe settings for LGBTQ youth.

In comparison to other homeless youth, LGBTQ youth face higher rates of physical and sexual assault, police maltreatment, and sexual propositioning when left unprotected. In their search for shelter and assistance, transgender homeless adolescents are at a higher risk of being bullied, having their families reject them, and being sexually abused. LGBTQ youth are more likely to face prejudice, which denies them access, as well as exploitation, which prevents them from taking advantage of opportunities that would otherwise be beneficial to them. LGBTQ youth are more likely to face both discrimination and exploitation, which prevents them from participating in otherwise useful programs and services (USC Price, 2020).

**Conceptual Framework Including Conceptual Diagram/Map**

The two conceptual frameworks I will use from Forge’s (2012) *A Longitudinal Investigation of Risk and Resiliency among Homeless LGBT Youth Residing in a Transitional Living Shelter*. The conceptual frameworks are (1) intersectional minority stress and (2) risk amplification model. According to the minority stress model, the stress that comes with being a member of a sexual minority in society puts people at risk for negative psychosocial outcomes, but that risk is tempered by things like social support and other resilience elements. The Risk Amplification Model, which is specific to the homeless youth population, is the circumstances surrounding the youths' departure from their home of origin put them on a path toward
unfavorable outcomes. The group is in what has been referred to as a "double jeopardy," since they are both homeless and LGBTQ (Walls, et al., 2007). Together, these two theoretical frameworks help us comprehend the experiences of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.

**Intersectional Minority Stress**

Intersectional minority stress model was the appropriate conceptual framework to understand the perceptions and experiences McKinney-Vento by LGBTQ young adults. Minority stress model allowed researchers to process their trauma by examining the higher prevalence of mental disorders among the LGBTQ homeless community. According to Forge (2012), minority stress conceptual model was a framework developed by Meyer (1995, 2003) that sexual minorities faced risk of mental health problems in their lives because they experienced chronic stress that was a result of the hetero norms placed on sexual minority status. Dohrenwend's stress model (1998) explains the detrimental consequences of discrimination and stigma on individuals and groups. Minority stress was inferred from sociological and social psychological including theories of stress (Meyer, 2003). According to Robinson (2021), research has looked at how homelessness affects and exacerbates minority stress (Bruce et al., 2014). Nonetheless, further study on minority stress itself leading to potential pathway into homelessness needs to be explored in the future. Robinson (2021) adds a layer to the minority stress model with the intersectional minority stress model. Intersectional minority stress was how the stress of LGBTQ homeless youth’s gender and sexuality intersect with race and class. According to the intersectional minority stress model, stress multiplies to marginalized students subjectively as they interpret stigmatizing experiences and stressors. Robinson (2021) argues that minority stress is talked about in a distal-proximal approach, where distal external stressful
comes from objective events such as experiencing discrimination and violence, and proximal internal stressors come from subjective events such as internalizing negative societal attitude. By bringing intersectional minority stress to the foreground, researchers were able to better understand the LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.

Prior studies examining perceived racial, sexual identity, and homeless status-related discrimination among Black adolescents and young adults (Gattis & Larson, 2016) also examine the minority stress model. They emphasize that the “sexual minority status itself does not matter so much as the norms, values, mores, and related processes of the social contexts in which sexual minority individuals live” (p.80). Gattis and Larson’s emphasis on social contexts matter for the LGBTQ homeless population. Perceived discrimination is the unfair treatment based on perceived group membership. Discrimination is a stressor targeted at marginalized populations while leaving more advantaged counterparts untouched. (Thoits, 2010; Kessler et al., 1999).

**Risk Amplification Model**

Developed by Whitbeck and Hoyt (1999), the Risk Amplification Model looks at the influence of social environment on mental health and risk behavior and helped explain the relationship between in-home experiences and negative outcomes in homeless youth. The Risk Amplification model combined Life Course Developmental Theory (e.g. (Elder, 1994) and Social Interaction Theory (e.g. (Patterson, Dishion, & Bank, 1984). Life Course Theory assumed that human development is a dynamic process of person and environment interactions, and states that people tend to choose environments that are like previous environments experienced.
Homeless youth and young adults who have experienced instability and stress prior to becoming homeless found themselves in similar situations when homeless based on this assumption. In turn, social interaction theory states that if youth and young adults experience violent and aggressive interactions, before they were homeless, then they experienced similar interactions while on the streets (Forge, 2012, p. 27-28).

According to Forge (2012), Minority Stress stated that sexual minority youth were at risk for negative health outcomes because of their identity status, experiencing homelessness exacerbates and adds to these outcomes. The Risk Amplification Model implied that homeless youth and young adults often experience negative environments within their homes, and that while homeless they will mirror similar situations and environments. This led to an increased risk for poor psychological and health problems. For sexual minority youth, the stress experienced because of their identity, combined with experiencing homelessness, may result in increased risk for negative outcomes. Furthermore, research supported that LGBTQ youth fair worse than their heterosexual counterparts because LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness and young adults are at increased risk for victimization, substance and alcohol use, sexual risk behaviors, and mental health issues. (Gattis, 2009). The Risk Amplification Model helped us understand the perceptions and experiences of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness regarding the McKinney-Vento Act and how it effectively leaves them out when they were in k-12 for external social support. This lack of external social support continued into postsecondary education for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Knowledge Gap Filled by This Study

LGBTQ youth are not specified in the McKinney-Vento Act, and there is no specific Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) policy designed towards LGBTQ youth who experience homelessness. Rather researchers have focused on competency (gender identity at birth vs. personal identity) and sensitivity training on LGBTQ issues that is left completely voluntarily for school districts and implementors to take upon to educate themselves. As a result, the experiences of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness receiving services under McKinney-Vento are unexamined. This study filled a gap in knowledge by exploring 21 self-identifying “LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness” who are between the ages of 18-26 years old, who have experienced homelessness at some point in their K-12 education in the United States to understand their description, experiences, and services they wished they received under the McKinney-Vento Act.

Research Design, Methods, and Data

First, the research employed a qualitative research design because it allowed LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness a voice, and a space to address their concerns and experiences when they were going through homelessness in K-12, and a sense of agency addressing the issue of homelessness for a very vulnerable population that has been often overlooked by McKinney-Vento. Second, there was a lack of qualitative research in the literature review on LGBTQ homeless youth and McKinney-Vento.
Moreover, the research population was found through local homeless shelters in the Los Angeles area that specifically had a high concentration of LGBTQ youth. Once an interview was complete, and the research participant was satisfied with the interview, word about the research spread causing it to have a snowball effect and more participants reached out to me. I also printed out research fliers and provided them to the shelters. Some of the research participants saw the fliers and contacted me to schedule their interviews. The protection of their identity was especially important because this was a vulnerable population. I protected their identity by providing both an oral consent and a written consent form.

In addition, the research protocol was crafted in a way to support the three research questions by aligning the interview questions to the three research questions. I did this by creating three categories: research question, questions aligned in the interview protocol, and categories/keywords in coding (see Appendix C). The CGU (Claremont Graduate University) Institutional Review Board (IRB #4408) has approved the interviews, and the interview questions were semi structured and informed by the literature review.

**Research Questions**

1. How can the perception of K-12 school by LGBTQ young adults under The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in Los Angeles tell us about the strengths and failures of this act?

2. How can the experiences of K-12 school by LGBTQ young adults under The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in Los Angeles tell us about the strengths and failures of this act?
3. What are the services LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness wished they have received under The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in Los Angeles?

This study has three research questions. The first question is how can the perceptions of LGBTQ young adults and their K-12 school experiences under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in Los Angeles tell us about the strengths and failures of this act, the second question is how can the experiences of LGBTQ young adults and their K-12 school experiences under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in Los Angeles tell us about the strengths and failures of this act, and the third question is what are the services LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness wished they received under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in Los Angeles? The conclusion that Tierney & Hallett (2012) come to is that homeless youth are silenced and invisible in a social service system that is overburdened with bureaucratic red tape. The authors advise that to give homeless adolescents a voice, program designers, researchers, and policy makers should listen to their stories and act upon their ideas. An interview guide (see Appendix B) with eight sections that delve deeply into the overarching research questions has been created to ask the research participants.

This study requires two levels of trust according to Tierney & Hallett (2012). The first level of trust is with the shelter. Why should the shelter trust the researcher? The second level of trust is with the individuals being interviewed. Any interviewee deserves respect, but with homeless youth, the topic was frequently connected to serious emotional and psychological problems (p. 24).
Figure 3
McKinney-Vento Services Not Reaching LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness

*Note.* McKinney-Vento services currently does not socially support LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Not receiving the appropriate McKinney-Vento services amplifies risk and increases minority stress which can lead to long-term homelessness for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.
CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH (RESULTS)

LGBTQ young adults (18-26 years old) who experienced homelessness in their youth (K-12 years) were the focus of the interviews to understand their perceptions, experiences, and descriptions of schools and whether they thought McKinney-Vento services were adequate or inadequate. This investigation interviewed 21 LGBTQ adults who remained anonymous based on a previous similar study by Forge (2012). Their written or oral consent would be logged by the researcher through IRB protocol. For example, at the end of any quotes used in the analysis, I put African American, Pansexual, Gender Non-binary, 21 years old. According to Tierney & Hallett (2012), “there is no magic formula” in interviewing homeless youth. This researcher did his best to build a sense of trust built on respect and reciprocity.

The research design required talking in-depth with young LGBTQ adults aged 18-26 years old to understand their views of schools while experiencing homelessness and identifying as LGBTQ. The research design was an exploratory qualitative interview using the Intersectional Minority Stress and Risk Amplification Model as utilized by Robinson (2021) and Forge (2012) through a grounded theory approach. This approach simplified the study in the field and with IRB without diminishing the ability to figure out the LGBTQ youth’s perception and experiences of homelessness and what services LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness wished they received and why.
This was a qualitative study at two single-site organizations that provide services to LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles. One of the organizations was the Los Angeles LGBT Center, a LGBTQ organization in Los Angeles where services such as housing, mental-health counseling, and health services are offered. They are one of the largest LGBTQ organizations in the world and they have eight sites in the city of Los Angeles. They have dedicated housing for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Many attempts were made to get approval from the LGBT Center to no avail. Research participants were recruited through snowball sampling by talking to them outside of the shelter and many of whom were hanging out with their friends and were interested based on the gift card compensation factor and being able to do the interview immediately outside the center.

The other site was a small homeless shelter in Hollywood that specialized in helping youth homelessness called My Friend’s Place. After speaking with the program coordinators, they informed me that there are participants at the shelter who would qualify for my research. They posted fliers where youth receive free services such as food, clothing, showers, and transportation services. Many participants called to schedule the interview and snowball sampling allowed more friends and referrals to complete the interviews. Because of the lack of space and the desire of the participants to do the interview as soon as possible, the interviews were conducted across the street from the shelter at a fast-food restaurant.

The data collected was 21 interviews from respondents who identify as LGBTQ who experienced homelessness during some time in their elementary-high school (K-12) years. Depending on the type of interview, some interviews were held face-to-face in front of the
homeless shelter, some on Zoom (virtual), and some were arranged with the participant over the phone or text message and met in person.

Collection and Analysis of Data

After gathering the interviews, I took a general qualitative approach and looked for themes that connected to my research questions. I did this by gathering keywords, categories, and themes. Taken from Robinson’s (2018) method, I used initial line-by-line open coding including codes such as “acceptance,” “teachers did nothing about it,” “one hell to another,” “not stable at all,” and “make life easier for me and others who are my kind.” I wrote memos about the action occurring within the coding of the data. I moved onto more engaged and focused coding to move the analysis to a more conceptual level, while being able to compare similarities and differences across the interviews. Focused codes can include themes such as “Gender Dysphoria,” “Not being taken seriously,” “Mental Health,” “Acceptance.” From axial coding, to identify the relationship between the focused codes (Charmaz, 2006), such as how being LGBTQ and homeless was related to perceptions and experiences at school and services received under McKinney-Vento, I moved on to selective coding. This final inductive approach connected all my categories into one core category. In doing so I defined one unified theory around my research.

Theme building through multiple interviews yielded important themes that led to a multiplicity of identities among the LGBTQ youth, even though they were all LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. This research was general qualitative research. My explanation
EXPERIENCES OF MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT BY LGBTQ YOUTH

reflects the important space needed for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness to voice their individual needs and suffering.

Data Collection Procedures

The primary research strategy was a qualitative interview. Participants were either asked to fill out and sign a consent form or provide oral consent before conducting the interviews. All questions asked during the interview were related to research purposes only. Participants had the complete right to remain anonymous or reveal personal details if appropriate. All face-to-face interviews were conducted in Los Angeles. The interviews lasted about one-hour and centered around the three research questions and grounded by the intersectional minority stress and risk amplification model, asking questions that are pertinent to experiences and description of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as well as questions related to services the LGBTQ youth have wished they have received while they were experiencing homelessness. Follow-up questions were asked regarding personal insights into the broader topic of homelessness in general, questions research participants found difficult to answer during the interview, questions that would have been interesting, controversial, or difficult for the participants to be asked, and questions that were not discussed about homelessness that would have been important in helping other people understand what it is like to be homeless, and any advice the participants would give to a person who has just become homeless.
Theme Building

I recorded the interviews through Otter.ai Pro, a voice meeting notes and real-time transcription application I downloaded on my phone. I paid to use the Otter.ai Pro account to capture multiple interviews within a few months. I also used a digital recorder as a backup device, at times when I was new to using the Otter.ai Pro application on my phone. I have also done virtual interviews via Zoom to record the interviews and uploaded the audio file to Otter.ai Pro to get a transcription of the interview. The participants were assured that all recorded interviews will be confidential through oral or written consent. Many of them opted to do an oral consent, but a few signed the written consent. Recorded data were expunged after the research was complete. More details are to be explained below in the protection of human subjects.

I auto transcribed each interview into Otter.ai Pro, a transcript generator, and simultaneously took field notes in a traditional approach of writing in my composition book for each interview. Otter.ai also generated summary keywords after it transcribed each interview which helped me with the analysis. The transcripts were categorized using color coded themes with the use of Google spreadsheet and aligned to my three research questions. I reviewed my work with experts and consulted the empirical literature to further review my keywords to categories, and themes. The transcriptions and field notes were coded following a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory allows the researcher to create new insights based on the respondents’ accounts (Charmaz, 2006).

Interviews were conducted over the course of three months starting in March of 2023 and concluding in June of 2023. I then coded the data by first uploading all 21 (23 documents total
because one of the interviews were broken into three segments) interviews through Atlas.ti resulting in a total of 1,355 quotations, of which there were 1,928 codes. I manually coded the interview transcriptions that had been saved as Microsoft Word documents and uploaded them on the Atlas.ti platform. The coding process focused only on the respondent answers to the interview questions. Focused coding is then implemented to move the analysis to a more conceptual level, which includes the overarching themes description of experiences of McKinney-Vento and services received under McKinney-Vento. The research interview guide is borrowed and adapted from Dr. Brandon Robinson whose research expertise is on LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Afterwards, I took the most salient themes, and it resulted in 26 categories. Conducting a more thorough exploration and analysis of the 26 categories resulted in the emerging of 7 distinct themes. (See Appendix E for details).

Interview respondents were volunteers contacted via recruitment materials approved by the dissertation committee and the IRB. All interviews were conducted virtually using either zoom, telephone, and face to face. Respondents were all native English speakers above the age of eighteen who were from all over the United States and territories including: New York, Washington, Puerto Rico, Louisiana, Alabama, Delaware, Tennessee, California, Texas, and Colorado.
### Table 1

**Demographics Table**

<table>
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<th>Participant num.</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnic background</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Pronouns</th>
<th>Sexual identity</th>
<th>Gender identity</th>
<th>Current living situation</th>
<th>State</th>
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<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>He/him</td>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>Cis male</td>
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<td>They/them</td>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>Trans</td>
<td>homeless</td>
<td>California</td>
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<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
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<td>Cis male</td>
<td>Living with roommates</td>
<td>California</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>High school</td>
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<td>Cis male</td>
<td>homeless</td>
<td>California</td>
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<td>homeless</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>he/him Bisexual</td>
<td>Cis male</td>
<td>transitional living</td>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Many of the participants attended high schools in Southern California and the data collected can be used to further future research especially at the Local Education Agency (LEA) level. There were six participants who attended high school in Los Angeles County, one in San Diego County, and one in San Bernardino County. Respondents were assured confidentiality in hopes of fostering a free and open dialogue. When referencing either of the interview respondents, their identity will be coded to only reveal generalized demographic information.

**Connection to RQ1:**

How can the perception of K-12 schools by LGBTQ young adults under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in Los Angeles tell us about the strengths and failures of this act? To answer the first research question there were two themes that emerged from the interviews: life and institutions and friendships. The questions that were asked by the interview guide relate to the perceptions of McKinney-Vento services (see Appendix B, section VI).

**Theme #1 - Life and Institutions**

An important theme that emerged by participants were that schools were a complex place meeting the needs of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Many participants felt grateful they received necessary school supplies, schools doing the best they could with limited resources, and the teachers who built genuine relationships with LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness and showed empathy. However, it was also a place where they got bullied by peers, ignored by teachers and administrators, and discriminated against by their parents and other adults.

“They gave me a laptop, a Chromebook. I asked them and I got it, and they gave
it to me. Like pen notebooks, everything. Calculator. Everything. It was [the teacher].

But I think it was the school but he's the one who talked to them because at that time, I had social anxiety. And I was learning how to defend myself at that time when I was going through homelessness. Yeah. And he's the one who connected me to the shelter actually. [...] They [The school] gave me bus tokens, yeah. I used to go back every other day to get the tokens. Over here [XYZ High School] I had the time of my life; they were super chill. Everyone was super chill over there. I just had to worry about my back after I left or before I came here. At one time I was on the train, Seventh Street Metro Center. It was from them, MS-13. When I was in high school, they saw me over there and they're like "hey faggot." Oh my God, it was so embarrassing but luckily the police heard, and the police were like "hey guys, you need to stop."

(Filipino American, Bisexual, Cis-male, 23 years old)

“Yeah. Notebooks, pencils, and papers, and school bus. [...] It was acceptable because they didn't have to provide you with that, but they did. I felt grateful.”

(Creole, Bisexual, Non-binary, 26 years old)

“I mean, it's a public school. I mean, what else can they do for me? Whatever it was, whatever they did for me was enough. I should be thankful. Because a lot of people will tell me that my generation is entitled. [...] No. No. No. Now I feel cuz now I see like what people go through and I'm like, nah, whatever they did for me, but at that time, I felt helpless. [...] To be honest, I wanted someone like a clique or a group to protect me.”
(Filipino American, Bisexual, Cis-male, 23 years old)

“Maybe give them a rating of like a four out of 10 when it comes to helping. because as much as they did try it out. There was no way for them to actually help the situations outside of school or the things that were out of their control. And so, I definitely do give credit to the efforts they've made, but ultimately, there are always going to be limits where help can no longer help. You have to take the initiative in your own hands. That's when things become difficult.”

(White, Bisexual, Cis-male, 20 years old)

“Honestly, I was not aware of the services that I could receive, not until this moment, I really don't know that there are services that are [available] to certain people. So, until that time, I wasn't really aware. And if I had known I don't think I would have advocated for myself, I think I would have coped because that's where I've adapted all my life, I've coped. so, I've been able to cope. So, I think I would have coped had I known that I would have been aware of how to access certain services.”

(Puerto Rican, Pansexual, Two-Spirit, 23 years old)

“Just because it was very limited in scope. It was like, you know, with ABC Charter School at least or rather like the people attached to the LA Education Corps that worked for ABC Charter High School. They like what I appreciate about them as they did their best with what they had access to. I can't really fault them for that, you know, like, a lot of the places that they didn't know were just full, you know, like, by the time I was almost here, it was almost springtime. Or with no, it was still like nearing the dead of
winter. Yeah. So frickin like tiny home communities were booked up because you know, people wanted to get out of the cold. And like the resources they had just were gone. And it was like, you know, find a roommate in like, two days or, you know.”

(African American, Pansexual, Gender Non-binary, 21 years old)

“All that when I was an optimist, yes. I received mental health services, like what you said. Through my probation. No, the school didn't offer that that was just for school, and they wouldn't offer stuff like that [in relation to any other school services]. […] There was like a current period of when I wasn’t going to school but then I went back into school when I went back to Rialto. So, I wasn’t coming to school. I wasn’t going to school in Pico-Rivera, I was going to school only in Rialto. So, I left the city, but I was not going to school for a bit of period for a year and then I went back to the city and then re-enrolled.”

(Hispanic, Bisexual, Cis-male, 24 years old)

“I feel like that's the main route for why they didn't offer the help that I needed, because they already had their own preconceived notions about myself and again, just like no care for LGBTQ youth.”

(Indigenous Mexican, Heterosexual, Trans-female, 24 years old)

**Theme #2 Friendships**

Another important theme that emerged from the participants was friendships. Many participants stated that schools did not do a good job identifying or prioritizing their needs, let
alone know of their existence as LGBTQ and homeless. An alternative solution was friendship. Some participants reported other LGBTQ friends were a source of support, and a reprieve from home life. They provided acceptance, love, and understanding. However, some participants admitted to having few friends, feeling pressure to fit-in, difficulty forming friendships, and having acquaintances, not friends. All of the participants did not know the existence of McKinney-Vento and the services they were entitled to. However, one participant gave more credit to his high school in California taking a more proactive choice for helping him as a LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness than his home state in Delaware.

“Um, trust, dependency on people, accountability all those things were never stable. Somebody will say, ‘oh you’re my friend you could talk to me,’ and that's one thing I've learned now like when people tell me ‘Oh, do you got friends?’ No, no, no, no, no, no, I don't have friends. I have acquaintances. There's no such thing as friends anymore. You know?”

(Multiracial, Bisexual, Cis-male, 26 years old)

“I have one brother. My dad was still alive. My mom died when I was five. It was kind of rocky because like dad had married my stepmom... They made life harder yeah... they would like to talk bad about me say mean stuff because I was a little chubby. Probably fat and stuff... [Friends made life] easier. Sometimes, maybe not a lot, but I have close friends that were very understanding what I was going through and what I was becoming. I just always felt misunderstood.”
EXPERIENCES OF MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT BY LGBTQ YOUTH

(White, Gay, Cis-male, 24 years old)

_They were there (gay straight alliance, LGBTQ groups), but I just didn’t want to join because I felt like okay, even though I am one of them, but I am not one of them. Obviously, it makes sense. I'm not gonna. Because if I did that at ABC High [School] then people would have made fun of me over there. Because they started doing that. Anyway, but at XYZ High [School] I was part of the gang, so I don't want to kill my rep[utation]. But they were there. They were active, but I wasn’t interested. Okay. And the people that were there were very, I'm sorry to say, but were flamboyant._

(Filipino American, Bisexual, Cis-male, 23 years old)

Perception is subjective because it is unique to the individual. According to Robinson (2021), proximal internal stressors are subjective such as internalizing negative societal attitudes. One student may see school as safe while another as not being safe at all. It is a matter of experience and how they internalized societal attitudes based on their identity throughout their lives and during their formative years in K-12. Evidence from the interviews of some LGBTQ youth who experienced homelessness in K-12 shows that the McKinney-Vento Act has strengths in the areas of some schools doing a good job providing basic school supplies, gratitude felt among some McKinney-Vento program recipients, and some schools doing the most with limited resources. On the contrary, the McKinney-Vento Act has failed in the areas of schools not doing a good job with some schools by providing limited resources, some schools providing inadequate services, and some schools doing an overall poor job implementing McKinney-
Vento. There is room to explore if schools are using financial resources for McKinney-Vento students that could be from somewhere else in the school’s budget.

**Connection to RQ 2:**

How can the experiences of K-12 school by LGBTQ young adults under The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in Los Angeles tell us about the strengths and failures of this act? The questions asked in the interview connecting to this research question were: How did people in your family make life easier? Harder? How do you think being LGBTQ affected your family relations? Have you had any contact with foster care or other child services? If so, can you tell me about it? Describe for me your school life growing up. Where did you go to school while experiencing homelessness? How did people in school make life easier? Harder? How do you think being LGBTQ affected your school experiences?

Experience is objective. Experiences shared by groups of people matter. To answer the second research question there were three themes that emerged from the interviews: higher risk, mental health, and safety. The questions that were asked by the interview guide relate to the experiences of McKinney-Vento services (see Appendix B, section IV).

**Theme# 1 - Higher Risk**

The theme of Higher Risk emerged from interviews with LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Instead of measuring higher risk, my study captured what risk looks like in the
everyday lives of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. How do they experience risk and what is the lived experiences of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness? How do they understand higher risk? My study captured how to address those risks. Categories such as gender dysphoria, learning disabilities, homelessness, not feeling safe, not being academically involved, behavioral issues, and crime were all categorized as higher risk pathways to homelessness for LGBTQ youth.

Multiple participants who identify as trans or non-binary used code words or phrases such as: “gender identity”, “general healthcare”, “hormone replacement therapy”, “felt dismissive by others”, “gender is sacred to me”, and “mix of both masc/fem” to discuss their feelings of gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria is a feeling of discomfort or distress that can occur in people whose gender identity differs from their assigned gender or gender-related physical characteristics at birth. Transgender and gender-diverse people may experience gender dysphoria at some point in their lives (Mayo Clinic, 2022). This was an unexpected topic that was not anticipated at the conception of this study but came up in several interviews where the participants identified as queer or non-binary.

“I mean, not one that I think would be a relevancy. I don't I mean, I don't know. Like, yeah, I mean, like, while we were having maybe discussing like mental health and how like, taught like, how, like having an LGBT identity and being homeless like ties into that but I know that's not really like your focus like, yeah. But you know, it is like an important part of what makes us totally agree, you know, being like, be homeless and what makes it so difficult to like, get back on our feet because it's like, you know,
dysphoria is like, you know, mentally taxing people, you know, constantly parading us mentally taxing, it causes you to be depressed and, you know.”

(African American, Pansexual, Gender Non-binary, 21 years old)

“At school A, I got jumped so many times because of my sexuality. Because they found me kissing a guy over there. At that time, I had long hair and they started calling me names like ‘sissy boy, lady boy, and faggot. I didn’t tell anyone because it would have made things worse for me... One time, I spoke to the principal about a bully and he said, ‘hey, you guys are both model students so you should both set a better example for us.’ So, both of us got a slap on the wrist.

(Filipino American, Bisexual, Cis-male, 23 years old)

Theme #2 – Mental Health

The theme mental health emerged from interviews with LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. There is an elevated level of mental health among LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Categories such as gender dysphoria, drug addictions, hard life, COVID-19 were all categorized as showing elevated levels of mental health among LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.

‘Yeah, she [my mother] was taking medication for bipolar disorder and ADHD. I think that might have been what caused her psychosis. But then we were able to eventually get her to check herself into a mental hospital and she got put on anti-psychotics and she started to stabilize... Mental Health was a really big struggle [for me]. They did diagnose me with ADHD, depression and autism. So, for a while I was getting
put on medication for it... My goal back then was to go to college for engineering. My mom had a psychotic break. So that's kind of what got me to stop attending school. The perfect scenario for me would have just been to get through school and go to college like I wanted to, really just to live the life that I envisioned building for myself, but never had the opportunity to build it.”

(White, Bisexual, Cis-male, 20 years old)

“Mental health. Yeah. Important? Yeah, I was taking medication for depression but then I did you know, a DMT. DMT is like a psychedelic. So, one of my friends he's the one who told me, 'Hey take DMT and it's going to give you like an ego experience.’”

(Filipino American, Bisexual, Cis-male, 23 years old)

“I felt stressed about my dysphoria. Because I experienced gender dysphoria when I was little. I would tell my parents that I don't feel like a boy. I feel like a girl. And I just never had the language to describe what it was up until right now.”

(Indigenous Mexican, Heterosexual, Trans-female, 24 years old)

Theme # 3- Safety

The theme safety emerged from interviews with LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Safety at school was another complex issue among LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Some felt safe when they were with friends at school, and not with institutional or administrative support at school. Some felt safe only with certain teachers they trusted, and some
only felt safe during certain parts of the day at school. Categories such as teachers, never disclosed homelessness, and never disclosed sexual orientation were all categorized as showing ambivalent level of feeling safe among LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.

“The place that felt the safest for me was maybe like the theater classes I was taking during school. The art classes, just like for me a way of escaping reality. I would hang outside at a coffee shop or in a field away from everyone. That was just because it was easier to avoid conflict. The place that felt the least safe would have to be the cafeteria maybe sometimes depending on which class I was in sometimes class because there were like certain bullies there typically where everyone just hung out.”

(White, Bisexual, Cis-male, 20 years old)

“So, for California [school]? Yes. Like I said, again, because there are people out there who truly want to see us succeed. And we want to do everything in their power to make sure that we get what we asked for. Delaware [school], no, like I said, again, it's more like every man, every woman for themselves. So basically, it's like, 'hey, nobody helped me. So I'm not going to help you. So if I can do it, you can do it.’”

(Multiracial, Bisexual, Cis-male, 26 years old)

“I wouldn't say that I got the chance to feel discriminated against because it was very different since I was doing school during COVID, and everything was on the computer. But everybody from school definitely knew that I disappeared, and everybody was actually asking me why I was and if I'm okay, like what's going on? Because everybody knew that I was in an abusive foster home. I think it was more of like care and
concern like or me because people knew that I had a really crazy foster mother. But I never openly like said to anybody that I was going through homelessness at the time, except for one of my friends which one of my friend’s family like they literally started building up like your garage to try to help me stay in it, but I just I ended up having to migrate out here to LA because there was no way for me to be homeless in Fontana. It was very dangerous. But people didn't know. I don't think people still don't know. Maybe up until last year when I made a GoFundMe and because I had lost my house. Yeah, foster home. Yeah, I had lost my home. I don't know where and so I posted a GoFundMe, like, hey, like help, excuse me, help me escape like the foster care system and homelessness and I literally got $1,000 in one day. And I was just using that to get like hotels and stuff and like, even then, like the people that didn't pay attention because I have a good social media following like everybody just gave like love and concern and like a lot of people donated to me and she just asked me still like if I'm okay, which was very nice to know that I had that.”

(Black, Queer Non-binary, Trans, 20 years old)

Experience is objective, a universal truth, when it is a common experience shared by a group, in this case LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. According to Robinson (2021), distal external stressors are objective such as experiencing discrimination and violence. Collective experiences of gender dysphoria, homelessness, and not feeling safe are a matter of shared experience and how they experienced discrimination and violence. Evidence from the interviews of some LGBTQ youth who experienced homelessness in K-12 shows that the McKinney-Vento Act has some strengths in the areas of rubber-stamp compliance, providing
basic necessities. On the contrary, the McKinney-Vento Act has revealed higher risk of homelessness, the complexities of mental health, and safety. There is room for improvement in McKinney-Vento in all the themes of higher risk, mental health, and safety among LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Addressing homeless youth is not a one-size fits all situation based on this qualitative research and agrees with current scholarship and research on homeless youth. Even LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness is not a one-size fits all situation. Future implementation in addressing the needs of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness should heed this warning based on the summary of evidence and connection to research question number one. Diversity and inclusion should be one of the best practices used in revising the next iteration of McKinney-Vento, and the homeless LGBTQ policy agenda.

Connection to RQ 3:

What are the services LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness wished they have received under The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in Los Angeles? This question was one of the most essential questions in the interview and it was placed in the middle of the interview. It was phrased as: “Please tell me what kind of services you wish schools can provide for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness?” The participants’ understanding of this question is open to interpretation. I intentionally placed emphasis on the word “do you wish” to elicit the answer of their personal opinion, and not a general opinion or politically correct answer. This may have been interpreted differently for each participant. To answer the third research question there were three themes that emerged from the interviews: More Resources Now, Resources that Benefit the Community, Government Should Do More to Promote McKinney-Vento, and Advice
to Others-Resilience. The questions that were asked by the interview guide relate to the services received under McKinney-Vento (see Appendix B, section V).

**Theme #1 - More Resources Now, Resources that Benefit the Community**

The theme More Resources Now, Resources that Benefit the Community emerged among three different research participants. They believed that there was a lack of services especially for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. They advocated for safe spaces for LGBTQ youth on campus, especially for queer trans individuals, professional development training for staff, student assemblies, clinicians that can provide hormone replacement therapy, providing toiletries to homeless students, gift cards, community work for pay, homeless queer youth work program, assistance with cell phones, metro transit cards, and scholarships. Others advocated for services like case management counseling.

“Not that I recall. I don't really feel like school had a lot of services for LGBTQ youth... Definitely safe spaces like... LGBTQ like safe spaces or groups that other queer trans individuals can go to. Schools can provide more education with like staff members. Cuz I just felt like they were ignorant as much as the other kids were too.”

(Indigenous Mexican, Heterosexual, Trans-female, 24 years old)

“I think that schools should provide like a safe room that has like clinicians, like nurses that can give out hormones and things like whatever that can be viable to trans youth, LGBT youth [hormone as in hormone therapy]. Yeah, like anything that, you know you can get their hands on because it's like very dangerous being like, especially like...
trans and homeless because you get hate crimes a lot up here and a lot of people don't have the resources to keep up with their HRT. And stuff like that. And I think that's really important. And that also is something that's huge that drives, like a lot of depression and like queer community and people killing themselves and things like that. So that would really benefit, and you know, maybe like they schools don't have the resources to necessarily always give food but maybe they can give out like, baskets with toiletries, and blankets and gift cards, like for a grocery store where you can like buy things over and over again. I feel like they should have like those type of resources where homeless like queer youth because this like gives homeless queer youth to have a chance to stand up on their feet. So, like if they were able to have resources like that, that'd be really cool. And I would do a lot and I think that it will definitely steer like a lot of our youth from doing drugs and getting involved in that type of route and leading them on to like, a path of light and like brightness and, you know, knowing that there's still hope even if you go through these types of things, there's always like a resource and somebody that cares, you know, like given the resources that actually show like that are gonna benefit our community and show that oh, people are putting thought into this.”

(Black, Queer Non-binary, Trans, 20 years old)

“Case management, something like that. Somehow, I don't know what other I was like one-on-one interview. No, like, case management. Yeah.”

(Hispanic, Bisexual, Cis-male, 24 years old)
Theme #2 - Government Should Do More to Promote McKinney-Vento

The theme Government Should Do More to Promote McKinney-Vento emerged as participants spoke about what they wished schools could provide for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Not one of the 21 participants were aware of their rights under McKinney-Vento, and all 21 participants experienced difficulties self-advocating for themselves. This could be because of their lack of knowledge of McKinney-Vento as well as the shame and stigma attached to homelessness in not wanting to be identified.

“Not that I recall. I don't really feel like school had a lot of services for LGBTQ youth.”

(Indigenous Mexican, Heterosexual, Trans-female, 24 years old)

“I think a system where, you know, there was like, zero tolerance for verbal harassment and a system where students were enlightened about certain things concerning people’s backgrounds, certain things concerning, you know, discrimination, certain things concerning class, the students were enlightened. And they were encouraged to mix with their peers, no matter what background no matter what, you know, origin no matter where they’re from. So, I think there has to be a lot of that enlightenment, at school, in schools and students should also be encouraged to teachers too teachers should also be encouraged to embrace students of whatever background of whatever sort of sexual orientation whatever. Whatever, gender, whatever, if you learn to like just to be accepting schools and school is a place where we’re going to raise the next
generation of people that are going to run the nation. So, I believe we should, like, do more to inculcate the values both of love and tolerance, and acceptance. So, I think that should be taught, I also think religion, religion should also religion should also like be the good aspects of religion should also be we spoken about because it seems there's still, you know, the religion is just like sidelined in, in school. So, I think the good aspects of religion should be talked about and should be upheld.”

(Puerto Rican, Pansexual, Two-Spirit, 23 years old)

Theme #3 - Advice to Others - Resilience

The theme Advice to Others emerged as all participants were asked what advice you would give to a person who has just become homeless in the last question of the interview. Many respondents said to find resources for anyone who is experiencing homelessness, not getting trapped in negative thoughts, and finding optimism even in a negative headspace.

“I think they should seek government assistance. And that's the first thing they should do. And then they should try to keep their head high, keep their head up and like get your head up and try to you know, get a job and do this, do these things that are necessary to help them get out of the situation. I think it is possible to avoid homelessness, especially in America, if you can be able to utilize your hands and your mind. So yeah, I would just give them the advice that they should seek government assistance to address the government systems and they should also try to work hard, work hard, and try to get themselves out of the situation.”

(Puerto Rican, Pansexual, Two-Spirit, 23 years old)
I don't go down the rabbit hole. I like to use that term because it keeps you from beating yourself, it keeps going back down that rabbit hole. Once you go down and you keep digging. You still end up nowhere. You still keep going down that hole and whether it's six feet on the ground. It's just gonna keep on going.

(White, Gay, Cis-male, 24 years old)

“Your life is not ending, it's just beginning.”

(Multiracial, Bisexual, Cis-male, 26 years old)

Connecting the Themes to the Research Questions

Table 4 below gives a quick overview of how the three research questions and the themes that surfaced during coding matched. There are several factors and complexities causing the overlap of several topics across the research questions, as is the case with the study's topic, Experiences and Description of The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act by LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness.

Table 2
Research Question and Theme Alignment and Orientation

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<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Themes &amp; Categories</th>
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<td>1. How can the perception of K-12 schools by</td>
<td>Life and Institutions</td>
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LGBTQ young adults under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in Los Angeles tell us about the strengths and failures of this act?

- Provided basic school supplies (pen, notebook, calculator, pencils, erasers, binders)
- Feeling grateful, giving credit where it’s due (11, 20)
- Can’t fault them with limited resources (6)
- It's a public school "what else can they do for me?” (18)
- 4/10 - rate school. Limits to what they can do. (20)

Friends hips
- Acceptance and understanding
- Felt safe
- Difficulty forming friendships
- Extracurricular activities

2. How can the experiences of K-12 school by LGBTQ young adults under The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in Los Angeles tell us about the strengths and failures of this act?

Higher Risk
- Gender Dysphoria
- Learning Disabilities
- Homelessness
- Not feeling safe
- Not academically involved
- Behavioral Issues
- Crime

Mental Health
- Hard Life
- Covid-19
What we learn from these findings is that K-12 in general, does not have the requisite procedural safeguards and rights in place necessary for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness to seek help or redress their concerns (i.e., higher risk, mental health, and safety), and has a high level of complications for several reasons. The initial, quite glaring concern is that the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act has yet to devise the means for accommodating students experiencing homelessness, regardless of their gender and sexual identity. Also made

<table>
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<td>Government Should Do More to Promote McKinney-Vento</td>
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<td>Keep your Head up</td>
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<td>Stay the Course/ Keep Moving Forward</td>
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<td>Your life is not Ending, It's Just Beginning</td>
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clear during this process, as well as in the literature, disparities continue for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Analysis of the themes also reveal higher risk, mental health, and safety are complicated by life in which institutions and friendships play a unique role for each individual by the experiences and description of LGBTQ homeless youth. These ambiguities complicate conversations around knowledge, training, and implementation as it applies to LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. This concern is exemplified by facts like the disproportionate number of homeless youths who identify as LGBTQ (Durso & Gates, 2012; Ray, 2006), and McKinney-Vento services not reaching LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness (see Figure 3).
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In 2021, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis vetoed a bipartisan bill that had passed in the state legislature. This bill aimed to allocate $750,000 for the construction of an LGBT homeless youth shelter and an additional $150,000 earmarked to provide counseling for survivors of the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, recognized as the deadliest act of violence against the LGBTQ community in the U.S. (Fraieli, 2021). This decision had significant implications for the McKinney-Vento Act, extending beyond the seemingly straightforward act of providing basic necessities to homeless youth. For LGBTQ youth facing homelessness, the veto underscored the severity of the injustice, emphasizing that offering just a toothbrush fell woefully short of addressing their complex and pressing needs.

The conceptual frameworks used were the risk amplification model and the intersectional minority stress framework to ground the three research questions. Four things were confirmed from the literature review of my research interviewing LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. First, the findings of higher risk, mental health, and safety among LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness in my research matches the research from Tierney & Ward (2017). My research goes beyond quantifying levels of higher risk, mental health, and safety; it delves into the daily realities faced by LGBTQ youth grappling with homelessness. By exploring how these individuals perceive and experience risk, as well as understanding the nuances of their lived experiences, my study sheds light on 21 unique perspectives. Additionally, the findings contribute insights into effectively addressing and mitigating the identified risks faced by LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.
Second, the negative attitudes towards LGBTQ are common among teachers and administrators through my 21 interviews were real (Tierney & Ward, 2017). Many felt unheard of and ignored by adults who were in charge of the classroom and the environment of the school. Third, there is a real gap in research that looks at the intersection of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Act (Tierney & Ward, 2017). How are K-12 schools addressing their needs? Schools need to understand LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness are often not homeless because of poverty in the family, rather they are more likely to be on the street because they are rejected by their family members, and more likely to find community elsewhere among friends and other LGBTQ youth.

Fourth, the participants in my research described and experienced their schools using a one size fits all solution to address homeless youth (Tierney & Hallett, 2012). The services they wish they received from school certainly attest to different needs. Intersectional minority stress framework also reveals how race finds its way among black trans youth, Latin youth, white gay youth, etc. The data collected from my research can certainly show future narratives among those lines of inquiry.

My initial impression at the start of my research included a call for regulatory change that requires federal data to be collected and reported on LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Since they a small group in a large homeless population, they are particularly vulnerable to experiencing homelessness. After conducting my research there may not be one single answer, and there may be alternative competing explanations as to why LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness are not getting the services under McKinney-Vento. What is ambiguous is that
LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness may have a self-perception issue where they think they are not getting services they feel they deserve. Also, there is a question of schools using resources for McKinney-Vento students that could be from somewhere else in the school budget. This might be something that the LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness might not be aware of and that was not part of the scope of this research.

Another competing explanation may be that one McKinney-Vento school liaison is not enough to identify and assist LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. More school liaisons may have a more positive impact in identifying LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. McKinney-Vento might be doing all it can do from a federal legislation point-of-view. These new potential pieces to the puzzle are important implications for homeless youth researchers, policy makers addressing homelessness from federal, state, to local levels, as well as school districts identifying homeless youth. Another explanation is that local McKinney-Vento school liaisons do not have sufficient training on McKinney-Vento to identify homeless youth. They may need more professional development training from non-profit organizations that specialize in McKinney-Vento, as well as more resources from their Local Education Agencies (LEA) to identify homeless youth and provide them with the necessary resources to implement McKinney-Vento with fidelity.

Moreover, most of the participants gave oral consent rather than signed consent. Many of them used aliases as they had run-ins with law enforcement and preferred not to use their legal names. The stigma around homelessness was real during the interviews.

**Reflections on Qualitative Data Gathering**
The insights gathered from interviews conducted over a three-month period in this study hold significant importance as they shed light on the perceptions and experiences of LGBTQ youth facing homelessness. These include issues like gender dysphoria, mental health, feelings of insecurity, as well as their ability to openly express their views on schools' performance and their desired services. The value of this research lies in its potential to guide schools and policymakers in implementing or amending McKinney-Vento, identifying programs to address the needs of LGBTQ homeless youth, and establishing a strong foundation to lead them out of chronic homelessness. Moreover, this research may pave the way for future researchers to explore the specialized field of LGBTQ education policy. Ultimately, the vision is to create program(s) in collaboration with non-profit homeless shelters and funding sources that can utilize publicly available local, state, and federal funding related to homelessness.

**Reflections on Conceptual Framework**

Intersectional Minority Stress (Robinson, 2021) and Risk Amplification Model (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999) were the two conceptual frameworks to look at the issue of LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness. Using Robinson’s distal-proximal approach to frame minority stress model, where distal external stressors come from objective events such as experiencing discrimination and violence, and proximal internal stressors come from subjective events such as internalizing negative societal attitude, I was able to better orient the research questions (experiences vs. perception) and align it to my themes understanding the issue LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Resilience was a hallmark trait that all 21 participants carried who identified as LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.
The interview guide was created mirroring the intersectional minority stress model as it placed emphasis on social contexts to draw out the research participants’ “norms, values, mores, and related processes of the social context” (Gattis & Larson, 2016, p. 80) of being homeless among LGBTQ youth. The answers of the research participants reflected social contexts mattering for the LGBTQ homeless population more than the sexual minority status itself.

According to the Risk Amplification Model, when homeless youth and young adults come from negative environments at home, they are likely to encounter similar negative situations and environments while being homeless (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999). Consequently, they face an elevated risk of experiencing psychological and health issues. For sexual minority youth, the stress arising from their identity, coupled with the challenges of homelessness, further increases their vulnerability to negative outcomes. Participants in the research often cited that their hard life involved rocky family relations such as alcoholism, drug use, physical, emotional, verbal, and sexual abuse in the family. LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness had their risks amplified in not feeling safe at home, school, and on the streets.

**Limitations**

During my research, there were many limitations and difficulties encountering the sampling and analysis that I had not expected going into the research. One of the limitations was the intention of my questions in the interview guide. Participants may have interpreted the questions differently than what was intended. I tried to place emphasis on words such as “do you wish” to elicit a personal answer as opposed to a politically correct answer.
Four separate amendments were made to the Institutional Review Board in changing the research protocols and casting a wider net to recruit more research participants. Initially, after posting my research flier on my social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram) publicly, I had received hundreds of participants sign up on Calendly. I was enthusiastic, but after conducting the first five interviews virtually on Zoom, I noticed some of the participants had similar voices and realized that scammers might be signing up for the gift-card component. There was a problem with recruitment. Therefore, I changed the Calendly link and requested changes in my protocols to have participants show some sort of proof proving who they are (i.e., providing social media handles, school ID, or turning their cameras on during the interview).

Second, I also decided to find purposeful places to physically flier my research. This led to not only posting my flyers on college and community college campuses, but it led me to attend LGBT rallies and networked with local activists fighting for LGBT rights and providing them my flyers so they could help me spread the word on their social media platforms.

Third, technology was a hindrance as I tried to conduct interviews via Zoom. One research participant had difficulty joining with their audio on Zoom. After repeated attempts with the Zoom meeting, the participant tried to call me on the phone to do the interview. However, this was also a challenge as the participant did not have a phone plan and was borrowing a friend’s phone who was also experiencing homelessness. Their phone was running low on battery during the interview, and the call was dropped multiple times. As a last resort, the researcher decided to meet with the participant face-to-face. However, in order to meet face-to-face, we had to follow the Covid-19 protocol, and that was another hurdle. As I was waiting for
the participant at a café, there were challenges to conducting the interview. The security guard at the café decided to shoo away my participant as they were coming in to appear homeless. Luckily, I was sitting right by the entrance and saw the interaction between the security guard and the participant and tried to remedy the misunderstanding right away. One of the managers then was concerned about the homeless participant at the café, so I had to reassure them that my research was not clinical research where bodily fluids was involved and that it was strictly a one-hour interview. The stigma attached to homeless individuals was a real concern in collecting my interview samples in a physical location.

Fourth, it was difficult finding participants willing to interview as well as agencies open for researchers to conduct work. The Los Angeles LGBT Center is a particularly large organization and does not reveal clients’ personal information to outsiders, or for research purposes unless it is research within the organization. Other organizations, understandably, are also weary of having outside people requesting personal information to protect the personal privacy of their clients. The topic of homelessness, by nature, is a personal and sensitive topic.

That is why the compensation factor was necessary to carry out the interviews. Participants received a $20 gift card to Ralphs, Amazon, Target, Starbucks, or Venmo for their time. Other limitations include lack of organizations working with homeless LGBTQ youth because there are few non-profit agencies providing care for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.

Future Research
The aim of this study is to look at the perspective of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness from the youth themselves. Using the intersectional minority stress framework, this study can also in the future look at the needs of Black trans youth, the needs of White gay cis-males, and the needs of Latinx trans youth. This study also did not look at the financial mechanism of McKinney-Vento from a school administrator’s perspective. The study strictly looked at the youth’s perception and experiences of McKinney-Vento and the services they wished they received as being LGBTQ and homeless.

Future studies may also seek to advance this research by creating a procedural safeguard to protect homeless students in K-12 similar to that of Special Education. This may require Congress to pass legislation designed specifically for protecting homeless students like that of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). There can also be more professional development training offered by LGBTQ non-profit organizations and homeless shelters to students, teachers, and school administrators to identify and provide more resources to specifically LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. And lastly, a word of advice for policymakers is to adopt the Japanese mindset of kaizen (改善) which is to make small little increments to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to update the legislation to include protections for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness rather than throwing everything out the window and starting from scratch. One suggestion is to survey McKinney-Vento liaisons and seek input on how to better serve the homeless student population, and in particular LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness that has been referred to by school counselors, teachers, school administrators, and government organizations.
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Appendix A- Consent Form

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN Experiences and Description of The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act by LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness (IRB # 4408)

You are invited to participate in an interview for a research project. Your involvement in this study will not provide any direct benefits to you. If you choose to volunteer, you will be interviewed for approximately one hour. Participating in this study carries minimal risk of potentially reliving any past or present traumatic experiences. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. Please continue to read further information about the study. If you have understood the purpose of the study, you may either sign the consent form provided or verbally confirm your agreement to participate.

STUDY LEADERSHIP: This research project is led by Jonathan Carter Lee, a doctoral student of education at Claremont Graduate University and supervised by Gwen Garrison, a professor of education at Claremont Graduate University.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to learn more about LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Act. This study is designed to test the idea that LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness are not included in federal policies designed to protect homeless youth at public schools even though there is a higher rate compared to non-LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. This is a study looking to better understand LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness and the services they are or should be receiving under McKinney-Vento by looking into the descriptions, experiences, and perceptions of young adults of their K-12 school experience.
ELIGIBILITY: To be in this study, you must be 18 years of age to 26 years old, identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer (LGBTQ), and experienced homelessness during childhood.

PARTICIPATION: During the study, you will be asked to complete an interview that will take about 30 minutes up to maximum 1 hour, asking about your description, experiences, and perceptions of homelessness during k-12, and services received while experiencing homelessness during k-12.

Examples of Questions are the following:

1. Please tell me about your identity while experiencing homelessness in school.
2. Please tell me about your identity as LGBTQ in school.
3. Please describe for me if school made you feel safe as a LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness?
4. Please tell me who you felt comfortable speaking to at school about your situation.
   4a. If you felt uncomfortable speaking to anyone at school, who and why?

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION: The risks that you run by taking part in this study are minimal. The risks include psychological distress and recollecting past trauma. The researchers will manage the risks by making the interviews confidential. No names or identifiable information will be used in the collection of data.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION: I do not expect the study to benefit you personally. This study will benefit me by helping me complete my graduate education and enabling me to publish the results in a scientific journal. This study is also intended to advance knowledge in a specific field of LGBTQ Education Policy.

COMPENSATION: At the end of the interview, you will spin a virtual wheel to determine their prize, which will be one of the following options: a $20 cash prize via Venmo, a $20 gift card to Amazon, a $20
EXPERIENCES OF MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT BY LGBTQ YOUTH

gift card to Target, or a $20 gift card to Starbucks. "Spinning the wheel" determines which form of compensation you will receive. If you prefer a different gift card option, you may request it, but it may not be available or may require additional processing time. For verification purposes and to avoid fraudulent interviews, when meetings are done virtually, you will be asked to turn on your video camera. You may be asked to show proof of identification (i.e., driver’s license, school ID, state ID, social media handle). Recording will only be done after the ID has been presented, so that the ID is not recorded. Only one gift card will be given to each participant. At any point during the interview, if it appears the person is not who they say they are, compensation will be forfeited, and the interview will end.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop or withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer any particular question for any reason without it being held against you. Your decision whether or not to participate will have no effect on your current or future connection with anyone at CGU, or the Los Angeles LGBT Center.

**Confidentiality:** Your individual privacy will be protected in all papers, books, talks, posts, or stories resulting from this study. In order to protect the confidentiality of your responses, I will erase all audio and visual recordings, delete all email correspondence, when research purposes are served after transcribing, coding, and summarizing them in order to protect participant privacy. However, in a group setting confidentiality is not 100% guaranteed because there are other members involved. Everyone’s privacy is important, each person should be respectful and not break confidentiality in the group interview of each other’s personal stories, and identifiable information (i.e., names, personal background information, etc.).

**Further Information:** If you have any questions or would like additional information about this study, please contact Jonathan Lee at (310) 422-4527 and jonathan.lee@cgu.edu. You may also contact Dr. Gwen Garrison at (909) 607-4282 and gwen.garrison@cgu.edu. The CGU Institutional Review Board
(IRB) has approved this project. If you have any ethical concerns about this project or about your rights as a human subject in research, you may contact the CGU IRB at (909) 607-9406 or at irb@cgu.edu. A copy of this form will be given to you if you wish to keep it.

**WRITTEN CONSENT USE FOR THOSE WHO READ THIS CONSENT FORM**

Signature of Participant _________________________________ Date ___________

Printed Name of Participant _________________________________

**ORAL CONSENT:** Your Oral Consent or signature below means that you understand the information on this form, that someone has answered any and all questions you may have about this study, and you voluntarily agree to participate in it.

Printed Name of Participant _________________________________

The undersigned researcher has reviewed the information in this consent form with the participant and answered any of his or her questions about the study.

Signature of Researcher _________________________________ Date ___________

Printed Name of Researcher: Jonathan Lee
COVID PROTOCOL PROCEDURES:

At the beginning of the interview, the participant and I will be 6 feet apart. We will take the following precautions to maintain Covid Safety protocol.

**Face covering/masks, PPE and Handwashing**

- All CGU investigators and members of research teams must wear a mask while in the presence of research subjects or other research team members.
- Research subjects should be instructed to wear a cloth or similar face covering. Masks will be provided to research subjects prior to the screening process if they do not bring their own.
- Masks or cloth face coverings must be worn at all times by research team members around subjects and other members of the study team. Face covering is always required when conducting tasks involving personal interactions at less than six feet distance.
- Masks or cloth face coverings should be changed whenever soiled, wet, or damaged. Cloth face coverings should be laundered with warm water and detergent daily or whenever they are visibly soiled.
- The mask or cloth face covering may be removed when eating/drinking.
- All CGU investigators and members of research teams should wash their hands before and after any interaction with research subjects

**Pre-Screening Checklist for Research Subjects**

Instructions: All face-to-face interviews will have a pre-screening checklist for participants. These questions will be asked orally, and the researcher will document responses.

1. Are you fully vaccinated? ☐Yes ☐No
2. Symptoms Check Questions:
   a) Is the forehead temperature <100.4° F? ☐Yes ☐No
b) In the last 30 days, have you had a positive COVID-19 test? ☐ Yes ☐ No

c) In the last 14 days, have you had sustained close contact (such as household contact) with a person with a positive COVID-19 test? ☐ Yes ☐ No

d) In the last 14 days, have you had a fever, cough or diarrhea? ☐ Yes ☐ No

e) In the last 14 days, have you had cold or flu-like symptoms? ☐ Yes ☐ No

f) In the last 14 days, have you had concerns regarding other potential symptoms (loss of taste, loss of smell, eye redness or discharge, confusion, dizziness, unexplained muscle aches) related to COVID-19? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If the response to #1 is Yes AND all other responses are NO, the in-person visit may proceed.

Name of the Interviewee/Research Subject: ________________________

Name of the Researcher: ___Jonathan Lee__________________________

Enter the date and time approval received for in-person visit: __________________
Appendix B – Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Establishing Rapport: This is a study about LGBTQ homeless youth and their specific needs and experiences. I am asking you – the expert – to please teach me about your life.

I. Initial Opening Questions

1. What are your pronouns?

2. How would you describe your sexual identity? Gender identity?

3. How would you describe your current living situation?

II. Pathways into Homelessness

1. Where are you from?

1a. [If not from Los Angeles], what prompted you to move here?

2. Tell me about your family life growing up.

   2a. How did people in your family make life easier? Harder?
2b. How do you think being LGBTQ affected your family relations?

2c. Have you had any contact with foster care or other child services?

2cc. If so, can you tell me about it?

3. Describe for me your school life growing up.

3a. Where did you go to school while experiencing homelessness?

3b. How did people in school make life easier? Harder?

3c. How do you think being LGBTQ affected your school experiences?

III. Description of McKinney-Vento Services

5. Please tell me about your identity while experiencing homelessness in school.

6. Please tell me about your identity as LGBTQ in school.

7. Please describe for me if school made you feel safe as a LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness?

8. Please tell me who you felt comfortable speaking to at school about your situation.

4a. If you felt uncomfortable speaking to anyone at school, who and why?

IV. Experiences of McKinney-Vento Services

1. Please describe for me a typical day in school.

1a. Where do you normally hang out at lunch?

1b. How did you get to school?
2. Where in school do you feel the safest?

2a. What makes you feel safe there?

2b. Where in school do you feel the least safe? Describe why.

3. Please describe for me if you received any services from school for being LGBTQ?

4. Please tell me what kind of services do you wish schools can provide for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness?

5. Please tell me if you ever felt discriminated at school for being an LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.

If so, could you tell me about a specific incident?

6. Please describe for me the stable aspects of your school experience.

7. Please describe for me the instable aspects of your school experience.

V. Services Received under McKinney-Vento

1. Can you describe for me the types of school supply you received at school to attend school?

2. Can you describe for me the transportation you received from your school to attend school?

3. Please tell me if you received any other services (i.e., health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services) from school for experiencing homelessness?
3a. If so, can you tell me about it?

3b. Do you think it was adequate? If not, why did you feel it was inadequate?

**VI. Perceptions of McKinney-Vento Services**

1. Tell me about what helped you get through school when you did not have a home to live in.
   
   1a. What made it harder to get through school? Please give me an example.

2. Tell me about what made you feel comfortable at school. Uncomfortable?

3. How do you think being LGBTQ affected the kind of services you got in school?
   
   3a. Your gender affects? Your race?

4. What would you like your life to be like after high school?
   
   4a. What did you think you needed in order to help you get there?
   
   4b. What did you think were some obstacles in your way in getting there?

5. What was your ideal situation for you back then?

6. Do you think your school did a good job of helping you while you were experiencing homelessness? Why or why not?

**VII. Other Demographics**

1. May I ask you your age?

2. How would you describe your ethnic background?

3. Educational background?
4. Current employment situation?

5. How long have you been homeless?

VIII. Final Thoughts

1. Is there a question that you found difficult to answer during this interview?

2. Is there a question I did not ask that you consider would have been interesting, controversial, or difficult for you to be asked?

3. Is there something we did not discuss about homelessness that in your opinion would be important in helping other people understand what it’s like to be in your shoes?

4. What advice would you give to a person who has just become homeless?
### Appendix C - Protocol Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Questions aligned in the interview protocol</th>
<th>Analysis Strategy: Possible Categories/Keywords in the Coding</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Set Up</td>
<td>(* refers to key questions aligning to RQ’s)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 1. How can the perception of K-12 school by LGBTQ young adults under The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in Los Angeles tell us about the strengths and failures of this act? | I. Initial Opening Questions  
1. What are your pronouns?  
2. How would you describe your sexual identity? Gender identity?  
3. How would you describe your current living situation? | • Stigma  
• Trauma  
• Discrimination  
• Family Relations |
| 2. How can the experiences of K-12 school by LGBTQ young adults under The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in Los Angeles tell us about the strengths and failures of this act? | II. Pathways into Homelessness  
1. Where are you from?  
1a. [If not from Los Angeles], what prompted you to move here?  
2. Tell me about your family life growing up.  
2a. How did people in your family make life easier? Harder?  
2b. How do you think being LGBTQ affected your family relations?  
2c. Have you had any contact with foster care or other child services?  
2cc. If so, can you tell me about it?  
3. Describe for me your school life growing up.  
3a. Where did you go to school while experiencing homelessness? *  
3b. How did people in school make life easier? Harder?  
3c. How do you think being LGBTQ affected your school experiences? * |                                                            |
### III. Description of McKinney-Vento Services

1. Please tell me about your identity while experiencing *homelessness* in school. *
2. Please tell me about your identity as *LGBTQ* in school. *
3. Please describe for me if school made you feel safe as a LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness? *
4. Please tell me who you felt comfortable speaking to at school about your situation. *
   4a. If you felt uncomfortable speaking to anyone at school, who and why? *

### IV. Experiences of McKinney-Vento Services

1. Please describe for me a *typical day* in school.
   1a. Where do you normally hang out at lunch?
   1b. How did you get to school?
2. Where in school do you feel the safest? *
   2a. What makes you feel safe there?
   2b. Where in school do you feel the least safe? Describe why.
3. Please describe for me if you received any services from school for being LGBTQ? *
4. Please tell me what kind of services do you wish schools can provide for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness? *
5. Please tell me if you ever felt discriminated at school for being an LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. *
   5a. If so, could you tell me about a specific incident?
VI. Perceptions of McKinney-Vento Services

1. Tell me about what helped you get through school when you did not have a home to live in.
   1a. What made it harder to get through school? Please give me an example.
2. Tell me about what made you feel comfortable at school. Uncomfortable?
3. How do you think being LGBTQ affected the kind of services you got in school? *
   3a. Your gender affects? Your race?
4. What would you like your life to be like after high school?
   4a. What did you think you needed in order to help you get there?
   4b. What did you think were some obstacles in your way in getting there?
5. What was your ideal situation for you back then?
6. Do you think your school did a good job of helping you while you were experiencing homelessness? Why or why not? *

3. What are the services LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness wished they have received under The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in Los Angeles?

V. Services Received under McKinney-Vento

1. Can you describe for me the types of school supply you received at school to attend school? *
2. Can you describe for me the transportation you received from your school to attend school? *
3. Please tell me if you received any other services (i.e., health care
services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services) from school for experiencing homelessness? *

3a. If so, can you tell me about it?

3b. Do you think it was adequate? If not, why did you feel it was inadequate?

VII. Other Demographics

1. May I ask you your age?
2. How would you describe your ethnic background?
3. Educational background?
4. Current employment situation?
5. How long have you been homeless?

VIII. Final Thoughts

1. Is there a question that you found difficult to answer during this interview?
2. Is there a question I did not ask that you consider would have been interesting, controversial, or difficult for you to be asked?
3. Is there something we did not discuss about homelessness that in your opinion would be important in helping other people understand what it’s like to be in your shoes? *

4. What advice would you give to a person who has just become homeless?

Used to see if there are any trend connected to personal characteristics
Appendix D- Research Flyer for Distribution

LGBTQ & experiencing homelessness

This is a study for young adults who are or have experienced homelessness who identify as LGBTQ. We are looking into the perceptions of young adults and their K-12 school experiences and services.

share your story

Recruiting:
- 18-26 year olds
- Identify as LGBTQ
- Experienced homelessness during childhood

Participants will get to spin the wheel
$20 GIFT CARD TO AMAZON, TARGET, STARBUCKS, OR CASH

Claremont Graduate University
SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

study on LGBTQ homelessness
jonathan.lee@cgu.edu
301-422-4627
Appendix E – Detailed Coding Analysis

Note: Appendix E notes 23 documents because interview participant #15’s interview was recorded into 3 segments due to the phone call dropping multiple times during the interview.
## EXPERIENCES OF MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT BY LGBTQ YOUTH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ties to ROs</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Code words/phrases</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>Higher Risk</td>
<td>Gender Dysphoria</td>
<td>hormone replacement therapy (7) felt dismissive by others (14, 16) mix of both fem/male (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>gender identity general healthcare (7) did not feel safe (8) suicidal - cutting myself (16)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>Learning Disabilities</td>
<td>ADHD (15, 20, 21)</td>
<td>Special Education (15, 20) Developmental delays (15) keep to myself (18)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Higher Risk</td>
<td>Learning Disabilities</td>
<td>ADHD (15, 20, 21) Special Education (15, 20) Autism (20)</td>
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<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>Friendships</td>
<td>love (3, 18) gang - provided shelter, food, friendship, acceptance (18)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>Friendships</td>
<td>out on the streets, park, friend's place in/out of homes being outside on the streets</td>
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<td>Remote learning cameras on - sleeping on drugs and alcohol anti-social quiet/reserved</td>
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<td>being outside on the streets, park, friend's place in/out of homes being outside on the streets</td>
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<td>Remote learning cameras on - sleeping on drugs and alcohol anti-social quiet/reserved</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>Higher Risk</td>
<td>Not Feeling Safe (11)</td>
<td>discrimination (14, 21)</td>
<td>hypermasculinity (18)</td>
<td>peer pressure (18)</td>
<td>embarrassment</td>
<td>singled out (18)</td>
<td>not welcoming (18)</td>
<td>invisible</td>
<td>bullied (13, 14, 15, 18)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Higher Risk</td>
<td>Not Feeling Safe continued</td>
<td>“If I’d join (GSA), I would be more made fun of.” (18)</td>
<td>“I wasn’t interested. They (GSA) were flammable.” (18)</td>
<td>“It wasn’t a safe space for me.” (18)</td>
<td>jumped by a group of kids (18)</td>
<td>Theater classes (19)</td>
<td>school environment was toxic (19)</td>
<td>parents made homophobic jokes (20)</td>
<td>people didn’t accept me for me (20)</td>
<td>I like guys, Dad replied, “no one wants to hear that.” (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>felt safe (15)</td>
<td>people didn’t care (15)</td>
<td>I wasn’t the only one (15)</td>
<td>people just knew (15)</td>
<td>Theater classes (20)</td>
<td>baseball, golf, wrestling, football (21)</td>
<td>business professionals of America (21)</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>Extracurricular activities</td>
<td>afterschool programs (15)</td>
<td>varisity track (16)</td>
<td>athletic (20)</td>
<td>wrestling (20)</td>
<td>honors student, athletic, talented (13)</td>
<td>AP Psychology (16)</td>
<td>got a lot academically (16)</td>
<td>do my work whenever I can (16)</td>
<td>liked to read (20)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>Intellectual Curiosity</td>
<td>took academics seriously</td>
<td>wanted to get educated (11)</td>
<td>get into college (11)</td>
<td>bright student (14)</td>
<td>suspended, expelled, it was my fault (21)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Higher Risk</td>
<td>Not Academically Involved</td>
<td>not involved in academics at all (15, 18)</td>
<td>harder to get through school (18)</td>
<td>Chronically Absent - Attendance issues (15, 18, 19)</td>
<td>I didn’t enjoy school (20)</td>
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# EXPERIENCES OF MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT BY LGBTQ YOUTH

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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>teachers</td>
<td>professional</td>
<td>caring</td>
<td>embrace all gender/sexual orientation</td>
<td>good communication with teachers</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>Never disclosed homelessness</td>
<td>never told anybody except my friend (16)</td>
<td>never told anyone (17)</td>
<td>It was “my fault for not seeking help.” (18)</td>
<td>school didn’t have services for LGBTQ, but also didn’t seek out any services (19)</td>
<td>mocked (14)</td>
<td>singled out (14)</td>
<td>understanding (16)</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>Never disclosed sexual orientation</td>
<td>didn’t share with anyone (17)</td>
<td>I kept to myself (18)</td>
<td>I was introverted, little introverted (18, 20)</td>
<td>I didn’t come out until 23 years old (21)</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td>Life and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>not aware of</td>
<td>there were no services (11, 14, 17)</td>
<td>I didn’t know about</td>
<td>felt discriminated</td>
<td>felt like no one cared</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Not School's Responsibility</td>
<td>assessing mental needs</td>
<td>needed money</td>
<td>feeling grateful</td>
<td>They did the best they could</td>
<td>did not slack, work non-stop</td>
<td>can't fault them with limited resources</td>
<td>Services adequate</td>
<td>- I don't expect anything</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Wish Services Provided (RQ 3)</td>
<td>Government should do more</td>
<td>more academic support</td>
<td>extra attention</td>
<td>lower SES background</td>
<td>equality vs. equity</td>
<td>seek government assistance</td>
<td>housing security through foster care system</td>
<td>Staff training about gender-identity and sexuality</td>
<td>mental health</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Wish Services Provided continued (RQ)</td>
<td>case management</td>
<td>self-defense classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Advice to Others</td>
<td>Stay the course/keep moving forward</td>
<td>Get into housing</td>
<td>Take it a day at a time</td>
<td>Don't get trapped</td>
<td>Don't do drugs, even weed</td>
<td>Find a good side hustle</td>
<td>Don't get into relationships</td>
<td>Don't let shelters become your home</td>
<td>Find resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(Advice to others) - Keep your head up (8)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(11, 19)</td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>(13)</td>
<td>(13, 16)</td>
<td>(13)</td>
<td>(13)</td>
<td>(13)</td>
<td>(15, 16, 17, 20)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Misc. Topics</td>
<td>Trump (6)</td>
<td>Can't pinpoint details, distorted,</td>
<td>Toxic culture of sex, drugs, and gun</td>
<td>Rude customer service at LGBIT Center</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>or blank / foggy to recall (14, 19)</td>
<td>violence (16)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In Delaware, it was very religious,</td>
<td></td>
<td>In California, no gender/race issue.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>they shun on that. No big opportunities,</td>
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<td>People truly want you to succeed.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>no support groups. No GSA/Pride.</td>
<td></td>
<td>In Delaware, every man for himself.</td>
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<td>(21)</td>
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<td>Pull yourself by your breeches</td>
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<td>mentality (23)</td>
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<td>Schools</td>
<td>School very religious (20)</td>
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