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An Examination of Poverty: A Case Study of
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by

Amy Michelle Ross

February 2017

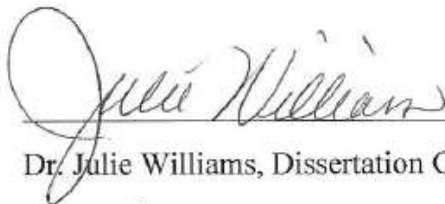
A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
School of Education

An Examination of Poverty: A Case Study of
One Rural Missouri School Attempting to
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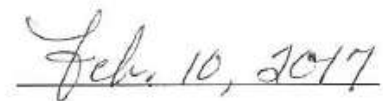
Dr. Julie Williams, Dissertation Chair



Date



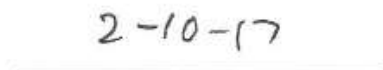
Dr. Sherry DeVore, Committee Member



Date



Dr. Terry Reid, Committee Member



Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

Full Legal Name: Amy Michelle Ross

Signature: Amy Michelle Ross Date: 3/6/17

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine if poverty impacts average daily attendance, discipline infractions, or dropout rates of students in today's society. The study included an in-depth analysis of homelessness, the influence it plays when educating children across the country, and the barriers schools face when dealing with families who live in poverty. According to Blad (2014a), enrollment of homeless students and those who qualify for free and reduced price meals are at record highs in the United States. Over half of the students in Missouri schools qualify for free and reduced price meals (Rapheal, 2014). The effects of an intervention program implemented by one rural Missouri school were addressed. The academic achievement of this particular subgroup in comparison to those who did not receive the intervention were closely examined. Data over a six-year period of time, three years before implementation and three years after implementation of the program, were analyzed to determine if a measurable impact could be noted. After review of the data, a significant impact could only be noted in number of discipline referrals. Although the dropout rate and average daily attendance slightly improved, the change was not enough to warrant a significant difference as measured by a *t*-test.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Vast amounts of research exist supporting the detrimental impact poverty plays in the lives of children (Lester, 2013). Researchers continue to fall short in providing insight into practical and feasible intervention models for schools, regardless of geographic location and despite the economic hardships of their clientele (Lester, 2013). The United States is a super power among leading nations around the world and must prepare all students with the skills needed to compete in a global market (Cutuli et al., 2013). Abramsky (2012) asserted the United States has a duty to make a difference in the lives of its citizens:

Surely the wealthiest nation on earth can make some bare minimum guarantees to our population: not that everyone will end up affluent or even comfortable, but that no one should have to live on income that is half the federally defined poverty level. (p. 18)

Poverty is a reality for a large number of children around the world (Haig, 2014). Time and energy must be devoted within the school system to address this issue if it is to truly be resolved and if students are going to receive the education they not only need but deserve (Cutuli et al., 2013).

Serious ramifications exist for children living in the lower socioeconomic class in terms of the quality of their education and in crucial brain development (Lende, 2012). De Boer, Bosker, and van der Werf (2010) provided correlational data which suggest an inclusive approach to educating students in the lower socioeconomic class greatly impacts their success. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs depicts an individual must have five

categories of basic needs met in the areas of “psychological, safety and security, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization” (Lester, 2013, p. 15).

A brief overview of the effects on children of generational and situational poverty is provided in this chapter, along with the barriers schools are confronted with due to stringent state and national guidelines. Payne (2013) defined generational poverty as “having been in poverty for at least two generations” (p. 64). Situational poverty can best be defined as “lack of resources due to a particular event (i.e. death, chronic illness, divorce, etc.)” (Payne, 2013, p. 64). One rural Missouri school district has attempted to address this issue by implementing a program designed to meet the basic needs of students who qualify for free and reduced price meals in order to improve their attendance and academic achievement. A thorough understanding of the obstacles poverty places in front of families and children, not to mention school systems, is crucial for schools as they face stringent guidelines from both the federal and state government concerning accountability through academic scores and services (Hendricks & Barkley, 2012).

Background of the Study

Public educational systems are confronted with numerous barriers which impact the school’s ability to educate students at the level now required to compete in a global society (Blad, 2014b). Under rigid guiding principles from state and federal agencies, public schools and higher-level learning institutions must ensure they track the academic achievement of all students (Wasta, 2006). During this process, the impact of poverty on academic achievement has become increasingly clear in schools across the country (Cutuli et al., 2013).

Title VII of The McKinney-Vento (MCKV) Homeless Education Assistance Improvement Act of 2002 requires schools to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and provides certain stipulations for schools to follow concerning enrollment and the education of homeless students and youths (National Coalition for the Homeless [NCH], 2006). According to Hendricks and Barkley (2012), the MCKV Act also requires homeless students receive the same educational opportunities and rigorous curriculum students not covered under the act are afforded. This is often an extremely difficult hurdle for schools to overcome due to the emotional and physical impact poverty plays on children, adolescents, and adults in society (Hendricks & Barkley, 2012). With homeless numbers on the rise, schools are faced with the debilitating fact poverty must be addressed through intervention measures in order to ensure academic achievement for all students (Blad, 2014b).

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), also known as the ESSA, schools must adhere to stringent provisions concerning education of homeless and impoverished students (Krebs, 2016). Ruby Payne (2013) has spent most of her life devoted to helping administrators, teachers, and other professionals better understand the class systems within the United States and has provided extensive research on individuals plagued by the poverty epidemic. Payne (2013) recognized school systems function within standards and ideals of those within the middle class, while those in the lower class of society function on a basis of survival and instant gratification without understanding long-term consequences of actions.

Hattie (2015) indicated, “Poverty, homelessness, abuse and inappropriate use of drugs are all major impediments to students progressing in their learning” (p. 6).

Teachers and administrators working on the front lines of schools with high numbers of students who qualify for free and reduced price meals seem to have a better grasp on the extent of limitations students within this class system face (Landsman, 2014). Schmoker (2012) cautioned, “Without doubt, poverty affects educational attainment; it is important then to fight for social justice and programs we know will mitigate the effects of poverty” (p. 70). Overwhelming research exists on the harm poverty afflicts on educational systems, yet theorists continue to provide data without a solution for schools (Blad, 2014b).

The participating school district in this study, hereafter known as School District A, is located in a rural district with a unique makeup. Five K-8 rural schools feed into School District A’s student population for grades 9-12. Each of the rural school districts has their own set of school norms, values, and cultures, and are considered independent districts under Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE) guidelines. The K-8 schools are funded from the state and federal levels as independent districts. Rural K-8 districts pay a set tuition for each pupil who chooses to attend School District A’s high school.

According to the MODESE (2014), the free and reduced price meals population of School District A is 66%, compared to the state average of 51.7%. School District A continues to see a large population of its residents living below the poverty line of economic status for Missouri (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The median household income of School District A’s patrons is \$30,000, with 28% of families living below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In order to help students succeed, School

District A, with communal support from various agencies and businesses, established the Bridges Program in 2013 as an attempt to bridge the gap between need and education.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was founded on the principles of Maslow's (1954) five-stage hierarchy of needs model. According to Maslow (1954), human needs are best represented in a hierarchical pyramid beginning with the most basic needs of love, security, belonging, and nourishment (physical needs) as the foundation for all other human needs. Based upon Maslow's (1954) methodology, Lester (2013) continued researching this theoretical framework and concluded, "The more these basic needs are satisfied, the better the psychological health of the individual" (p. 15).

Academic achievement is at the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs model (Lester, 2013). In order to reach this level, based upon Maslow's (1954) theory, the basic needs of students in poverty must first be met if intervention measures to reform academic achievement are to be successful (Jae Min & Hanna, 2015). The desire to have basic needs met is the root of all other hierarchical development (Maslow, 1954). According to Lester (2013), individuals cannot proceed into the next level until they have reached satisfaction of the hierarchical base of psychological needs or the next step of safety and security. Living in poverty or being homeless makes it virtually impossible to move beyond the second stage of development, safety and security, even into adulthood (Jae Min & Hanna, 2015). Shown in Figure 1 is a depiction of Maslow's (1954) framework and demonstrates the hierarchical process humans maneuver through as they strive to attain each level of the pyramid and attempt to progress to the next, as a basis of motivational psychological hidden drivers for developmental fulfillment (McLeod, 2013).



Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Adapted from "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs," by S. McLeod, 2013, *Simply Psychology*. Copyright 2013 by Simply Psychology.

Retrieved from <http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

Jae Min and Hanna (2015) provided overwhelming evidence on the correlation of Maslow's Hierarchy to the financial planning of families living in poverty and made comparisons to families who have never been forced to live below the poverty line. In fact, "Poor parents will need most of their resources for economic survival and will have little time, money, and energy left over to invest in children's human capital" (Payne, 2013, p. 166). Maslow's (1954) basic needs must first be met, or reform measures will have little to no effect (Lester, 2013). This research directly coincides with Payne's

(2013) framework depicting the poverty mindset. The life-long psychological and emotional damage children in poverty are exposed to may prove to be more than society is able to overcome (Lygnegård, Donohue, Bornman, Granlund, & Huus, 2013). The basis of this theory may substantiate meaningful change for school systems and solidify the premise of the influence of basic needs on the lives of individuals living in poverty.

Effective school reform measures are critical for districts in their ongoing attempt to meet the various needs of stakeholders (Fullan, 2011). In order to effectively execute a rigorous curriculum which equips students with the skills they need to compete in a global society, schools must actively seek improvement measures and effective reform strategies while performing at high standards regardless of their educational enrollment status (Hillemeier, Lanza, Landale, & Oropesa, 2013). High-performing districts must readily seek effective measures to ensure the basic needs of students in the lower socioeconomic class are met, if the districts hope to improve in academics, discipline, and attendance performance indicators required at the federal and state levels (Kohler-Evans, Webster-Smith, & Albritton, 2013). Therefore, the premise of Maslow's (1954) theoretical framework formed the basis for this study, as the primary investigator attempted to provide research-based strategies for districts to implement in their efforts to equip students with the skills needed to overcome poverty and the numerous barriers it creates throughout the academic process (Jae Min & Hanna, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

There is a tremendous amount of research on the impact of socioeconomic status on attendance and academic achievement, yet there is a sizeable gap in quality intervention programs designed to help students of poverty succeed (Blad, 2014b).

Albrecht, Mathur, Jones, and Alazemi (2015) emphasized the importance of quality intervention programs to yield improved social and academic outcomes for all students. Schools are faced with increasing accountability requirements under the MSIP 5 waiver (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MODESE], 2014) and the ESSA (2015). This increased responsibility demands school districts and communities invest in a sustainable program that results in improved educational performance (Cooper, 2014). According to Turner (2012), “The growing number of children living in poverty directly affects our schools and has important implications on educational practices” (p. 1). Schools across the country are faced with a growing population of homeless children and youth along with an alarming number of children living in poverty (Dill, 2015).

Little research has been conducted addressing intervention programs that can be implemented in school districts across the country facing numerous obstacles related to students living in poverty (Cooper, 2014). Using research guided by Maslow’s (1954) Five-Stage Hierarchy of Needs Model, this investigator studied the relationship of meeting the basic needs of psychological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization through interventions in the school setting (Jae Min & Hanna, 2015). Lester (2013) reported, “People are motivated to achieve certain needs and when one need is fulfilled, a person seeks to fulfill the next one, and so on” (p. 130). Once basic needs are met, schools will be able to document improved educational performance among students living in poverty.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this project was to provide insight into one rural district in Missouri's attempt to reduce the impact poverty has on educational outcomes. Causal-comparative research was conducted to determine if the Bridges Program impacted the educational performance of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals in School District A during the 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 school years. The investigator attempted to identify interventions which may be replicated regardless of a school's location and may prove to be successful for other districts as they strive to improve the educational performance of all students, regardless of student economic status.

According to Bernhardt (2013):

Demographic data are extremely important for continuous school improvement.

Demographics establish the current context of the school and describe trends.

Trends help staff predict and plan for the future, as well as understand all other data with which they work in their continuous school improvement efforts.

Comprehensive demographic data inform about the structure of the school—the system—as well as leadership. (p. 28)

Hattie (2015) expressed although schools can do little to fix the economy or poverty rates across the country, they can do everything in their power to help students overcome the barrier. Bernhardt (2013) identified four distinct areas districts should address within her continuous school improvement model. These include planning, implementing, evaluating, and improving based upon the data collected (Bernhardt, 2013). Figure 2 depicts the cycle.



Figure 2. Continuous school improvement cycle. Adapted from Data Analysis for Continuous School Improvement, by V. Bernhardt, 2013. Copyright 2013 by Eye on Education. Retrieved from http://images.slideplayer.com/19/5804912/slides/slide_13.jpg

Gordon and Cui (2014) noted, “Achieving academic success marks one of the most critical developmental milestones of an adolescent’s life” (p. 617). Academic success cannot be measured by a student’s current living situation, yet too often this is the case, as school systems assume or underestimate a student’s strengths or abilities to achieve high expectations (Schmoker, 2012). Hattie (2015) reflected educational systems are often limited in their ability to change a child’s living or economic situation; however, school systems have the ability to arm students with a quality education and the encouragement needed to succeed.

Research questions. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the statistically significant difference between dropout rates of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance?

H1₀: There is no statistically significant difference between dropout rates of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance.

2. What is the statistically significant difference between discipline infractions of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance?

H2₀: There is no statistically significant difference between discipline infractions of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance.

3. What is the statistically significant difference between the ADA of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance?

H3₀: There is no statistically significant difference between the ADA of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after

implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance.

Definition of Key Terms

Adequate yearly progress (AYP). As required by No Child Left Behind, adequate yearly progress (AYP) is an indication if the school receives federal Title I funding; achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) the previous year; and if the school has been identified as “in school improvement” or other special status (MODESE, 2014). In 2013, with the MODESE’s NCLB waiver, the AYP measure was changed to ESEA-Annual Measurable Objective (MODESE, 2014).

Average daily attendance (ADA). Average daily attendance (ADA) is the number of “students who regularly attend school meets or exceeds the state standard or demonstrates required improvement. Attendance targets use the individual student’s attendance rate and set the expectation that 90% of the students are in attendance 90% of the time” (MODESE, 2014, p. 14).

The Bridges Program. The Bridges Program is an intervention program implemented by School District A, with financial assistance from various stakeholders throughout the community, designed to meet the basic needs of students in poverty.

Dropout rate. According to the MODESE (2014), “For grades 9-12, the dropout rate is the number of dropouts divided by the total of September enrollment, plus transfers in, minus transfers out, minus dropouts, added to September enrollment, then divided by two” (p. 50).

Four-year graduation rate. According to the MODESE (2014), The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is the number of students who graduate in four (4) years

with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class.

High School A. High School A is in southern Missouri with a population of 1,111 students and is currently using the Bridges Program to assist in meeting the basic needs of students who qualify for free and reduced price meals.

Homeless. According to the McKinney-Vento (MCKV) Education Homeless Act of 2002, homeless is defined as anyone lacking a “fixed, adequate, regular nighttime residence” (Sparks, 2013, p. 2).

K-12 enrollment. The K-12 enrollment of a district is the number of students in a specific school district on the last day of September during each school year, including residents and non-domicile students (MODESE, 2014). All students in grades kindergarten through 12 are included, regardless if they attended partial or full days (MODESE, 2014). Enrollment for students attending alternative schools and area vocational schools should be reported at the students’ regular schools in their home districts (MODESE, 2014).

Maslow’s five-stage hierarchy of needs model. Maslow’s five-stage hierarchy of needs model includes classification of basic needs into five categories: psychological, safety and security, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization (Lester, 2013).

McKinney-Vento Education Act of 2002 (MCKV). The McKinney-Vento Education Act of 2002 requires schools to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and requires certain stipulations concerning homeless children and youth involving enrollment and educational practices (Sparks, 2013).

Missouri school improvement program (MSIP 5). The MSIP 5 is the state's accountability system, which was rereleased and reorganized in 2013 for reviewing and accrediting public school districts, and which outlines the expectations for student achievement with the ultimate goal of each student graduating ready for success in college and careers (MODESE, 2014).

School District A. School District A is in southern Missouri with a total population of 2,456 students and initially implemented the Bridges Program during the 2013-2014 school year to assist the population of students (66.1%) who qualified for free and reduced price meals.

Limitations and Assumptions

The following limitations were identified in this study:

Sample demographics. The sample was taken from only one school district's and one rural high school's population of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals. Investigator bias could be present, as the investigator feels strongly about the need for intervention programs to support students in the lower socioeconomic class of society. However, every precaution was taken throughout the course of this research, and only archival data were used to eliminate the risk associated with bias and to ensure validity.

Instrument. The use of archival historical data did not allow for the sample groups' opinions to be expressed. Quantitative data alone were used as evidence of the Bridges Program's effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness over the three years it was implemented by School District A.

The following assumptions were accepted:

1. The archival data reported to the MODESE were accurate for each of the years studied.
2. The third-party investigator gathered accurate information and removed all identifiable markers without prejudice or bias in the selection process.
3. The students who qualified for free and reduced price meals utilized the Bridges Program as it was offered to the population from 2013-2016.

Summary

According to Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2015), a case study involves research of a single individual or example through extensive data gathering. The investigator comprehensively gathered and analyzed data as part of a case study of the population of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals in School District A. The data included the population's ADA, four-year graduation rates, dropout rates, and the number of discipline infractions before and after enactment of the Bridges Program by School District A. Archival historical data from school years 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 were carefully analyzed for the three years prior to and the three years after its implementation.

The data gathered by the third-party source and the primary investigator were used to develop inferential statistical information concerning the Bridges Program's impact on the population of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals in grades 7-12 attending School District A. According to Bernhardt (2013), "Inferential statistics are concerned with measuring a sample from a population, and then making estimates, or inferences, about the population from which the sample was taken" (p. 73).

Fraenkel et al. (2015) defined inferential statistics as “certain types of procedures that allow the researchers to inference about a population based on findings from a sample” (p. 220).

In Chapter Two, poverty and the adverse impact it has on children and adults are examined. A careful analysis of the increasing numbers of students living in poverty across the United States and Missouri are reported. The impact of socioeconomic status on brain development and health along with academic achievement is explored. In conclusion, current intervention measures implemented in various school districts, as well as report on current legislative and community responses to address issues related to poverty are presented.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Researchers continue to support the devastating impacts of poverty on educational achievement (Agarwal, 2015). America is considered a land of plenty to numerous countries around the world, yet millions live below the “living wage threshold” (p. 14). Trauma and tension associated with poverty variables negatively impact the development and bodily systems of children and adults (Agarwal, 2015). Poverty has also been linked to chronic absenteeism among students (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Barlow (2011) put forth, “We need to recognize the barriers that poverty creates, but it is no excuse for educators not to create the conditions to learn” (p. 66). Educators are not disputing the fact poverty places enormous obstacles on its clientele (Barlow, 2011). However, districts and legislators must strive to educate and equip students with the skills they need to overcome poverty (Clyburn, 2014).

School support systems and mentoring programs play an important role for students living in poverty (Dang & Miller, 2013). Students living below the poverty threshold or those considered homeless face “the threat of having to contend with difficult weather conditions, hunger and thirst, dangerous predators, street crime, rape, human trafficking, and more” (Dill, 2015, p. 45). According to Dang and Miller (2013), over 95% of children living in poverty or those considered homeless under the MCKV Act have undergone some type of “abuse or neglect” (p. 246). Fraad (2012) noted homelessness “is a small sample of life twisting tragedies that now wreak havoc on the lives of United States children” (p. 204). Cutuli et al. (2013) echoed the impact of chronic absenteeism and homelessness on the overall academic achievement of students, especially in the primary grades.

An estimated four out of five children and adults have experienced homelessness or have received some type of food or medical assistance at some point in their lives (Fraad, 2012). President Obama's administration aspired for the United States to "race to the top" in terms of educational performance compared to other countries as based on completion of college programs and educational outcomes (p. 6). Despite the statistics associated with free and reduced price meals and homelessness, educational systems are held to the high standards set forth by legislators without program funding to establish meaningful intervention models which address the needs of over half of students (Baker, Kamphaus, Horne, & Winsor, 2006). Homelessness and poverty knows no boundaries in terms of ethnicity (Castillo & Becerra, 2012).

According to Abramsky:

Although poverty is borne more heavily by minorities, that doesn't mean that is only, or even mainly, a "minority problem." In fact, 47 million Americans—of all colors, ethnicities, and backgrounds—are living at or below the poverty line. Of these, more than 20 million are living in what's called "deep poverty" with incomes that put them and their families at below 50 percent of the poverty line.
(p. 14)

Abramsky (2012) went on to state in the United States alone over 22% of juveniles live in the lower socioeconomic class of society. With these alarming statistics, educational leaders are in desperate need of research-based effective practices which meet the educational, social, emotional, and physical needs of over half of the students served in today's school entities (Rapheal, 2014).

Increasing Number of Homeless Impoverished Students in the United States

Across the United States, numerous schools are facing the fact an astounding number of students are considered homeless under the MCKV Act definition or fall into the impoverished socioeconomic class of Americans (Rapheal, 2014). The MCKV Act defines homeless as any child who does not have a “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence” (Sparks, 2013, p. 2). DeNavas-Walt and Proctor (2015) defined poverty:

If a family’s total money income is less than the applicable threshold, then that family and every individual in it are considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds are updated annually for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The official poverty definition uses money income before taxes and tax credits and excludes capital gains and noncash benefits (such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits and housing assistance). The thresholds do not vary geographically. (p. 43)

According to the 2010 United States Census, 15.1% of the population lived in poverty in the United States alone (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). This was the highest poverty rate recorded since 1993’s economic downturn (Zalaznick, 2015). The vast majority of homeless statistics are made up of Hispanic (35%) and African American (38%) children (Turner, 2012). This is even more appalling and disconcerting when one considers over half of the Hispanic population of children attending school in the United States are living in poverty (Turner, 2012). Cultural diversity is yet another obstacle school officials must address and understand before dealing with poverty-associated problems and the cultural perspective of each ethnicity on receiving outside assistance (Malone,

2015). Figure 3 depicts the percentage of residents in poverty along with the number of residents in the United States who lived at or below the poverty threshold from 1953 to 2015 (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015, p. 12).

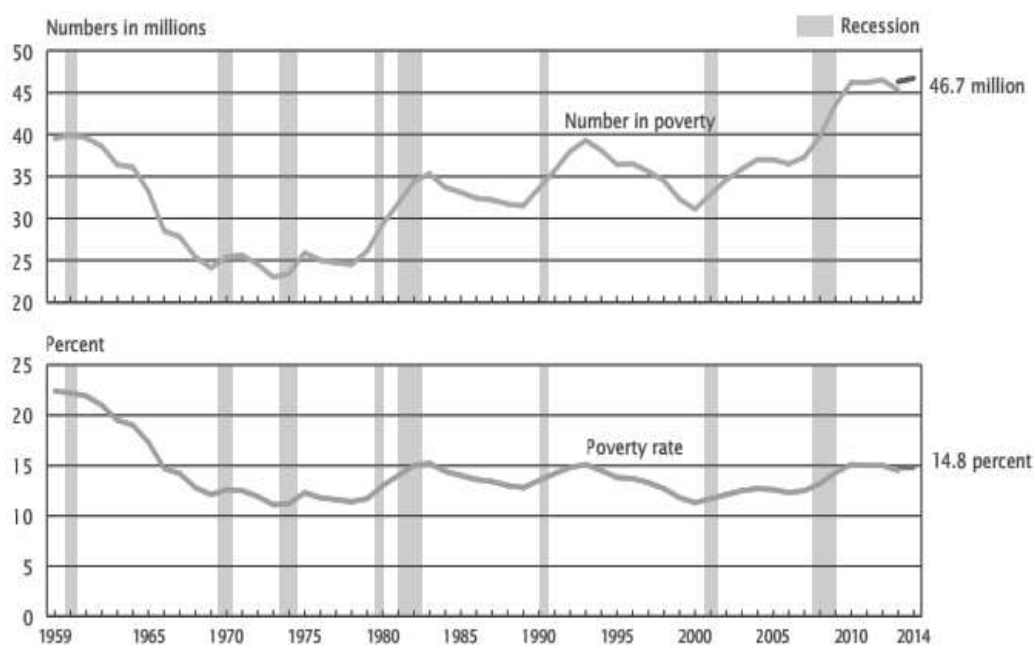


Figure 3. Number in poverty and poverty rate 1959-2015. Shaded areas represent economic downturns in the United States economy. Adapted from “Income and Poverty in the United States: 2014,” by C. DeNavas-Walt & B. D. Proctor, 2015. Copyright 2015 by the United States Census Bureau. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/library/publications/2015/demo/p60-252.html>

During the 2013-2014 school year, there were over one million students in the United States classified as homeless and enrolled in public schools (Dill, 2015). DeNavas-Walt and Proctor (2015) reported, “In 2014, the official poverty rate was 14.8 percent. There were 46.7 million people in poverty. Neither the poverty rate nor the

number of people in poverty were statistically different from the 2013 estimates” (p. 12). Krabbenborg, Boersma, and Wolf (2013) reported over 50,000 adolescents are living in shelters across the United States. The number of students qualifying for and receiving free and reduced price meals services becomes even more astonishing when one looks at data related to this issue (Rapheal, 2014).

Sulkowski and Joyce-Beaulieu’s (2014) research on the adverse impact of poverty on academic achievement revealed the higher the percentage of free and reduced price meals within the district, the larger the percentage of homeless students under the MCKV definition a district will have. These statistics support the ideology of the negative impact poverty plays on educational systems (Malone, 2015). School districts are faced with copious difficulties which may negatively impact academic performance in a high-stakes, accountability-driven educational system (Sulkowski & Joyce-Beaulieu, 2014). Figure 4 differentiates the percentage of homeless individuals by age subgroups (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015, p. 14).

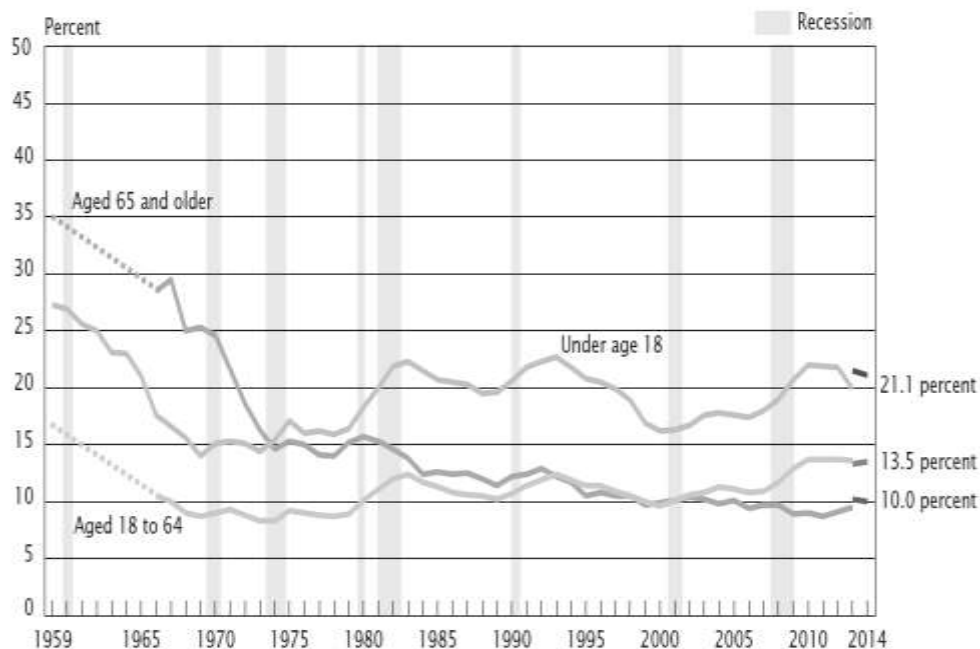


Figure 4. Poverty rates by age: 1959 to 2014. Shaded areas represent economic downturns in the United States economy. Adapted from “Income and Poverty in the United States: 2014,” by C. DeNavas-Walt & B. D. Proctor, 2015. Copyright 2015 by the United States Census Bureau. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/library/publications/2015/demo/p60-252.html>

Since the economic recession of 2008, homeless student numbers have magnified by an alarming 20% or more, according to Robert Scott and Steven Pressman (2013) of the Department of Economics and Finance at Mammoth University in New Jersey. A recent study by the Southern Educational Foundation indicated, “Students in poverty make up the majority of public school students in 17 states” (Sparks, 2013, p. 5). Homeless students make up the largest subgroup of the population in public schools across the country (Sparks, 2013). In fact, if all the homeless students across the country were consolidated into one district, it would be the largest school district in the United

States, serving just over 1.17 million students' educational needs (Sparks, 2014a). Of these 1.17 million homeless students in the United States, over 75% are classified as “doubled up” under the MCKV Act (Blad, 2014a).

The MCKV Act defined “doubled up” as “sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, or economic hardship” (NCH, 2006, p. 4). Many families are forced to combine assets in order to meet their basic needs (Miller, Pavlakis, Lac, & Hoffman, 2014). As stated by Dill (2015), the reason the vast majority of homeless students are “doubled up” is due to the fact “...most families turn to friends or relatives in their time of need” (p. 42). Blad (2014a) identified an alarming number of United States students enrolling as unaccompanied youth. In 2014, according to Blad's (2014a) research, approximately 76,000 students were considered unaccompanied homeless youths.

Even with the increase in the number of families “doubled up,” the population of children in homeless shelters has stayed relatively consistent compared to what it was before Hurricane Katrina and after the Great Recession (Sparks, 2014a). To ensure their own survival, more and more families are being forced to combine resources and become “doubled up” (Sparks, 2013). The research of Dill (2015) on poverty and homelessness revealed:

What It Looks (and Feels) Like to be Doubled Up: Telltale signs of living doubled-up include references to crowded conditions, panic attacks in class, chronic hunger or food-hoarding behaviors, sleep deprivation, unkempt clothes, inadequate personal hygiene, and unmet medical or psychological needs. Many students are runaways from crowded, doubled

up situations because the atmosphere has become insufferable, they're in danger from domestic violence, or they're chronically hungry or depressed. Trauma after Trauma: All homeless students are likely to be somewhere on the post-traumatic stress disorder spectrum. (p. 43)

The physical and mental health of children and adults rapidly diminishes while living in poverty regardless of their sex (Sulkowski & Joyce-Beaulieu, 2014). In Figure 5, DeNavas-Walt and Proctor (2015) distinguished between the percentage of males and females living in poverty in each age subgroup (p. 15).

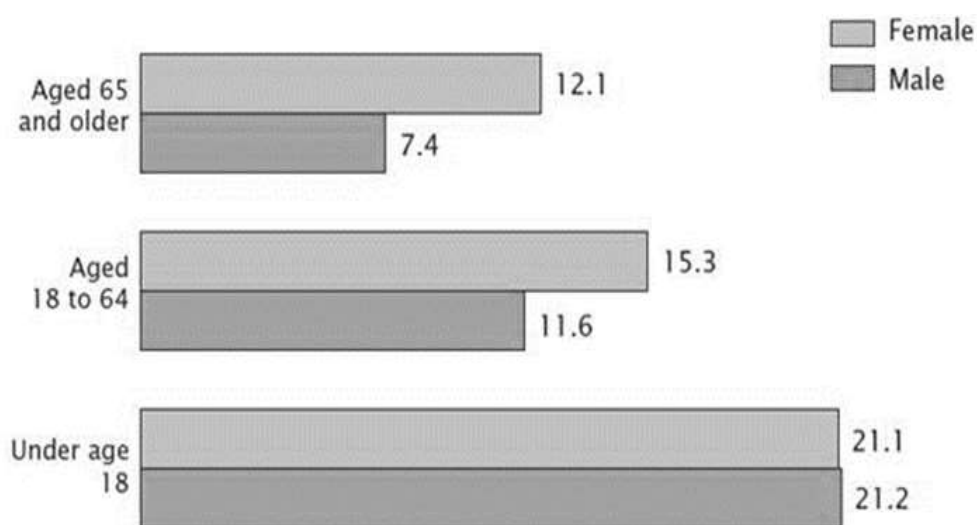


Figure 5. Poverty rates by age and sex: 2014. Adapted from “Income and Poverty in the United States: 2014,” by C. DeNavas-Walt & B. D. Proctor, 2015. Copyright 2015 by the United States Census Bureau. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/library/publications/2015/demo/p60-252.html>

In the speech, “The Promise of Rural America” (2015), the belief was emphasized that rural Americans face the same obstacles they did at the beginning of the 19th century. Rural America is the “backbone” of our country, according to Teddy Roosevelt, yet it lacks the educational and job opportunities needed to keep the majority of its residents out of poverty (“The Promise of Rural America,” 2015, p. 217). According to Payne (2013):

Perhaps the most important analytic point to have emerged in this description of the other America is the fact that poverty in America forms a culture, a way of life and feeling, that it makes a whole. It is crucial to generalize this idea, for it profoundly affects how one moves to destroy poverty. (p. 182)

Despite the fact poverty statistics continue to indicate a disconcerting number of students defined as homeless under the MCKV Act, society in general appears to be “choosing to ignore the needs of tens of millions of Americans” (Abramsky, 2013, p. 2). For decades, 400 counties across the United States have had at least one-fifth of their population living at or below the poverty line (Clyburn, 2014).

According to Rapheal (2014), food scarcity is present in every county across the United States, and approximately one in five children go to bed hungry every night. As a nation, the United States continues to sponsor and feed children around the world, but the epidemic of child hunger is a reality for approximately one-third of the United States population (Rapheal, 2014). Even though families are receiving assistance through Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and other food supplement programs, it appears the majority of households are hungrier than they have ever been (Missouri Community Action Network, 2016).

According to Clyburn (2014), programs such as these “address the immediate needs of the individual and family, but they do not address the underlying causes of persistent poverty that is concentrated in certain communities” (p. 7).

As the number of students living in poverty grows, so must the ability of schools across the United States to meet the educational and basic needs of millions of Americans (Rebell & Wolff, 2012). Poverty rates are on the rise across the United States, which is having a negative impact on the overall health of the nation (Shipp, 2012). Those in extreme poverty often have safety nets such as Medicaid and food assistance vouchers (Turner, 2012). It is children whose parents make slightly above the annual income requirement who continually go without food, necessary routine medical care, routine dental care, or who are often forced to live “doubled up” with friends or family members (Turner, 2012).

Knowing all of this, it is extremely alarming the number of homeless students enrolling in public education continues to significantly increase (Blad, 2014b). Even more disturbing is that the trend is expected to continue, in spite of the fact unemployment rates are beginning to decline and the economy appears to be stabilizing (Blad, 2014a). Current poverty rates in the United States are rising steadily, mimicking those during Ronald Reagan’s presidency in the early 1980s and continuing under George Bush’s leadership for the remainder of the decade (Abramsky, 2013). With the continued growth in enrollment for public schools, there may continue to be an adverse impact on society (Lende, 2012).

Increasing Number of Homeless Impoverished Students in Missouri

The population of residents living in poverty is increasing across the United States and is especially evident at the state level (Missourians to End Poverty, 2014). Based upon data collected through the American Community Survey (ACS) conducted by the United States Census Bureau (2015), over 14.8% of Missourians live below the poverty threshold. According to Missourians to End Poverty (2014), 21.1% of residents in Howell County live in poverty. All of the neighboring counties, consisting of Ozark, Douglas, Texas, Shannon, and Oregon, have a larger percentage of homeless and impoverished individuals with Oregon County's poverty rate the highest at 27.7% (Missourians to End Poverty, 2014). The team of Cafer, Chapman, Freeman, and Rikoon (2016) stated the number of individuals facing food scarcity, homelessness, or living below the poverty line in Missouri has steadily risen since the economic downturn of the 1990s.

Samuels (2013) reported Governor Jay Nixon increased the fiscal budget for education by adding \$100 million to the funding formula used to calculate aid for school districts. However, the money was allocated to "train teachers, modernize equipment and lengthen the school year, which he said is the nation's fourth-shortest," thus again not addressing the needs of hundreds of thousands of students in the lower socioeconomic subgroup of the population who receive free and reduced price meals (Crisp, 2013, p. 1). Based upon the report by Blad (2015) synthesizing the findings of the Ferguson Educational Panel formed under the direction of Governor Nixon, "Missouri should address systemic racial inequity and poverty by focusing on the 'whole child' needs of students in its public schools" (p. 6). Parsons (2016) suggested Missouri's students who

qualify for free and reduced price meals continually perform lower than their peers on state-measured assessments regardless of the overall population of this subgroup within a district.

Food scarcity is a ubiquitous reality for millions of Missourians across the state regardless of the county where they reside (Missourians to End Poverty, 2014). The rate of food scarcity among Missourians is currently 16.7%, measurably higher than the food scarcity national average of 14.5%, which translates into half a million Missouri households consisting of 2.5 individuals experiencing some form of food insecurity on a daily basis (Missouri Community Action Network, 2016). According to Missourians to End Poverty (2014):

Health problems are directly connected to economic hardship since they affect an individual's ability to work or to function in school. There are a variety of poor outcomes that result from inadequate nutrition. Chronic diseases can be brought on by calorie dense/low nutrition foods. Beyond that, poor nutrition increases healthcare costs by increasing the amount of time needed to recover from illness and by exacerbating the effects of chronic disease. Poor nutrition also reduces productivity at work through lowered energy/illness and negatively impacts the ability of children to focus and learn in school. (p. 4)

According to the United States Census Bureau (2015), Missouri is ranked as low as the 30th state in the nation when comparing food scarcity and poverty rates, which leads to serious long-term medical, physical, and sociological ramifications amongst its residents (Missouri Community Action Network, 2016). The MODESE (2015) documented over 50% of students enrolled in Missouri public schools qualified for free and reduced price

meals services. The number of students qualifying for free and reduced price meals in Howell County is even greater at 62.7% (Cafer et al., 2016).

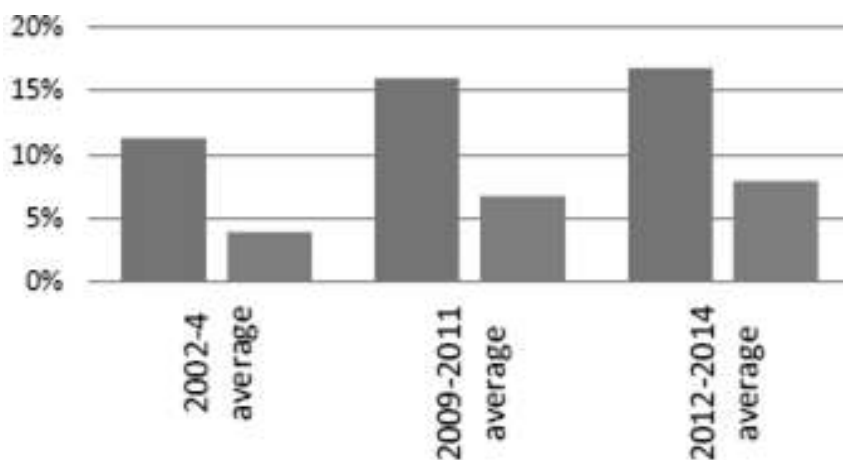


Figure 6. Food insecurity rates among Missouri households. Adapted from “Missouri Hunger Atlas: 2016,” by A. Cafer, D. Chapman, K. Freeman, & S. Rikoon, 2016.

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Retrieved from <http://foodsecurity.missouri.edu/projects/missouri-hunger-atlas/>

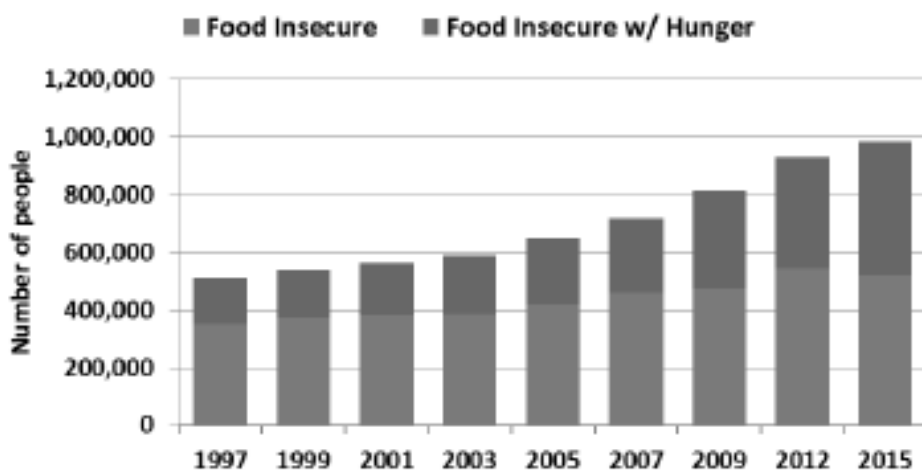


Figure 7. Food insecurity in Missouri, 1997-2015. Adapted from “Missouri Hunger Atlas: 2016,” by A. Cafer, D. Chapman, K. Freeman, & S. Rikoon, 2016. Copyright 2016 by the University of Missouri, Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security.

Retrieved from <http://foodsecurity.missouri.edu/projects/missouri-hunger-atlas/>

After deciphering the census data for Missouri, Cafer et al. (2016) ranked each county for food scarcity and poverty in correlation to the state average. These rankings were broken into five distinct groups:

- Very High: 80th to 100th percentile
- High: 60th to 79th percentile
- Average: 40th to 59th percentile
- Low: 20th to 39th percentile
- Very Low: 1st-19th percentile (Cafer et al., 2016, p. 4)

Missouri's population was ranked High on average with 60-79% of its residents living with food scarcity, and School District A's county of origin ranked Very High with 80-100% of its population facing food scarcity and/or poverty thresholds (Cafer et al., 2016).

Impact of Poverty on Brain Development and Health

Babies born into low-income families often lack medical insurance, which results in little to no prenatal care and low birth weights of infants (Miller et al., 2014). There is a substantial degree of brain development in a child during the first five years of life (Hattie, 2015). Hanson et al. (2013) stated as children progress through adolescence the individual's home, family, and societal genetics play a unique role in the development of the frontal and parietal lobes. Dr. Martha Farah leads a research team at the Center for Neuroscience and Society (CNS) (2015) located at the University of Pennsylvania. Her research team reported, "The relevance of socioeconomic status to cognitive neuroscience lies in its surprisingly strong relationship to cognitive ability, as measured by IQ and school achievement, beginning in early childhood" (The Center for Neuroscience and Society [CNS], 2015, p. 1). According to Mullainathan and Shafir

(2013), lack of money affects cognition and everyday hardships which have a substantially greater effect on the poor than the wealthy. This, in turn, causes neurobiological changes and impacts the development of the brain of individuals from an early age (Zalaznick, 2015).

Financial stress significantly impacts cognitive functioning and reasoning skills (Scott & Pressman, 2013). When an individual stresses about love life, money, time, or other factors, he or she is less likely to make wise decisions which may substantially alter life (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). Miller et al. (2014) stated, “The strength of the relationship between poverty and school success is even stronger than the reported link between cigarettes and disease” (p. 132). The social group and demographic physical surroundings of those living in poverty can greatly impact the long-term effects of poverty on the individual (Alexander-Eitzman, Pollio, & North, 2013).

When researching the impact of poverty on the brain, noticeable changes may be noted by studying the surface of the brains of children from each socioeconomic class (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). The CNS (2015) denoted “the most pronounced disparities were executive function (EF), associated with prefrontal cortex, and declarative memory, associated with the hippocampus” of the brain’s surface (p. 1).

Figure 8 illustrates the “Poverty Poisons the Brain Model” (Lende, 2012).

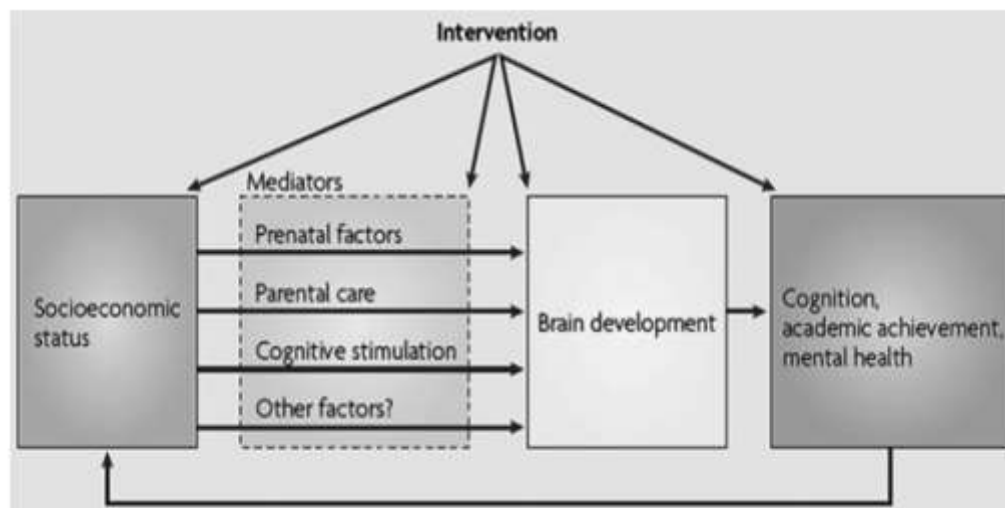


Figure 8. The basic “Poverty Poisons the Brain” model. Figure depicting the impact socioeconomic status has on brain development, along with the mediators which may affect the overall development and outcomes in mental health, cognition, and academic achievement. Adapted from “Poverty Poisons the Brain,” by D. H. Lende, 2012, *Annals of Anthropological Practice*, 36(1), pp. 183-201. Copyright 2012 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Retrieved from

<http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/gatekeeper2.lindenwood.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=9&sid=3ec183ac-8f9b-4ad4-beb7-fa0acc72c47%40sessionmgr4007&hid=4208>

Mullainathan and Shafir’s (2013) findings supported poverty as the precursor to numerous mental, physical, and educational problems for children. The age at which a child is thrust into poverty impacts the severity of the effects it bears on mental functioning and cognitive development (Scott & Pressman, 2013). Rapheal (2014) revealed, “Even short episodes of hunger can cause lasting child developmental damage” (p. 47).

The American Academy of Pediatrics recently published a statement reinforcing the impact of poverty on brain development (Garner et al., 2011):

Pediatricians are now armed with new information about the adverse effects of toxic stress and brain development, as well as a deeper understanding of the early life origins of many adult diseases. As trusted authorities in child health and development, pediatric providers must now complement the early identification of developmental concerns with a greater focus on those interventions and community investments that reduce external threats to healthy brain growth. (p. 232)

Children growing up in an extremely low socioeconomic household “may physically survive, but they lose their sense of self” (Fraad, 2012, p. 203). Early poverty is a debilitating factor in normative development, as well as physical and emotional growth (Hanson et al., 2013). These children are often facing unsurmountable obstacles, such as raising and taking care of younger siblings while parents work, or may even be expected to hold down a full- or part-time job to contribute to their families’ monthly income (Barlow, 2011).

Hillemeier et al. (2013) found poor children are one-third more likely to have cognitive deficits in academic achievement and over four times more likely than students in the middle to upper class to have psychological and social disabilities. David H. Lende (2012), professor at the University of South Florida, noted the “consistent linkage of children living in poverty and negative brain development is considered the poverty poisons the brain” model (p. 184). Research supports the importance of providing

effective interventions from an early age for students residing below the poverty line (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013).

According to an article entitled “Research Roundup” (2015):

Society must foster and protect the brain development of children, but investigators have found that children living below the federal poverty level have smaller volumes of brain regions that are essential to cognitive and academic performance (gray matter, frontal and temporal lobes, and the hippocampus).
(p. 7)

Lende (2012) revealed, “A U.S. Department of Education study found that each year spent in poverty increases by 2 percentage points the likelihood that a child will not progress in school” (p. 185). Long-lasting poverty wreaks serious long-term psychological and physical incapacities on both children and adults (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013).

As stated by Miller et al. (2014), students who qualify for free and reduced price meals are two to four times more likely to associate with friends who have some type of learning deficit or who live in the same socioeconomic class, which limits exposure and opportunities of advancement socially and academically. Limited knowledge of basic skills in mathematics and reading significantly limits an individual’s ability to progress into a higher socioeconomic class (Payne, 2013). When a child is raised in a poverty-stricken home, the impact significantly influences the likelihood he or she will graduate and seek post-secondary education, even though under the MCKV Act, numerous grants are awarded for students considered to be homeless (Hendricks & Barkley, 2012).

Not only does poverty impact intellectual development of the brain, it also impacts social and psychological development (Cutuli et al., 2013). Children and adults in lower socioeconomic households often feel isolated and alone, which may lead to long-term detrimental psychological effects on their lives and in their brain development (Abramsky, 2012). The mental health of children growing up in poverty is significantly damaged in comparison to children growing up in middle class households (Lende, 2012). According to Mendenhall, Iachini, and Anderson-Butcher (2013), over 2.7 million children have been diagnosed with some type of psychological disturbance. These disorders are often related to some type of extreme trauma which in some capacity directly relates to living in prolonged situations of poverty (Mendenhall et al., 2013).

Often growing up poor means children run the risk of exposure to environmental hazards, such as lead, which may result in a lower Intelligence Quotient (IQ), higher mental retardation rates, and neurological problems (Scott & Pressman, 2013). Krabbenborg et al. (2013) stated, “The majority of homeless youths experience a low quality of life and lacks the personal and social resources to be successful” (p. 1). This is especially true in the areas of depression, anxiety, and self-esteem (Garner et al., 2011).

Agarwal (2015) associated the detrimental impact poverty has on the lives of children and the psychological, behavioral, and health damages it causes. Scott and Pressman (2013) disclosed poverty may lead to “a greater likelihood of early sexual activity and a greater probability of teenage out-of-wedlock births” (p. 359). Homeless youth are 40-70% more likely to participate in unprotected sexual interactions as opposed to their peers living in middle to upper class families (Kennedy et al., 2015). Sexual and

physical referral rates among youths to child protection agencies are also on the rise (Matta Oshima, Jonson-Reid, & Seay, 2014):

Family poverty significantly increases the risk of childhood maltreatment.

Children in poor families are three to seven times more likely to experience maltreatment. This is likely due to higher levels of family and neighborhood risk factors for maltreatment among poor families (Kohl, Jonson-Reid, & Drake, 2011). The risk of CSA specifically has also been found to be associated with poverty. (pp. 369-370)

Children living in poverty are more likely to be exposed to adverse childhood trauma which develops into irreversible and detrimental long-term social and psychological problems (Agarwal, 2015). Data suggest the central nervous system may also be adversely impacted by environmental stimuli (Hanson et al., 2013).

The suicide rates of adolescents living in generational poverty are more than double that of their peers (Oppong Asante, Meyer-Weitz, & Petersen, 2015). According to Kennedy et al. (2015), “Homeless youth between the ages of 13-24 continue to be a highly vulnerable population for a variety of sexual health risks” (p. 937). Students living in poverty are especially vulnerable to peer pressure and have a greater number of adverse childhood experiences than students living in the middle to upper class of society (Agarwal, 2015). Alcohol and drug abuse is also higher among students living in poverty (Krabbenborg et al., 2013). According to Oppong Asante et al. (2015), “A positive relationship ‘exists’ between poor mental health and substance abuse” (p. 2).

Impact of Socioeconomic Status on Academic Achievement and Schools

Socioeconomic status directly correlates with a student's attendance and his or her academic achievement (Cutuli et al., 2013). Romero and Lee's (2007) examination of poverty indicated children from impoverished households are more apt to chronic bouts of school truancy in adolescence than are children from any other class of society. Sparks (2014b) asserted, "To improve homeless students' achievement, schools must balance academic and behavioral support, according to a new research and policy report by the National Center for Homeless Education at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro" (p. 5).

According to Miller et al. (2014), there is a direct correlation between a student's educational performance and his or her socioeconomic status. Hanson et al. (2013) supported this and stated babies born into lower socioeconomic households are exposed to less cognitive engagement from birth, which equivocates to depilating implications of brain development and cognitive functioning. Payne (2013) noted, "Low achievement is closely correlated with lack of resources, and numerous studies have documented the correlation between low seriocomic status and low achievement" (p. 116). Posel (2015) reported a study by the University of Wisconsin at Madison included analysis of brain images from 389 participants ages four to 22 in the lower socioeconomic class and exposed a 20% sizeable gap in standardized examination scores compared to peers from middle to higher socioeconomic households. Hanson et al. (2013) reported, "The development of gray matter in the brain is especially important for understanding problems in cognition and behavior regulation because this brain tissue contains neural

cell bodies, dendrites, synapse that support the processing information and execution of action” (p. 2).

A direct correlation between socioeconomic status and academic achievement and regular school attendance exists (Hanson et al., 2013). Chang and Jordan (2011) stated, “Chronic absence in Kindergarten can translate into poor academic performance throughout elementary school, especially for children in poverty whose families lack the resources to make up for time lost in the classroom” (p. 6). Growing up in a lower socioeconomic household often results in more prominent medical issues which may go untreated, resulting in more school days missed or sporadic school attendance (Haig, 2014). When a student misses 10 or more days a year, he or she begins to fall behind peers in every aspect of the school setting (Rapheal, 2014). Students then become known as at-risk for failing, which may result in retention due to lack of progress in various subject matters (Scott, 2013).

According to Romero and Lee (2007), low-income students have higher absenteeism rates regardless of their grade level. Early onset of prolonged truancy greatly impacts a student’s ability to read, which is especially true for students in poverty-afflicted households (Chang & Jordan, 2011). Romero and Lee (2007) found students at the poverty level are four times more likely to be absent than their peers. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) reported, “In high poverty areas, significant numbers of students are missing amounts of school that are staggering: on the order of six months to over a year in a five-year period” (p. 5). According to Cutuli et al. (2013), “Findings support the concept of a continuum of risk on which homelessness or high rates of residential mobility represents a greater level of risk beyond poverty alone” (p. 853).

In order to improve average daily attendance and the attendance of those with chronic absenteeism, Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) strongly encouraged schools to create various attendance incentives for not only students but also families. The higher level of education the motherly figure in a home holds, the greater chances a child has for receiving post-secondary educational opportunities (Park & Holloway, 2013). According to Turner (2012), “The growing number of children living in poverty directly affects our schools and has important implications on educational practices” (p. 1). Poverty negatively impacts educational systems across the United States, thus enhancing debilitating ramifications on society as a whole (Forman, 2016). It is therefore imperative the United States and other nations around the world address this issue to avoid a collapse of the American way of life and the standards first-world countries have become accustomed to (Turner, 2012).

It is often extremely difficult to find high-quality educators to work in impoverished school districts, and teacher retention rates are 50% lower for low-income districts as compared to districts with a more diverse population of wealth (Muller, Dodd, & Fiala, 2014). Teacher bias and stereotypes of homeless and impoverished families often limit low-socioeconomic schools from recruiting quality educators (de Boer et al., 2010). This is often attributed to a lack of adequate resources, psychological stressors from dealing with families in poverty-stricken living situations, and lack of family domicile support due to the higher homeless and free and reduced meals student population (Muller et al., 2014). Educational systems must first change the mindset of teachers and administrators working with underprivileged students to include an in-depth understanding of the everyday hardships disadvantaged children face and to ensure a

quality curriculum with realistic expectations and norms tailored to address students' needs (Barlow, 2011).

Violent crime rates are often higher in neighborhoods with large free and reduced price meals rates, which in turn results in poor-quality school systems within these neighborhoods (Miller et al., 2014). In fact, Coleman et al. (2003) reported, "The connection between low achievement in school and social class have been widely documented, yet our representatives continue to legislate under the assumption that schools alone can solve societal inequities that include social class" (p. 91). Education cannot be changed through legislation which forces improved academic accountability without the school systems themselves having the funding and support to implement programs that address the unique challenges faced by their patrons (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Dr. Poke (2016) suggested internal accountability of school districts is the only way reform measures will have a positive impact on their clientele, regardless of the legislation lawmakers impose at the national or state levels.

The way schools educate students is directly correlated to economic status, yet teachers and administrators are often oblivious to this practice (Landsman, 2014). Marzano (2009) expressed for effective pedagogy to take place, educators must take into account their individual students' diverse backgrounds and unique needs. However, educators must ensure they challenge and provoke higher-level autonomy in learning despite a child's socioeconomic status (Lane, Pierson, Stang, & Carver, 2010).

Professional development across the United States must also address changing the mindset of educators working with underprivileged students and their families (Hattie, 2012). Poke (2016) emphasized the principle educators must truly believe all students

can learn and have the ability to attend college if properly equipped with the educational tools to help them succeed in a global society. Landsman (2014) disclosed, “Wealthier children are taught through a variety of approaches that emphasize developing the whole child, while the emphasis for low-income children is often on developing obedience” (p. 17). Regardless of socioeconomic status, all children benefit from effective feedback that provides them with clear, concise expectations individualized to their unique needs and circumstances and that allows the students ownership in their learning experiences (Hattie, 2012). Schools alone cannot be expected to free society of the complications of social inequality, yet schools are held accountable regardless of these obstacles and must be willing to foster innovative approaches when developing effective instructional practices (Turner, 2012).

Retention of students living in poverty has proven to be extremely ineffective (Hattie, 2015). High academic achievement of students in this subgroup is extremely difficult to maintain, due to the fact students fall into a high-risk category of “poor developmental outcomes, like educational, social emotional, and health problems” (Cutuli et al., 2013, p. 3). Highly transient families living in economic instability negatively impact the gains students are able to make compared to their peers in regard to academic and social achievement (Agarwal, 2015). Dill (2015) documented, “Living doubled-up is a hardship and an inherent barrier to academic success” (p. 43). Hendricks and Barkley (2012) believed, “Compared with conventionally housed students, homeless students have lower achievement test scores, poorer grades, more grade retentions, and a higher incidence of school dropout” (p. 179). Hattie (2015) emphasized retention for even one year doubles a student’s chance of dropping out of high school, while retention

of two years or more almost guarantees the child will never graduate. Payne (2013) identified, “Over the past two decades, individuals with less than a high school degree have suffered an absolute decline in real income and have dropped further behind individuals with more education” (p. 178). This is a startling statistic, considering less than half of youth who become homeless earn a high school diploma or General Education Diploma (GED) (Johnson, 2014).

Interventions to Help Students Overcome the Poverty Barrier

In order for schools across the United States to succeed despite rigorous educational standards and high-stakes accountability from both the federal and state government, intervention models should be utilized when dealing with students of lower socioeconomic class and for students struggling academically due to high-risk factors in their everyday lives (Cutuli et al., 2013). According to Mendenhall et al. (2013), “Traditional school-based solutions that focus solely on academic instruction, tutoring, and remediation support are no longer enough to meet these growing nonacademic challenges faced by students today” (p. 225). Schools must teach all students cultural and socioeconomic tolerance in order for reform measures to be successful in educating children from the lower socioeconomic class of society (Redeaux, 2011). Reform efforts by schools must include clear expectations for students regardless of their socioeconomic background or current living situations (Stringfield, Reynolds, & Schaffer, 2012).

As school leaders look to examine continuous school improvement, several questions must be addressed within districts to enable sustainable effective programs (Bernhardt, 2013). These questions include the following:

- “Where are we now?”

- “How did we get to where we are now?”
- “Where do we want to be?”
- “How are we going to get where we want to be?” and
- “Is what we are doing making a difference?” (Bernhardt, 2013, p. 13)

Hattie (2012) revealed, “The aim of feedback is to reduce the gap between where students are and where they should be” (p. 20). In order for sustainable interventions to be established for students living in poverty, concentrated effort toward quality collaboration and planning within the school system must be at the forefront (Kohler-Evans et al., 2013). Bernhardt (2013) expressed confidence in the idea, “With continuous school improvements, the vision is the target of everything that is done in the school” (p. 19).

According to Dill (2015), there are four effective approaches to meeting the academic needs of students forced to live in poverty:

First, one must build a strong relationship with students of poverty to ensure an understanding in the classroom of the everyday hardships they face. Secondly, teachers must realize the behaviors children in poverty exhibit are directly related to their mindset rather than their character. Thirdly, one must strive to increase a child’s low self-esteem if academic success is ever to be gained; lastly, one must be willing to invest the time to help students face their problems rather than make excuses for the hurdles they face. (p. 46)

For schools to see positive educational reform and improvement, a support system for children in the lower socioeconomic classes must be established early on in their education (Park & Holloway, 2013). Early childhood interventions must become a

necessity, especially in low socioeconomic neighborhoods and districts (Hillemeier et al., 2013).

McCarver Elementary School in Tacoma, Washington, is putting this plan into action by confronting student mobility issues and putting into place numerous intervention programs which support students including their Special Housing Program (Blad, 2014b). Blad (2014b) reported students and their families are able to earn vouchers for up to two years of housing if they meet stringent guidelines set forth through a partnership between “public and private entities” working hand-in-hand with the school to confront the issue (p. 1). Bridgeport, Connecticut, has been ranked as one of the poorest cities in the United States where over half of students are not proficient in communication arts and mathematics (“Poverty Stricken City,” 2013). Religious and community leaders are working together with the district to strategize efforts in overcoming this precedence that has been established through the media and community organizations of children unable to overcome due to their socio-status (“Poverty Stricken City,” 2013). New York, Baltimore, and Oakland are other examples of cities where community agencies are working in tandem with school districts to actively seek an effective attendance initiative by utilizing task forces to mentor homeless or low-income families (Chang & Jordan, 2011).

Efforts of these type are aimed at helping ensure highly mobile, transient families maintain residency for longer periods of time, thus allowing schools to help students succeed academically and to address the many obstacles poverty creates (Cutuli et al., 2013). Low-income families are often forced to relocate every time the rent is increased by their landlords (Miller et al., 2014). Students who move three to four times

throughout the school year lose at least six months of academic learning each time they transfer schools (Johnson, 2014). Highly mobile students end up being at least two years behind educationally compared to their same-aged peers (Cutuli et al., 2013). Effective coalitions among community agencies, parents, schools, and the community must be established to deploy effective programs which address the individual needs of the community and to attain meaningful change that equips students with the education needed for success after graduation (Gordon & Cui, 2014).

Ruby Payne's (2013) research is also widely used across the country to help schools attain high-quality professional development on understanding the poverty mindset in order to help students overcome the obstacles associated with low socioeconomic status. For students in poverty, emphasis is placed on people, survival, relationships, and entertainment (Payne, 2013). Students in poverty are, in essence, just trying to survive (Johnson, 2014). According to Payne (2009), the ability of children in the lower socioeconomic class to solve problems is essential to their achievement and survival. Payne's (2013) approach is considered to be a "cultural approach" based on behaviors which support school officials in efforts to better understand the obstacles those in poverty face, thus equipping schools with the skills needed to realize student success (Shuffelton, 2013, p. 305).

Another program utilized by educators is the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP), which focuses on "character" education to overcome barriers poverty imposes on children and families (Shuffelton, 2013, p. 299). Shuffelton (2013) stated through KIPP: Students are taught an array of practices, such as making and maintaining eye contact with authority figures, nodding in response to conversation, and adhering

to a tight schedule of classes and homework, that are believed to convey dominant cultural capital. (p. 306)

Hattie, Masters, and Birch (2016) also supported this concept, affirming, “The most significant impact on student learning comes through challenging mindsets, setting high expectations, and making learning visible and explicit for all children” (p. 117). There is opposition to the program from those who believe “adopting the cultural practices of the elite will not serve to redistribute advantage” to those living in poverty (Shuffelton, 2013, p. 299). Charter schools such as KIPP are experiencing success due to the key fact a concentrated emphasis on addressing poverty at the school level is used to ensure educational achievement of all students, and especially those living in poverty (Miller et al., 2014).

In order for students to overcome the barrier of situational or generational poverty, schools must ensure students in the low socioeconomic subgroup are in attendance every day (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Berliner and Glass (2015) advised districts to “redraw school attendance areas to achieve socioeconomic balance, and support high-quality early childhood education in those areas” (p. 12). Schools, teachers, and community stakeholders have the ability to create an environment conducive to learning regardless of a child’s socioeconomic situation (Hess, 2015). Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) voiced chronic absenteeism can be divided into three main categories:

Students whose families do not value education or the school system in general, those individuals plagued with some sort of extenuating circumstance involving the work or illness, and lastly students who are harassed or feel school is an unsafe environment for them. (p. 7)

Students living in poverty miss more school than students in any other socioeconomic class due to poor quality of housing and continuous exposure to various environmental illnesses (Miller et al., 2014). Children living in poor housing developments run a greater risk of exposure to lead and mold which trigger asthmatic-type illness and can have serious long-term effects on growth and brain development (Miller et al., 2014).

Schools must develop programs which focus on a student's strengths regardless of socioeconomic status (Krabbenborg et al., 2013). When describing students in poverty, conversations are often centered on the things students are lacking rather than their unwavering resilience to overcome (Landsman, 2014). Opong Asante et al. (2015) acknowledged, "Resilience can be described as the ability to 'bounce back' in the face of adversity" (p. 11). Many students are blessed with numerous educational and non-educational strengths, including those in various content-specific subjects, trades, extracurricular activities, or in the fine arts (Landsman, 2014). According to Payne (2013), "[There are] four reasons one leaves poverty: It is too painful to stay, a vision or goal, a key relationship, or a special talent or skill" (p. 11). Schools and policymakers must be willing to think outside-the-box to formulate intervention programs centered on helping students develop gifts through a mentoring program which fosters positive, healthy relationships with other educators or community volunteers (Krabbenborg et al., 2013). Two of the key components in helping individuals overcome poverty are meaningful relationships and quality schooling (Payne, 2013).

Hattie (2015) emphasized the capability of the United States educational system to become one of the greatest structures in the world. This can and will be accomplished if legislators and school leaders work collaboratively, drawing from the vast amounts of

expertise teachers and administrators possess in their chosen field (Hattie, 2015).

According to Haig (2014):

A major challenge for education policymakers and educators globally is the strong and persistent impact of student socio-economic status (SES) on learning. This is a challenge that will not be addressed solely by school-focused reform. However, one policy initiative that could make a positive difference in this regard, and could bring other benefits to schools and communities, is equipping schools to act as hubs for a range of social and health services for their students, families, and communities. Schools as community hubs can not only act to mitigate the impact of poverty on learners, but can position schools at the center of communities, and build community resilience and capacity. (p. 1018)

Kohler-Evans et al. (2013) believed schools must be willing to invest their largest resource, quality compassionate and caring educators, to mentor and develop relationships with students and their parents living in poverty. Professional stakeholders in the community who are not involved in the educational system are an untapped resource who can serve as mentors for students deemed as at-risk (Kohler-Evans et al., 2013). Krabbenborg et al. (2013) stated, "There is little information available on evidence-based interventions, some studies mention a supportive working relationship between professionals and youths as a crucial element in an effective intervention" (p. 2). The advantages of developing a program which capitalizes on relationship building and effective communication with students living in poverty will far outweigh an investment in another meaningless intervention program which will have little to no impact within the community or in the lives of students (Kohler-Evans et al., 2013).

Legislative and Community Response to Poverty

Educational reform is at the forefront of legislation during the 21st century (Malone, 2015). In order for educational policy reform to take place, Miller et al. (2014) stated, “Toward the cultivation of equitable opportunity for all students, school leaders must understand and strategically engage federal, state, district, and school-level education policies that shape students’ and families everyday out-of-school lives” (p. 135). Legislators and community activists lobbying for policy reform measures for those plagued by the poverty epidemic continually state America’s social stratification exists with a substantial line drawn between the poor and other social classes (Abramsky, 2012). According to Rebell and Wolff (2012), “We know we live in economically difficult times, but so do the growing number of children whose educational opportunities are being are being stunted by current policies” (p. 65). Redeaux (2011) reiterated the ideology legislators must first understand the reason for poverty is scarcity of jobs and educational opportunities for the lower class and minorities, before school reform measures will be successful.

Horn and Freeland (2015) believed schools cannot be held accountable for continued academic achievement without the nation’s lawmakers addressing poverty as an epidemic increasing across the United States at an alarming rate. When children live in poverty, they are often forced to attend school without even their basic needs met (Scott & Pressman, 2013). A unified approach by legislators must be taken to ensure students in the lower socioeconomic class have a feasible chance of overcoming the barriers poverty invokes (Rapheal, 2014). Poke (2016) quoted Ronald Edmonds of Harvard University, Founder of the Effective Schools Movement, on the education of

students living in poverty and the duties of these schools in becoming high-performing regardless of the rate of students in poverty:

How many effective schools would you have to see to be persuaded of the educability of poor children? If your answer is more than one, then I submit that you have reasons of your own for preferring to believe that pupil performance derives from family background instead of school response to family background. We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far. (p. 4)

According to Horn and Freeland (2015), until poverty is addressed in the United States., educational reform measures will be unsuccessful, and children will continue to fall farther and farther behind as they strive to compete for jobs in a global society.

Educational systems in the United States are primarily funded by student attendance rates (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) suggested, “Educators and policy makers cannot truly understand achievement gaps or efforts to close them without considering chronic absenteeism” (pp. 4-5). Abramsky (2013) delivered a powerful message to United States leaders, stating, “A country with a \$17 trillion economy allows so much misery amid so much plenty by allowing a significant part of the labor force to work full-time with no hope of paying for food, utilities, or rent” (p. 2). According to the article “Identifying the Poor” (2013), “The Working Poor Families Project Study found that 62 percent of low-income families spent over one-third of their income on housing, majority of which is rented” (p. 9). President Obama

addressed the poverty issue in his February 2013 State of the Union Address by calling for reform measures to be put into place to stimulate the economy by raising the minimum wage and by producing more jobs for workers (“Identifying the Poor,” 2013).

President Obama began addressing the homeless and poverty issue in 2010 for families and veterans (Cauvin, 2010). His administration released a guide, written by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, to end homelessness across the United States over a 10-year period of time (Cauvin, 2010). However, with wars in Iraq and Afghanistan during this time period, money was not allocated to assist with the measures to address housing and development, education, jobs, and physical and mental health issues often associated with poverty and homelessness (Cauvin, 2010). Although the Obama Administration had good intentions to end homelessness by 2015 for veterans and families, based upon 2010 census data, the initiative has had little to no impact (Zalaznick, 2015).

The Bureau of Labor and Statistics, along with the Census Bureau, are working to accurately measure the poverty rate based upon current economic trends (“Identifying the Poor,” 2013). Reformists, however, do not feel the poverty rates portrayed by the census and media give an accurate picture of the severity of poverty in America, since a large number of homeless are not measured through their data collection efforts (Clyburn, 2014). Figure 9 portrays the Supplementary Poverty Measure (SPM) in relation to the official poverty measure released in the Census Bureau’s 2015 report (Renwick & Fox, 2016, p. 17). The SPM is a “housing index that measures variations of housing costs in each state based on the rent price for a two-bedroom apartment” (“Identifying the Poor,”

2013, p. 9). Figure 10 represents the SPM and traditional poverty measures by age group (Renwick & Fox, 2016, p. 4).

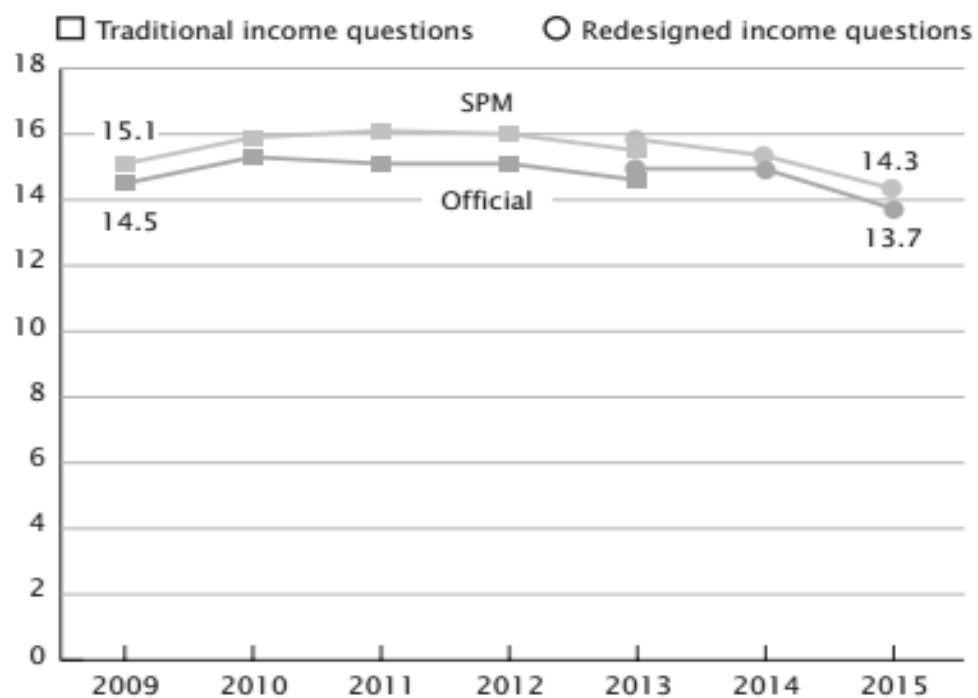


Figure 9. Poverty rates using the official measure and the SPM: 2009 to 2015. Adapted from “The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2015,” by T. Renwick & L. Fox, 2016.

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<http://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-258.pdf>

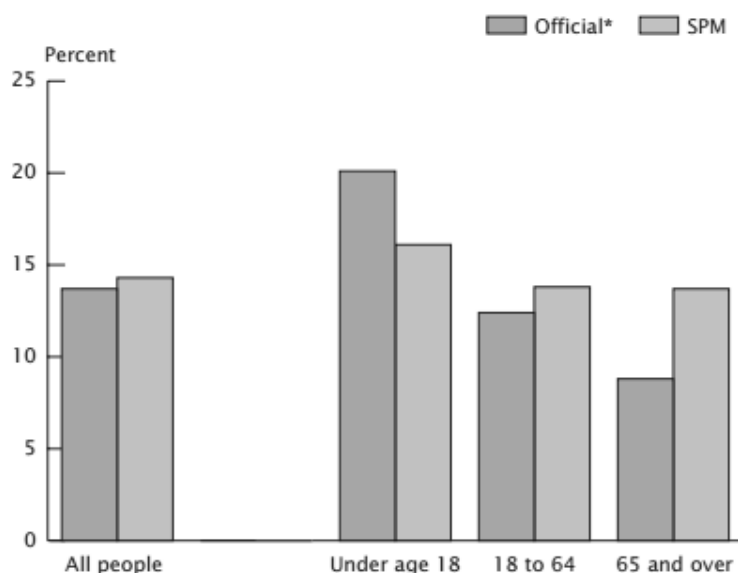


Figure 10. Poverty rates using two measures for total population and by age group: 2015. Adapted from “The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2015,” by T. Renwick & L. Fox, 2016. Copyright 2016 by the United States Census Bureau. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-258.pdf>

Using these statistics, educational reform leaders and lawmakers are closely examining the data to determine a realistic and effective plan of action in addressing the needs of families and children in poverty (Poke, 2016). Instructional drivers which take an innovative approach to helping students and their families overcome the detrimental effects of poverty have recently gained support among lawmakers (Shuffelton, 2013). In order to improve poverty and the detrimental impact it has on the United States, a multifaceted approach must be used involving community leaders and government officials at state and national levels (“Identifying the Poor,” 2013). President Lyndon B. Johnson’s 1964 War on Poverty established an initiative to address the various needs of early childhood students through federally supported part-time Head Start programs

(Armor & Sousa, 2014). Head Start was converted into a full-time program after leaders realized the part-time program was not enough to manifest the skills needed to overcome the difficulties faced by children in the lower socioeconomic class (Armor & Sousa, 2014).

Hillemeier et al. (2013) reiterated the importance of early childhood education programs such as Head Start by affirming, “Early childhood in particular is a crucial period with far reaching effects on physical and mental health in adulthood” (p. 1852). On average, the longer an individual is on the streets, the greater the amount of psychological and physical damage they incur (Oppong Asante et al., 2015). Intervention programs should be put into place at an early age if one hopes to reverse the damage caused by poverty (Lester, 2013). Payne (2013) documented, “Children under age 6 remain particularly vulnerable to poverty” (p. 12). Armor and Sousa (2014) reiterated the importance of Head Start by noting, “Children who participated in Head Start did exhibit several significant positive effects compared to children who had no preschool at all” (p. 42). The most noticeable impact, though, was for students who also had parental involvement rather than those in foster or outside care (“Head Start Impact Study,” 2014). The most obvious impact was in language and literacy development at an early age, as compared to those students without early childhood intervention services (“Head Start Impact Study,” 2014).

By entry to kindergarten, the pre-academic scores of children living in poverty are on average half the overall scores of their peers living in the middle to upper socioeconomic class (Miller et al., 2014). Washington University’s School of Medicine in St. Louis completed a longitudinal 10-year study of preschool-age children; after

measuring stressors associated with traumatic life experiences, researchers found reduced brain development of individuals who were raised in poverty-stricken environments (“Poverty Linked to Reduced Brain Development,” 2014). Hanson et al. (2013) suggested, “Infants, toddlers and preschoolers from lower income families began their lives with similar grey brain matter volumes but had a lower total gray matter as compared with those from middle and high-income households by toddlerhood” (p. 5). As time passed and exposure to various hazards often associated with lower socioeconomic households took place, the gap in gray matter widened as compared to same-aged peers from middle to high-level income households (Hanson et al., 2013). According to Lester (2013), when interventions are not provided until adolescence, the ramifications of poverty may be too far embedded in a child’s brain for interventions to truly be successful.

Schools in the 21st century are being forced to remove the barriers poverty imposes on students and to reform current practices to address the diverse social and academic needs of all students through legislative measures such as the MCKV Act and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) (Sulkowski & Joyce-Beaulieu, 2014). The MCKV Act started requiring districts to track and report information to the federal government pertaining to the homeless population during the 2002-2003 school year (Hendricks & Barkley, 2012). These numbers continue to rise throughout the nation (Abramsky, 2013). Johnson (2014) theorized homeless numbers are actually higher than the numbers reported to districts by students and their families due to the stigma associated with being labeled homeless.

The passage of the MCKV Act affirmed, “The federal government recognized that it had a responsibility to assist in improving the educational experiences of homeless children” (Hendricks & Barkley, 2012, p. 180). However, only 23% of schools across the nation receive federal MCKV grant money to help educate and support homeless students (Sparks, 2013). Although the MCKV Act has made registering for school easier and has ensured transportation is readily available for homeless students, there is no correlational research supporting the MCKV Act’s impact on educational performance of students who meet the criteria for homeless or free and reduced price meal services (Hendricks & Barkley, 2012). According to Hendricks and Barkley (2012), there is research to support the MCKV Act has positively impacted attendance rates for homeless students who qualify for free and reduced price meals.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a reauthorization in 2015 by President Obama of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), ensures equal protection of youth and children in foster and juvenile care systems (Krebs, 2016). Schools across the United States are in anticipation of the official release from the United States Department of Education which specifies the exact stipulations on educational systems under the ESSA to ensure compliance (Whitehouse, 2016). The ESSA will allow for schools to allocate resources and funding toward the education of youth and children in the area of technology (Cavanagh, 2016). According to Peet and Vercelletto (2016), the ESSA is “the first piece of federal education legislation in over 50 years enabling federal funding to be directed at school libraries to enhance services and resources” (p. 1). According to Klein (2016), the ESSA holds schools accountable for academic achievement, including subgroups of students in special education, English language learners, and free and reduced price meals

students. The ESSA (2015) entails systematic plans, goals, and systems which ensure accountability across the nation's schools and provide further protection for students.

In order to reach poverty-stricken families and children, there must be a defined and systematic way to properly identify those in need throughout the community and measures in place that help organizations work together to provide services to those in poverty (Cettina, 2015). Haig (2014) suggested "three policy options" exist for schools and the communities when addressing poverty and the numerous challenges it creates for its patrons (p. 1021). These are as follows:

- "First one can deny the correlation and demand that schools overcome the achievement gap on their own" (Haig, 2014, p. 1021).
- "A second option is to directly address the problem by reducing the incidence of poverty in society overall" (Haig, 2014, p. 1021).
- "A third option is to equip schools to directly address the challenges faced by low SES learners" (Haig, 2014, p. 1022).

For this to be accomplished, Americans must first admit there is a scarcity epidemic afflicting the nation, and the division between the poor and other social classes is in fact a reality for more than half of those who reside within United States borders (Abramsky, 2013). Sustainable efforts between community agencies and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are being put into place in response to the overwhelming need for intervention measures for children and youth ("Social Media Tips," 2014). For communities and neighborhoods to thrive, poverty rates must first be addressed ("Identifying the Poor," 2013). In lower-income neighborhoods, violent acts and crime rates are higher, while

unemployment rates are more prominent, due to the deterioration of the community and lack of economic and educational opportunities (“Identifying the Poor,” 2013).

Structured community reform efforts will maximize positive results for children in poverty (Dill, 2015). Poverty appears to know no boundaries and equally plagues all racial ethnicities around the globe (Clyburn, 2014). According to Moustaka-Tsiolakki and Tsiakkiros (2013), “Both the organizational structure and cultural background of a school define its capacity to develop and manage change” (p. 4). Park and Holloway (2013) asserted, “A number of studies have found that in general, low-income and/or ethnic/racial/minorities parents are less likely than other parents to participate in some form of involvement in their children’s schooling” (p. 105). A community approach addressing the specific culture of a community and district must be utilized if change is to be positively received among stakeholders (Hattie, 2011).

Fullan (2011) noted, “After minimal needs are met, what turns most people on is being effective at something that is personally meaningful, and which makes a contribution to others as well as society as a whole” (p. 3). Correlational data exist outlining the relationship between poor academic achievement and socioeconomic class, yet schools must look past this obstacle and provide students with a quality education which delivers the tools to move out of their current place in society (Barlow, 2011). Barlow (2011) echoed this idea, “We need to recognize the barriers that poverty creates, but is no excuse for educators not to create the conditions to learn” (p. 68). Schools often forget their first priority should be to provide all students with a quality education and to meet the basic needs of all students regardless of socioeconomic class (Landsman, 2014).

According to Dill (2015), agencies must first edify dignity within the homeless population while helping identify barriers that must be addressed in individual situations; come to the realization negative behaviors of those in poverty are not tell-tale of their personalities and generally stem from the situations they are placed in; and have individuals willing to mentor families throughout the process if viable community improvement is to meet the needs of those in the low socioeconomic class. Dang and Miller (2013) advised, “Social supports provided by mentors enhance youth’s adaptive functioning and may promote resilience, thus the use of natural mentors may be an important untapped asset in designing interventions to improve outcomes for homeless youth” (p. 246). Cooper (2014) referred to adolescent mentoring programs as having “a significant positive impact on learning and academic achievement as well as on their personal and social well-being” (p. 21). Relationship building among adolescents and children in the lower social class of society is fundamental in equipping them with the self-sufficiency skills they need to overcome the barriers poverty often creates (Krabbenborg et al., 2013).

Park and Holloway (2013) concluded there is a significant direct correlational connection between socioeconomic status and the amount of parental involvement within a school system. Numerous studies have supported the importance of effective quality community intervention programs and the positive impact parental involvement plays in educational outcomes for students (Gordon & Cui, 2014). Malone (2015) noted there is a “direct association of parental involvement with positive student academic outcomes” (p. 14).

According to Wang and Sheikh-Khalil (2014), parental involvement often declines in the secondary school setting. Gordon and Cui (2014) found, “Communities high in poverty have an adverse impact on the effectiveness of school-related parental involvement on adolescents’ academic achievement” (p. 622). Districts that find a way to overcome this typical scenario in the secondary setting are finding the academic performance and attendance rates of students improve in correlation to increased parental involvement (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Schools must find a way to facilitate and encourage parental involvement regardless of socioeconomic status throughout the school setting in order to maximize academic achievement and positive outcomes for all students (Malone, 2015).

As documented by Hattie (2011), the culture of students, along with their socioeconomic status, can impact the way students interpret feedback and interactions in the school setting. According to Moustaka-Tsiolakki and Tsiakkiros (2013), a student’s educational and socioeconomic background greatly influences a school’s ability to grow, and the primary concern should be with meeting the basic needs of the clientele. School districts alone cannot be expected to meet every need of every student, but they must be willing to try if society is going to prosper for future generations (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). A positive alliance and relationship among community agencies, school officials, and families will better equip students living in poverty with the essential skills they need to overcome their current situations and will improve the overall health of the community (Cooper, 2014). Programs must be designed to meet the unique needs of students in the lower socioeconomic class if initiatives are to be implemented in a successful manner (Sulkowski & Joyce-Beaulieu, 2014).

Summary

Schools create a sense of purpose for students and for the community (Sergiovani, 2005). This is especially true of schools in rural areas, which often become the hub for all extracurricular entertainment throughout the community (Mendenhall et al., 2013). However, little practical research has been done examining the overall impact this plays on each subgroup of students or on improvements in academic achievement (Gordon & Cui, 2014). This is especially true for students living in low socioeconomic situations (Blad, 2014b). Miller et al. (2014) reported, “Poverty can thus create overlapping obstacles to school success, leaving students and families with complex, multi-sector needs” (p. 133). Schools are faced with helping students overcome the barrier of poverty and should ensure interventions are put into place to help students reach academic success if society is to continue to prosper in the United States (Cutuli et al., 2013). Community and parental involvement is crucial in the academic success of all students regardless of socioeconomic status (Gordon & Cui, 2014).

Education alone is not enough to help families and children in poverty overcome their situations (Payne, 2013). Sergiovani (2005) disclosed, “It is trust first, followed by vision, strategy, and action that work for serious and long-lasting change to occur” (p. 8). One must believe the impact of socioeconomic status on academic achievement is an obstacle worth overcoming (Scott & Pressman, 2013). Investment in an innovative educational system which thrives on effective positive relationships between the community and their patrons is crucial in the success of all students, regardless of socioeconomic status (Krabbenborg et al., 2013). Gordon and Cui (2014) supported, “Community efforts may improve the community’s conditions and therefore alleviate the

negative effects that distressed communities may have on family functioning and adolescents' development" (p. 624). Quality educational systems are willing to take on poverty and the obstacles it creates, but lack the proper funding and support at state and federal levels to address the needs of over half their clientele (Haig, 2014).

If hierarchical basic needs are met, children will be able to overcome environmental instability to ensure the United States remains a strong nation and a leader of progress around the world (Lester, 2013). Albrecht et al. (2015) proposed, "Schools are one of a culture's primary socialization forces, and positive peer interactions play an important role in this process; School success is optimized when supportive environments are established to facilitate better social communication and social problem solving strategies" (p. 566). Schools alone can do little to overcome poverty, but quality educational systems and staff can work together to fight against the tremendous barriers poverty creates for students (Haig, 2014).

Poke (2016) suggested the need for educators to take an active role in changing educational outcomes for students in the lower socioeconomic class. High expectations for achievement and a multi-tiered system of support which addresses the individual diverse needs of millions of students suffering from debilitating circumstances brought on by poverty are necessary when attempting to equip students with a solid educational foundation (Sulkowski & Joyce-Beaulieu, 2014). Schools willing to invest in programs which meet their students' and families' individual needs will find greater success than those adopting programs without stakeholder buy-in (Hattie, 2012).

Consistent with the American Psychological Association's research, "Poverty and dropouts are inextricably connected in the three primary settings affecting healthy child

and adolescent development: families, schools and communities” (Poke, 2016, p. 4). Due to the home environment and living conditions children in poverty are forced to live in, the psychological, physical, and mental health of these individuals are often extremely damaged with long-term inevitable consequences which may impact them for the rest of their lives (Dang & Miller, 2013).

Even though the primary responsibility of schools is to educate children, if basic psychological and physical needs are not met, children will not be able to progress onto the next stage of hierarchical development as outlined in Maslow’s (1954) research (Barden & Lassmann, 2016). A nurturing and loving environment that addresses basic human needs must be a priority for schools and community organizations working together to overcome poverty and the debilitating obstacles it creates for so many around the world (Dang & Miller, 2013). Supports such as these may help in attaining meaningful and substantial educational gains despite the socioeconomic makeup children are born into (Lester, 2013). Chronic poverty is a reality for millions of Americans on a daily basis (Clyburn, 2014). Yet, the United States continues to raise educational expectations for schools without delivering a service model or funding to address the basic needs of over half the students they serve (Hendricks & Barkley, 2012).

Haig (2014) asserted, “Poverty and wealth are not destiny” (p. 1019). Society possesses the tools needed to help those plagued with poverty to overcome its ramifications (Clyburn, 2014). However, those individuals living in poverty must be willing to accept assistance and have the drive to overcome despite their current situations when offered a quality education and job training programs (Forman, 2016).

According to Jae Min and Hanna (2015), “Because goal-directed behavior regulates process, it thus positively affects desired outcomes” (p. 130).

Establishing positive mentor relationships between school leaders and community members with students living in poverty will help students establish clear and attainable goals (Landsman, 2014). This is crucial for sustainable change initiatives to be effective throughout the world to address the numerous obstacles those in poverty face on a daily basis (Poke, 2016). Clyburn (2014) noted, “Today, the poor in America are in poverty not because they do not know how to pull themselves out of that predicament, but because they do not have available to them the resources necessary to do so” (p. 1). A quality education is crucial in helping those in poverty overcome and move into the next socioeconomic class of society (Coleman et al., 2003). Horn and Freeland (2015) stated, “A major battle waged in education reform is over whether it is possible to educate successfully low-income students without first solving poverty and the effects it has on students’ potential to thrive” (p. 4).

Clyburn (2014) reflected on a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his essay to legislative organizations concerning poverty in America. Dr. King stated:

Why should there be hunger and privation in any land, in any city, at any table when man has the resources and the scientific know-how to provide all mankind with the basic necessities of life? . . . There is no deficit in human resources; the deficit is in human will. (as cited in Clyburn, 2014, p. 2)

The need for educational reform is ever-present for school leaders, but the legislative support to attain meaningful change which addresses the needs of students living in

poverty must be acquired if the United States is going to continue to compete as a global leader (Cutuli et al., 2013).

Schools play an important role in millions of lives around the world (Haig, 2014). If a healthy relationship is formed among schools, parents, community leaders, and various other stakeholders, true meaningful change will occur which benefits the entire community and society as a whole (Haig, 2014). Educational leaders are desperately seeking quality intervention measures to address individual student needs (Hattie, 2015). School leaders must join together in this effort to lobby for funding and legislation which supports this endeavor (Lester, 2013). As Dr. King pointed out, mankind has the ability to ensure none go without food or basic necessities of life, yet millions around the world face this on a daily basis (Clyburn, 2014).

In Chapter Three, the primary investigator will discuss the methodology used as a basis for the study. The purpose of the study will also be discussed along with analysis of the research questions in comparison to the data. Data collection and analysis will be thoroughly examined to determine the impact of the Bridges Program on School District A.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is an improved overall education for students living in poverty after execution of the Bridges Program in School District A. In this quantitative study, the primary investigator used archival data collected from students who qualified for free and reduced price meals in School District A to compare mean scores of ADA, dropout rates, and discipline infractions. The data were used to examine whether the Bridges Program had a positive measurable impact after implementation. The data were collected and analyzed accurately and consistently by reporting frequencies and percentages.

The investigator conducted a quantitative study using historical data collected from students who qualified for free and reduced price meals during the school years 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016, three years before and three years after implementation of the Bridges Program. According to Fraenkel et al. (2015), “Quantitative research is research in which the investigator attempts to clarify phenomena through carefully designed and controlled data collection and analysis” (p. G-7). The data were collected and analyzed accurately and consistently on a nominal scale reporting the frequencies and percentages of students’ ADA, discipline infractions, and dropout rates. A nominal scale “groups and labels data only; reports frequencies or percentages” (Fraenkel et al., 2015, p. G-5). According to Bernhardt (2013), “From a historical perspective, a school can use demographic data in its analyses of how well it has served its past and current populations and identify professional learning and changes needed to meet the needs of its future clients” (p. 29).

Chapter Three includes a description of the sample population for the study, mechanisms used for data collection, procedures and methodology used, and selection of the processes employed in analysis of the data.

Problem and Purpose Overview

School District A implemented an intervention program to address the basic needs of all students, especially addressing the basic needs of students living in poverty, during the 2013-2014 school year. The purpose of this investigation was to determine if there are statistical differences in terms of ADA, dropout rates, or the number of discipline infractions between students who utilized the Bridges Program from 2013-2016 in comparison to students from 2010-2013 who did not. The investigator reviewed and analyzed data from the two groups using a *t*-test. A *t*-test is a “parametric test of statistical significance used to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the means of two matched, or non-independent, samples. It is also used for pre-post comparisons” (Fraenkel et al., 2015, p. G-9). The examiner used the data to determine if there is a statistically significant difference ($p \leq .05$) between the mean achievement scores of students who had the intervention of the Bridges Program available to them during a three-year period, as compared to those students who did not. The results will be made available to stakeholders and will be used to inform district policy of School District A and improvement efforts for High School A.

Research questions and hypotheses. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the statistically significant difference between dropout rates of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016

after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance?

H1₀: There is no statistically significant difference between dropout rates of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance.

2. What is the statistically significant difference between discipline infractions of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance?

H2₀: There is no statistically significant difference between discipline infractions of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance.

3. What is the statistically significant difference between the ADA of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance?

H3₀: There is no statistically significant difference between the ADA of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance.

Research Design

The primary investigator used quantitative data to examine one rural Missouri school district's attempt to utilize an intervention program to meet the basic needs of students in poverty. The study was conducted to determine if a positive correlation exists between the Bridges Program and improvement in academic achievement and attendance for students who qualified for free and reduced price meals in School District A. Cohort data were extracted for grades seven through 12 as measured by ADA, graduation rates, and the number of discipline infractions in comparison to the students who did not have access to the program three years prior to implementation. Archival historical data were collected for three years before implementation of the Bridges Program (school years 2010-2011 to 2012-2013) and for the three years after the Bridges Program was established and available (school years 2013-2014 to 2015-2016).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations and safeguards are of utmost importance to the investigator (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Every effort on the part of the investigator and the third-party was utilized to ensure confidentiality and anonymity for the sample group. The investigator used only extractable data from a secondary source to ensure no potential harm or risk was present to the participants (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

Confidentiality. During this study and data-gathering stage, all data were secured on a pass-coded desktop computer for the extent of the study. Removable backup of data was created and secured in a locked file under the supervision of the investigator after permission was granted from the superintendent of School District A. No other human has access to the primary investigator's storage media and/or equipment.

All information has been kept locked and secured throughout the course of this study and will be destroyed three years after completion.

Anonymity. The third party removed any and all identifiable markers from the data before providing the information to the investigator. Individual student data were not exploited throughout the course of this study. The third-party researcher used a coding system to ensure anonymity of the students was maintained. There is no possibility of harm to the participants, since only archival data were used. During this study and during the data-gathering stages, all data were secured on a pass-coded desktop computer. The data remained there during the extent of the study. No other human had access to the primary investigator's storage media and/or equipment during any part of the study. Removable backup of data was created and secured in a locked file under the supervision of the investigator and after permission was granted from the superintendent of School District A.

Overall. The superintendent of School District A provided the primary investigator written consent for archival data to be extracted after permission was granted from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) committee for Exempt Review. Data will be retained for three years. After the three-year period, all data will be shredded by the primary investigator.

Population and Sample

The sample for this study was determined using stratified random sampling of 35-50 students' data from a population of 566 students who qualified for free and reduced price meals in grades seven through 12 and who were enrolled in School District A during the 2010-2016 school years as reported to the MODESE. According to Fraenkel

et al. (2015), “Stratified random sampling is a process in which certain subgroups, or strata, are selected for the sample in the same proportion as they exist in the population” (p. 96). In other words, each member of the select population of students had an equal chance of being selected throughout the data collection process (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

In causal-comparative research, a minimum of at least 30 individuals per group is recommended to ensure validity (Fraenkel et al., 2015). An advantage to using stratified random sampling is that it increases the likelihood of equal representation of the subgroup as it naturally occurs in the population (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Results of this type of sample are the purest (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Of the 566 students who qualified for free and reduced price meals, an equal percentage of each gender within the subgroup was used to ensure validity.

Instrumentation

After informed consent was acquired from the superintendent of School District A, a third-party investigator accessed historical archival data from the MODESE concerning the student population who qualified for free and reduced price meals in School District A from the school years 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016. Although the primary investigator was approved by the IRB for a Category I (Exempt Review), which presented no harm to the participants requiring informed consent, consent was nonetheless obtained from the superintendent of School District A to ensure the district’s willful knowledge of the study being conducted (Fraenkel et al., 2015). A third-party examiner de-identified data from both sample groups using a coding system before granting the examiner access to the data.

Data Collection

After IRB approval was granted for the primary investigator (see Appendix A), informed consent from the superintendent of School District A was obtained (see Appendix B). The third-party investigator selected a random sample group of 35-50 students of the 566 students who qualified for free and reduced price meals in School District A. The third-party examiner extracted data concerning dropout rates, ADA, and the number of discipline infractions for both sample groups from the school years 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016. A third-party examiner redacted all identifiers for the primary investigator to ensure validity, confidentiality, and anonymity were maintained.

Data Analysis

After information was gathered from the third-party investigator, the primary investigator analyzed the stratified random sample of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals. Data were analyzed for the sample group of students who did not have access to the Bridges Program from 2010-2013 and the same stratified group of students who had full access to the Bridges Program from 2013-2016. Data were assessed and compared from the two groups using a *t*-test. According to Fraenkel et al. (2015), the first step in using a *t*-test to compare data from two random samples is to “construct frequency polygons and then calculate the mean and standard deviation of each group if the variable is quantitative” (p. 371). The data were used to determine if there is a statistically significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$) between the mean achievement scores of students who had the intervention of the Bridges Program available to them

during a three-year period as compared to those same students who did not during the three years prior to its implementation.

The data allowed the primary investigator to formulate answers to the research questions concerning the impact the Bridges Program may or may not have had on improving the educational data of students in poverty. This research was calculated to help other districts when contemplating various mentoring or intervention programs designed to help students at-risk in today's educational systems. Quality research with data-driven results is essential for school improvement measures to be effective when identifying the driving forces behind effective schools (Fullan, 2011). The primary investigator used applied research to determine the effectiveness of the Bridges Program on the average daily attendance, discipline infractions, and dropout rates of School District A's subgroup of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals. According to Fraenkel et al. (2015), applied research "is interested in examining the effectiveness of particular educational practices" (p. 7). The results will be made available to stakeholders and will be used to inform district policy of School District A and improvement efforts for High School A.

Summary

This chapter included the procedures and methodology the investigator used to determine whether a change in data and educational attained occurred for students who qualified for free and reduced price meals once their basic needs were met in School District A. A sample group of 36 students were used to ensure an accurate depiction of the results was obtained with an equal representation of female to male subjects. Chapter Four includes a description of the demographic information of the sample along with the

research questions as they correlate to the data collected. Chapter Four also addresses the investigator's findings and conclusions based upon the data collected.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

Schools from around the world are faced with numerous barriers centered on poverty and the insurmountable strain it places upon school systems to prepare students to compete in a global society (Cutuli et al., 2013). School systems are embracing the lower socioeconomic class with intervention programs designed to meet the basic needs of students and their families (Jae Min & Hanna, 2015). Sustainable intervention programs which address Maslow's (1954) Basic Needs Model were the focus of this research study (Lester, 2013). To enrich the everyday lives of students faced with poverty, schools must be willing to invest viable resources if sustainable reform measures are to be successful (Cettina, 2015).

Chronic risk factors associated with poverty may negatively impact educational outcomes for students who lack the resources to access community and educational intervention services (Cutuli et al., 2013). The design of intervention programs to address risk factors associated with poverty is intended to improve overall educational outcomes for students in the lower socioeconomic class of society (Gorski, 2013). In Missouri, this particular subgroup is often classified as students who qualify for free and reduced price meals (MODESE, 2015).

The purpose of this study was to provide insight into one rural district in Missouri's attempt to reduce the impact poverty has on student educational outcomes. Causal-comparative research was conducted to determine if the Bridges Program has impacted the educational performance of students who qualify for free and reduced price meals in School District A. Schenker and Rumrill (2004) suggested, "Causal-comparative designs generally involve the use of pre-existing or derived groups to explore differences between or among those groups on outcome or dependent variables"

(p. 117). Barden and Lassmann (2016) proposed investigators use this type of research when attempting to find a correlational relationship between two or more items and in determining positive or negative outcomes derived from a particular program.

For this study, the investigator used a random sample of 36 students who attended School District A and who qualified for free and reduced price meals for six straight school years from 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016. In School District A, at present, no comparative data exist regarding the effectiveness or the ineffectiveness of the Bridges Program on meeting the basic needs of students as outlined in Maslow's (1954) Hierarchy of Needs Model.

Data were assessed and compared from the two groups using a *t*-test. Ahad and Syed Yahaya (2014) supported the validity of a *t*-test as "the most familiar parametric method for testing the mean equality for two groups" (p. 888). The examiner used the data to determine if there was a statistically significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$) between the mean achievement scores of students who had the intervention of the Bridges Program available to them during a three-year period as compared to those same students who did not during the three years prior to its implementation.

Research Question One Data

What is the statistically significant difference between dropout rates of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance?

The dropout rate for students in 2013-2014 was 3.33%; the dropout rate for students in 2014-2015 was 3.33%; and the dropout rate for students in 2015-2016 was

3.33%. The 2010-2011 school year data revealed the dropout rate for students was 0.00%; the dropout rate for students in 2011-2012 was 3.33%; and the dropout rate for students in the 2012-2013 school year was 0.00%. The data showed 3.00% of students dropped out between the years 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 who participated in the Bridges Program as compared to 1.00% of students who dropped out from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance.

In the paired sample of dropout rates for all 36 students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013, the *t*-test could not be computed because the standard error of measurement difference was zero. Standard error of measurement is defined as “an index that shows the extent to which a measurement would vary under changed circumstances” (Fraenkel et al., 2015, p. 159). According to Fraenkel et al. (2015), a *t*-test for correlational research “is used to compare the mean scores for the same group before and after a treatment of some sort, to see if any observed gain is significant, or when the research design involves two matched groups” (p. 236). When comparing two sets of data using the *t*-test method, the scholar must analyze the data to determine if the means are dissimilar enough for the investigator to “conclude that the difference is most likely not due to chance but actually to the difference between the two” controls being evaluated (Fraenkel et al., 2015, p. 234). The data are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Dropout Rate Paired Samples Statistics 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 to 2015-2016

		<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>	Std. Error Mean
	Dropout 2011	2.0 _a	36	.000	.000
Pair 1	Dropout 2013	2.0 _a	36	.000	.000
	Dropout 2014	2.0	36	.000	.000
Pair 2	Dropout 2016	1.97	36	.167	.028

Note. *t*-test could not be computed because the standard error of the difference was 0. 35

A paired samples *t*-test was conducted to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between dropout rates of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals and received no program assistance in school year 2010-2011 and the same subgroup after implementation of the Bridges Program in school year 2015-2016. As seen in Table 2, there was not a statistically significant difference after implementation of the Bridges Program ($M = .01$, $SD = .167$); $t(35) = 1.00$, $p = .324$.

Table 2

Dropout Rate Paired Sample Test 2010-2011 to 2015-2016

		<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>t</i>	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Dropout 2011-2016	.028	36	.000	.000
Pair 2	Dropout 2013	2.0 _a	36	.000	.000

Note. The paired samples *t*-test was significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Research Question Two Data

What is the statistically significant difference between discipline infractions of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance?

The mean score of discipline infractions for students in 2013-2014 was 1.58%; the mean score of discipline infractions for students in 2014-2015 was 1.42%; and the mean score of discipline infractions for students in 2015-2016 was 0.83%. The 2010-2011 school year data mean score of discipline infractions for students was 5.47%; the mean score of discipline infractions for students in 2011-2012 was 3.44%; and the mean score of discipline infractions for students in the 2012-2013 school year was 3.13%. The data showed 1.27% of students had discipline infractions during the three-year collection period from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 who participated in the Bridges Program as compared to 4.02% of students who had discipline infractions from the three-year collection period from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance.

A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare discipline infractions of the students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance. As seen in Table 3, there was a statistically significant difference in the number of discipline infractions from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program ($M = .75$, $SD = 1.99$); $t(35) = 2.26$, $p = .030$. There was also a statistically significant difference in the number of discipline infractions from 2010-2011 and 2012-2013 ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 4.57$); $t(35) = 3.06$, $p = .004$.

Table 3

Discipline Infractions Paired Samples Test 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 and 2010-2011 to 2012-2013

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Discipline 2014- 2016	.75000	1.99105	2.260	35	.030
Pair 2	Discipline 2011-2013	2.33333	4.57321	3.061	35	.004

Note. The paired samples *t*-test was significant at the $p < .05$ level.

To compare discipline infractions of the students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2010-2011 to the same subgroup in 2015-2016, a paired-samples *t*-test was conducted. As seen in Table 4, there was a statistically significant difference in the number of discipline infractions from 2010-2011 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 5.69$); $t(35) = 4.89$, $p = .000$.

Consistent with Fraenkel et al. (2015), “Statistical significance is the conclusion that results are unlikely to have occurred due to sampling error or ‘chance’; an observed correlation or difference probably exists in the population” (p. G-8).

Table 4

Discipline Infractions Paired Samples Test 2010-2011 to 2015-2016

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Discipline 2010- 2016	4.64	5.69	4.89	35	.000

Note. The paired samples *t*-test was significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Research Question Three Data

What is the statistically significant difference between the ADA of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance?

The mean score of ADA for students in 2013-2014 was 94.18%; the mean score of ADA for students in 2014-2015 was 95.01%; and the mean score of ADA for students in 2015-2016 was 95.53%. The 2010-2011 school year data mean score of ADA for students was 92.74%; the mean score of ADA for students in 2011-2012 was 93.31%; and the mean score of ADA for students in the 2012-2013 school year was 93.61%. The ADA data score of students was 94.90% during the three-year collection period 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 who participated in the Bridges Program as compared to the mean

ADA score of students as 93.22% from the three-year collection period 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance.

A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the ADA of the students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to the data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance. As seen in Table 5, there was not a statistically significant difference in the ADA from 2013-2014 and 2015-2016 ($M = 99.11$, $SD = 16.41$); $t(35) = .362$, $p = .719$. There was not a statistically significant difference in the ADA from 2010-2011 and 2012-2013 ($M = .87$, $SD = 3.52$); $t(35) = -1.48$, $p = .148$.

Table 5

ADA Paired Samples Test 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 and 2010-2011 to 2012-2013

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed)
Pair 1	ADA2014 - ADA2016	.99111	16.40679	.362	35	.719
Pair 2	ADA2011 - ADA2013	.86750	3.52006	-1.479	35	.148

Note. The paired samples *t*-test was not significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Next, a paired samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the ADA of the students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2010-2011 to 2015-2016 to parallel students who had no program assistance to their counterparts who received assistance from the Bridges Program. As seen in Table 6, there was not a statistically significant difference in the ADA from 2010-2011 to 2015-2016 ($M = -.44$, $SD = 16.71$); $t(35) = -.160$, $p = .874$. As stated by Fraenkel et al. (2015), a *t*-test for correlated means is, “a parametric test of statistical significance used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the means of two matched, or non-independent samples (G-9).

Table 6

ADA Paired Samples Test 2010-2011 to 2015-2016

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed)
Pair 1	ADA2014- ADA2016	-.44639	16.71428	-.160	35	.874

Note. The paired samples *t*-test is not significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Summary

The number of homeless and highly mobile students continues to increase across the United States and has had debilitating consequences on educational systems of the 21st century (Price & Reeves, 2003). Although legislation such as the MCKV Act (2002) was created to aid those in poverty and facing homelessness by allowing for immediate enrollment of homeless children and unaccompanied youth into public school systems, it lacked the support needed to help children attain success once placed into the school setting (Masten, Fiat, Labella, & Strack, 2015). Many children are faced with food scarcity and a lack of proper clothing; they also lack the school supplies needed to perform everyday school work and homework assignments (Scott & Pressman, 2013).

For students forced to live in poverty, intervention measures by schools and community organizations increase a child's chances of overcoming socioeconomic barriers and achieving educational success (Frazier, Chacko, Van Gessel, O'Boyle, & Pelham, 2012). Schools in urban Chicago are realizing the need for such programs which address this issue, putting into place mentoring programs with community volunteers to better serve students in disadvantaged homes (Frazier et al., 2012). Public schools across Kentucky are striving to meet the basic needs of students by implementing a community

approach of educational reform and intervention methods which address meeting the basic needs of students living in poverty (Price & Reeves, 2003). Although programs such as these may improve some aspects of education for students in poverty, the interventions still fall short when attempting to improve the overall educational outcomes for most students regardless of their geographical location in the world (Nega et al., 2010).

Students from diverse ethnicities make up the subgroup of students who qualify for free and reduced price meals (Castillo & Becerra, 2012). According to Webster-Stratton, Reid, and Stoolmiller (2008), “While socioeconomic disadvantage does not necessarily lead to social and emotional problems, up to 25% of children living in poverty experience negative social and emotional outcomes” (p. 472). Current educational researchers have embraced the need for intervention programs that address the needs of the lower socioeconomic class, but there is still a lack of a clear model for implementation for school entities around the world let alone in the United States (Levine & Wilson, 2013).

An overwhelming amount of research exists within the social work field from the past five decades concerning poverty and the negative implications it has on children trying to overcome the obstacles scarcity places in their lives (Castillo & Becerra, 2012). Despite the beliefs of social workers on the underlying causes of underprivileged families, Baker et al. (2006) stated, “Early intervention in the risk trajectory is critical to enhance children’s adaptation to the school environment” (p. 33). Focusing on meeting the basic needs of those in poverty is crucial for not only schools but society if they are to eliminate the obstacles overshadowing a student’s ability to actively participate in the

learning process and to make educational gains despite socioeconomic status (Clark, 2007).

In order for schools with a high population of students who qualify for free and reduced price meals to be successful, schools must consider the psychological and emotional experiences that plague students in poverty (Price & Reeves, 2003). Quality intervention programs are a necessity for the success of students in poverty, but research suggests the educational data associated with these students may not be the measurable impact attained (Bell, 2001). According to Bell (2001), “In the absence of credible models of success, the prevailing orthodoxy that demographic factors will overwhelm school-related variables maintains its veneer of certainty” (p. 8). It is imperative schools embrace their individual students’ needs and implement intervention programs to address the needs of all students without a presumption scores will be improved due to implementation (“Poverty Stricken City,” 2013).

In Chapter Four, the primary investigator examined poverty and the numerous impediments it places on individuals living within the low socioeconomic class of society in correlation to student educational data from School District A, three years before implementation of The Bridges Program and three years after its implementation (Haig, 2014). The chapter offered results of the statistical analysis of the research questions posed by the primary investigator relating to dropout rates, ADA, and discipline infractions three years prior to implementation of the Bridges Program and three years after implementation of the program in relation to student data. Sustainable improvement measures based upon accurate and reliable data will help districts determine the need for change or program sustainability (Flumerfelt & Green, 2013).

In Chapter Five, the implications of the data from the statistical analyses and outlines recommendations for future programs and research for districts regardless of location or socioeconomic makeup are examined. A summary of the findings along with implications for practice is discussed. Recommendations for future research are addressed along with a synopsis of the primary investigator's basis for investigation.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

In support of the previous research, the ideology of poverty impacting educational performance is evident but the solution to this barrier is less prominent (Bluman, 2013). Intervention programs are crucial when working with students in poverty and when attempting to improve the educational statistics associated with measuring school performance (Chang & Jordan, 2011). Quantitative methodology was utilized throughout the course of this investigation by gathering archival data pertaining to School District A's free and reduced price meals subgroup over a six-year period of time.

This study was conducted to determine if socioeconomic status can be impacted by a school's concentrated efforts in meeting the basic needs of patrons. Hattie et al. (2016) asserted, "When evidence of impact is prioritized, conversations, practices, and routines are initiated which continue" long after the current school leaders (p. 7). Sustainable programs will only result after educators first analyze data relevant to their geographic clientele in order to establish areas of improvement and strengths of a particular driver (Bouwma-Gearhart, Perry, & Presley, 2014). Mincu (2015) emphasized, "In a rapidly changing world, students' success depends upon the schools' capacity to deal with their specific needs" (p. 253).

The research questions used in this study were derived from the MODESE (2014) MSIP 5 waiver and the requirements it sets forth to measure a school's educational performance in comparison to other districts across the state. The purpose of this investigation was to assess School District A's efforts in bridging the gap between need and achievement after implementation of an intervention program designed to address meeting the basic needs of all students. These needs, according to Maslow's (1954)

research, are love, security, belonging, and nourishment. By meeting these needs, School District A was attempting to equip students in the lower socioeconomic class with fundamental tools of survival by allowing them the opportunity to progress to the next level of Maslow's (1954) Hierarchy once their basic needs were met. Ultimately, under these guided principles, students would be given the opportunity to focus solely on their education rather than survival outside of the school system.

Data were carefully gathered and analyzed pertaining to attendance, discipline infractions, and dropout rates of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals. Transient, highly mobile student data were not utilized in order to ensure validity of the results. Therefore, student data used consisted of families that remained in School District A for the entire six years studied by the primary investigator. An equal number of male and female students were used, resulting in 18 females and 18 males for a total of 36 students.

School District A's building norms are consistent between the middle school and the high school. The same attendance policy is used for each building, along with the same discipline expectations and discipline tracking procedures. All data were recorded into the same student information system throughout the study. Even though School District A's high school encompasses five rural feeder schools, these students were not used for the study to ensure the soundness of the data. Building administration was not the same over the six-year span.

However, during the three years the students were in sixth through eighth grades, the same assistant principal and the same principal were present in Middle School A. As the students entered High School A, there was a different set of building-level

administrators. For ninth through 11th grades, the same principal oversaw the building along with two assistant principals who were also present for the entire three years while data were being collected. This component ensured consistent expectations were present during the investigation and throughout the district. This chapter includes an analysis of the research findings, conclusions in relationship to the questions posed by the primary investigator, inferences for practice, recommendations for further research and development, and a summation of the study.

Findings

The findings from the data support improvement in one of the three areas researched and addressed by this study.

Research question one. What is the statistically significant difference between dropout rates of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance?

According to the data gathered from the 36 students used for this study, more students dropped out after implementation of the Bridges Program by School District A than before it was implemented. However, the reader should note this may not be an accurate depiction of the data investigated concerning the program. Students are more likely to dropout from high school as compared to middle school, due to the fact students turning 18 years of age are considered adults under federal and state law and may dropout without parental consent at any time (Freeman et al., 2015). This study began through analysis of student data from grades six through eight, and parents/guardians of this age

child are required to provide children with an education. According to the MODESE (2016), the Compulsory Attendance Law Section 167.031 states:

Any parent, guardian or other person having custody or control of a child between the ages of seven (7) and the compulsory attendance age for the district, must ensure that the child is enrolled in and regularly attends public, private, parochial, home school or a combination of schools for the full term of the school year.

(p. 1)

Based upon this statute, parents are legally accountable for students attending school until the age of majority, thus impacting the dropout rate statistics gathered from middle school-age children used in this study (MODESE, 2016). Using the data collected on the 36 students, a total of three students dropped out over the six-year period investigated. By analyzing the data alone, there was no statistically significant difference after implementation of the Bridges Program on the dropout scores in School District A. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected concerning the dropout data in relation to implementation of the Bridges Program.

Fraenkel et al. (2015) outlined guidelines concerning *t*-tests relating to obtained *t* data; the results indicated the standard error of the difference was 0, thus resulting in a non-measurable standard deviation score. The significance of the two-tailed test was 0.324. Fraenkel et al. (2015) described a two-tailed test as “use of both tails of a sampling distribution of a statistic—when a nondirectional hypothesis is stated” (p. G-9).

Research question two. What is the statistically significant difference between discipline infractions of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to

data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance?

In support of research question two, the data showed there was a statistically significant difference in the number of discipline infractions from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 with $p = .030$. (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Discipline infractions from 2011-2013 were dramatically higher than the discipline infractions from 2014-2016. As the primary investigator looked further into the number of infractions, there were fewer infractions due to theft of property after implementation of the Bridges Program.

According to the United States Juvenile Department of Corrections, “Sixty-five percent of juvenile offenders under age eighteen are fifteen to seventeen” years old and come from a low socioeconomic household (Black, 2005, p. 50). School District A implemented the Bridges Program as an attempt to reduce negative statistics often associated with growing up in poverty. Based upon the data, there was a significant difference in the number of discipline infractions after implementation of the Bridges Program within the student population who qualified for free and reduced price meals randomly generated and used for this study. The mean number of discipline infractions from 2011-2013 was 2.33, while the mean number of discipline infractions after implementation from 2014-2016 was 0.75. When paired together, a 5.69 statistical difference after implementation of the Bridges Program was revealed by the data. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected based upon a significant difference, as noted by the data, in a decrease of discipline infractions after implementation of The Bridges Program. In “Arrowhead Middle School’s Schoolwide Discipline System” (2012), it was noted interventions through positive relationships of students and faculty members

despite socioeconomic status directly relate to the number of discipline infractions students commit in the school setting.

To meet the diverse needs of all students, Cettina (2015) suggested identifying poverty deficits and supporting these basic needs through intensive intervention measures. This may reduce trauma-derived behaviors, which students tend to exhibit within the school setting when they are living in poverty-stricken home environments (Cettina, 2015). Bernhardt (2013) proposed various processes of analyzing data to be used in determining the specific needs of the community and school organizational structure. Mayer and Blome (2013) supported these data by addressing the positive impact quality intervention models play in the lives of disadvantaged children from an early age. As Maslow (1954) suggested, when people's basic needs are met, they are able to achieve more and progress onto the next stage of development (Jae Min & Hanna, 2015).

Research question three. What is the statistically significant difference between the ADA of students who qualified for free and reduced price meals from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 after implementation of the Bridges Program, as compared to data from the same subgroup of students from 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 who received no program assistance?

Based upon analysis of the data derived from the study, there was no statistically significant difference in ADA of students after implementation of the Bridges Program by School District A. Although ADA slightly improved over the course of the study, it was not sustainable enough to result in a significant difference measured by the data comparison used for this study. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected

concerning the attendance rate in relation to implementation of the Bridges Program. Sustainable attendance programs must address chronic absenteeism from an early age (Chang & Jordan, 2011). The program implemented by School District A began when this group of students entered junior high. The results may prove to be different if future researchers use data from preschool through high school.

Norms set forth by districts in early childhood often set the precedence for future patterns of attendance and behavior (Hillemeier et al., 2013). Armor and Sousa (2014) believed investing in a full-time Head Start program from an early age equips students with a resolute foundation necessary to address the numerous barriers poverty imposes on children and their families, thus impacting attendance for the rest of their lives in school and future employment. Lester (2013) also supported this theory by stressing the importance of early attendance policies, if society hopes to minimize the long-term effects of growing up poor.

Conclusions

Across the nation, educational delivery systems in schools are ever-changing, yet the basis and foundation of addressing basic needs of all human beings must still be present if children in poverty are to be successful and armed with the skills they need to compete in a global society (Cutuli et al., 2013). Political entities can no longer ignore the devastating impact poverty places upon the children and youth of this country (Abramsky, 2012). According to Barlow (2011):

Ignoring the impact poverty has on academic achievement will only serve to put impoverished American students at risk. As we are now seeing, requiring all schools to meet the same high standards for all students, regardless of family

background, will inevitably lead either to large numbers of failing schools or to a dramatic lowering of state standards. Both serve to discredit the public education system and lend support to arguments that the system is failing and needs fundamental change, like privatization. (p. 66)

Schools must be willing to implement quality intervention programs that address the diverse needs of students from the impoverished class of society by providing for basic needs in hopes of nurturing authentic educational experiences and competencies (Cettina, 2015).

The perception of today's public school systems often leads to heated debates over what schools are lacking, rather than what schools are doing to make a positive impact on the surmounting needs of their diverse student population (Evans & Cowell, 2013). The reauthorization of the ESSA fuels the drive of school systems to ensure vulnerable subgroups are protected, but it lacks the funding needed to support sustainable change (Krebs, 2016). A school- and community-based approach which fosters relationships among the haves and the have-nots is proving to be successful for numerous school systems across the United States in addressing the needs of students regardless of socioeconomic status (Shuffelton, 2013).

Implications for Practice

The confirmation attained throughout this investigation echoed similar studies concerning the impact poverty has on the educational data related to school performance indicators along with research associated with Maslow's (1954) Hierarchical Needs Model (Cutuli et al., 2013; Jae Min & Hanna, 2015). The data derived from this study left the primary investigator with even more questions than answers. When using the

questions posed by the primary investigator and the data associated with the MODESE (2014) standards, the reader may not fully grasp the impact the program has had on the student population and its families throughout the community. Based upon data alone, the Bridges Program can only be supported as improving discipline rates for students during the course of this study. There was not a measurable amount of significance to support improvement in dropout rates or ADA for School District A, when comparing the data three years prior to implementation and three years after implementation of the Bridges Program.

It is the opinion of the primary investigator the program should be continued and possibly expanded. It is imperative the resources continue to be readily available for the student population who qualify for free and reduced price meals. The Bridges Program is solely funded by donations from the community, and there is no fiscal responsibility on the part of the district since it is overseen by a committee of volunteers.

The data showed measurable progress in reducing the number of discipline infractions since the program's implementation, supporting the primary investigator's previous research in one of the three areas measured. Lester (2013) also addressed Maslow's (1954) theory and practice of meeting basic needs to progress in various stages of life. However, when examining these basic needs, how does an investigator measure love, security, belonging, and nourishment without surveying the population this program impacts on a daily basis?

Schools must ensure a stable environment which fosters positive relationships for all students. As progress and achievements are attained, districts must share these accomplishments with various stakeholders throughout the community in order to fuel

continuous educational improvement. Data concerning the program should be readily available to stakeholders in order to ensure longevity of the program for future generations of students entering School District A. Investment in the lives of children from each class of society will improve the world in the future.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further questions emerged through careful analysis of the research data.

Subsequent investigations could be explored in relation to poverty and the impact it has on the lower socioeconomic class. Ideas pertaining to this are as follows:

1. Because dropout rates are more prominent after the age of majority, a future study may be conducted analyzing data which target students in the high school over an extended amount of time before and after implementation of the Bridges Program.

2. Since Maslow's (1954) research revolved around ideals often hard to measure without direct input from individuals concerning their needs and feelings, implementation of a survey component would better serve the researcher in understanding the effects of the program on the lives of students and their families in the free and reduced price meals subgroup.

3. A study tracking families in the free and reduced price meals subgroup from preschool until graduation may give a more accurate depiction of further areas which need to be expanded or explored for School District A in meeting the unique needs of these individuals.

4. Research about intervention programs, like the one used for this study, could be replicated in the five feeder rural schools that supplement the community and the resources of this area. The researcher could examine the statistics relating to this

subgroup and compare the effects on smaller districts in comparison to a larger district as was used for this study.

5. A further study exploring the possibility of intervention programs impacting a homogenous population over a heterogeneous population may be an area worth further examination.

6. Further studies addressing the various socioeconomic variables as well as the structure of the family may be an area worth further investigation, in determining their roles in overall student outcomes.

7. The district used in this study has a free and reduced price meals population of 66%. A study further exploring the impact of intervention programs in various districts with differing socioeconomic levels may provide additional data for improvement efforts.

Summary

Poverty imposes numerous challenges on educational systems, as well as various other entities (Agarwal, 2015). Schools across the United States face high populations of students and families who qualify for free and reduced price meals (Hendricks & Barkley, 2012). Abramsky (2013) stated, there are “tens of millions of Americans at or below the poverty line” (p. 1). Over half of the schools in Missouri have a free and reduced price meals subgroup of 50% or more (MODESE, 2014). Based upon these statistics, school and public entities must invest in sustainable, longer-term, effective programs that address the needs of this subgroup of the population (Shuffelton, 2013).

CNS (2015) reported, “Childhood poverty is associated with high levels of stress and low levels of cognitive stimulation, and these are among the likely causes of socioeconomic status disparities” (p. 2). Hattie et al. (2016) and Bernhardt (2013)

provided school leaders with effective methodology designed for school improvement. Drivers aimed at effective school improvement, blended with effective communication and collaboration among stakeholders, will ensure schools are meeting the diverse needs of their clientele (Hattie et al., 2016).

Quantitative research methods were used to gather data for analysis, aligning to the indicators of the MODESE (2014) MSIP 5 waiver outlining accountability measures for public school entities in Missouri. The ESSA (2015) reauthorization of NCLB levied stringent guidelines for schools to follow in relation to the protection and education of specific vulnerable subgroups of students. Homeless students and those qualifying for free and reduced price meals are considered one of these designated subgroups and account for a large population of students attending public schools across the United States (Blad, 2014a). On a daily basis, many homeless and lower socioeconomic status students face barriers often too debilitating for them to overcome (Blad, 2015). Academic achievement and school attendance are often ideas unfathomable when students are forced to live with food uncertainty, lack of shelter, lack of basic hygiene needs, and physical and/or emotional danger on a daily basis (Barlow, 2011).

The primary investigator used historical archival data for School District A from 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016. These data were composed into a nominal scale. Causal-comparative research was used to compare and analyze data gathered before and after implementation of the Bridges Program. This investigation was conducted to determine if there was a positive or negative impact on dropout rates, discipline infractions, and ADA scores for students in poverty. Data in these three indicators are tracked under MSIP 5 guidelines (MODESE, 2014).

The data revealed a positive significant difference in discipline infractions over the six-year period of time. The dropout rates were not influenced for School District A by the implementation of the Bridges Program. There was no statistically significant difference in ADA over the six-year period of time, but scores improved slowly overall as noted by data on the nominal scale.

Poverty has debilitating implications on the physical and mental health of children (Dang & Miller, 2013; Garner et al., 2011; Hillemeier et al., 2013; Lygnergård et al., 2013; Masten et al., 2015; Miller et al., 2014). School District A's program to address the needs of this subgroup of students may be replicated by other districts with a strong community support system, regardless of the districts' geographic locations or the makeup of their populations. Hattie et al. (2016) supported schools implementing best educational practices with clear lines of communication that lead to a positive culture for all stakeholders and thus result in improved educational performance for all.

Appendix A



DATE: September 2, 2016

TO: Amy Ross, EdD
FROM: Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board

STUDY TITLE: [948814-1] An Examination of Poverty: A Case Study of One Rural Missouri School Attempting to Meet the Needs of All Students

IRB REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE:

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 4

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office.

If you have any questions, please send them to IRB@lindenwood.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board's records.

Appendix B

Lindenwood University
School of Education
209 S. Kingshighway
St. Charles, Missouri 63301

Permission Letter: XXXX School District

August 18, 2016

Dear Dr. XXXXX,

I am conducting a research study entitled, *An Examination of Poverty: A Case Study of One Rural Missouri School Attempting to Meet the Needs of All Students*, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for a doctoral degree in Educational Administration at Lindenwood University. The research gathered should provide insight into whether “The Bridges Program” has made a measurable difference for students living in poverty.

I am seeking your permission as Superintendent of the XXXX School District to study and analyze archival data of the free and reduced price meals students from 2010-2016 concerning dropout rates, average daily attendance (ADA), and discipline referrals.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty. The identity of the school district will remain confidential and anonymous in the dissertation or any future publications of this study.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns about participation (phone: [REDACTED] or e-mail: [REDACTED]). You may also contact the dissertation advisor for this research study, Dr. Julie Williams (phone: [REDACTED] or e-mail: [REDACTED]). A copy of this letter and your written consent should be retained by you for future reference.

Respectfully,
Amy Ross
Doctoral Candidate
Lindenwood University

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I understand it is my responsibility to retain a copy of this consent form, if I so choose. I consent to participation in the research described on the preceding page.

Superintendent’s Signature/Date

Superintendent’s Printed Name

Primary Investigator’s Signature/Date

Primary Investigator’s Printed Name

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Vita

Amy Michelle Scherff-Ross was born in West Plains, Missouri, on March 21, 1976. She attended grade school at South Fork, Carmichael, and Glenwood Elementary Schools. After completing high school at West Plains High School, she enrolled and attended Southwest Missouri State University-West Plains, where she received her Associates Degree in General Studies. She then enrolled at Missouri State University where she received her Bachelor's in Elementary Education with an emphasis in Middle School Communication Arts and Social Studies in December of 2005. Upon graduation, Amy was certified to teach kindergarten through sixth grades, fifth- through ninth-grade social studies and communication arts, early childhood education, and special education.

Amy was then employed by Dora R-III as a teacher for two years and by Glenwood R-VIII for four years before transferring to West Plains R-VII. She then moved into an administrative role and began overseeing the Special Services Department for the district. In May of 2013, Amy graduated with her Masters in Educational Administration and then her Specialist Degree in December 2014, both from Missouri State University. In the fall of 2015, Amy began the Doctoral Program in Educational Administration through Lindenwood University.