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# Administrators' Perspectives and Strategies Regarding Student Homelessness

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Walden University

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Abstract

Administrators' Perspectives and Strategies Regarding Student Homelessness

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Cynthia B. Barfield

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

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## Abstract

Student homelessness presents challenges and opportunities for public school administrators. The primary purpose of this study was to explore whether the effects of child homelessness caused students to drop out of school and engage in criminal activity before the age of 18 or if they would further their education beyond high school. A quantitative method with a cross-sectional design was used to examine the topic, and a self-administered survey, adapted from Dillman's design, was employed for data collection. The sample included 150 participants who were teachers and principals in a school district in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. An ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was used for analyzing participant responses and to examine gender, race, age, years teaching, grade teaching, teacher concerns, witnessed behavior, policies, and training. Key results of this study are significant for social change because they provide evidence for policy officials to redevelop ways to assist teachers of homeless students. The findings from this study also allowed teachers the opportunity to recognize what resources were made available to them through local community service providers and the state school system.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### **Introduction**

In Chapter 1 of this study, I will identify child homelessness as a major concern in North Carolina. As homelessness rates have increased, North Carolina's school systems have done little to cater to this specific group. In this chapter, I will provide background information on the problem; address the purpose of this research; explain the rationale for the research methods selected; highlight important research questions, hypotheses, and limitations; and then finally, examine important term and definitions and they relate to the topic.

### **Background**

A child in North Carolina is considered homeless if they do not reside in a fixed residence (Holgerson-Shorter, 2015). According to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS; 2016), students who live in a shared housing facility because of economic hardships are also considered homeless. Likewise, Tanabe and Hippensteele (2015) refer to homeless children as the forgotten students if they do not have a permanent resident and they are listed as *below the radar*.

While it can be challenging to track the living arrangements of students, policies are in place in North Carolina that require schools to keep updated records on where each student resides. Before a child can enter into kindergarten, parents are required to fill out several forms, including important contact information about the student and parents, along with a place of residency, and any medication that the student may be on (NC DHHS, 2016). Problems generally occur when parents provide inaccurate information on

these forms or move without informing the school. The question then becomes, who is responsible for tracking the living arrangements of each student. Tanabe and Hippensteele (2015) expressed that it is the responsibility of schools to monitor and track each student academically and personally, until they graduate high school. Unfortunately, North Carolina does not have a regional plan in place to monitor students as they progress through schools because each school and district is granted the freedom to develop their own plan of action (Moore, 2014). Since there is no precise way to recognize if a student is homeless or not, Tanabe and Hippensteele argued that at least 1 in 25 students do not have a permanent residence. By not having a stable place to live, scholars such as Moore (2014) indicated that homeless students will demonstrate more behavioral problems than their permanently-housed peers.

The primary reason that homeless students may undergo more behavioral problems than those that are not homeless is because of the conditions they face on a regular basis. Moore (2014) explained that homeless children tend to feel more stress and anxiety than those who are not homeless, worrying about where they will live, where their next meal will come from, and about school in general. They also undergo longer periods of time where they do not feel loved (Moore, 2014). All of these factors collectively lead to high rates of stress that can have an effect on how well the student performs academically in school.

Wood et al. (2014) and Feldman (2015) also offered comparative studies that suggested that children who are classified as homeless are far more likely to suffer from behavioral disorders and academic delays than their permanently housed peers. These

studies were valuable in explaining how the effects of homelessness correlate to youth decision making. They also offered evidence to suggest that homeless children are forced to grow up quicker than children their age who are not homeless. Wood et al. indicated that although homelessness is a great concern, other poverty-related issues also affect children, including factors such as parents who earn income below the poverty level, children who are abused, etc. Oftentimes, students who are abused are more likely to engage in criminal behavior because their actions are based on anger and not moral values (Wood et al., 2014).

When exploring the topic of homeless students in North Carolina, I found it necessary to also compare the academic performance of homeless students with students who were not considered homeless. If a student performs well in school, they will have the option of furthering their education beyond high school, and this could be accomplished through receiving financial aid, grants, and scholarships. However, if a student does not perform well academically in school, the student would not be eligible to graduate high school or continue their education.

Rubin et al. (2006) conducted a study comparing the standardized tests scores of a selected group of homeless children to those earned by a group of children who were raised in a permanent housing environment. Their results were not viewed as biased because the children who were selected came from the same public school classrooms. They concluded that that homeless children scored significantly lower in several academic areas, such as reading and math, despite showing similar levels of verbal and nonverbal intelligence (Rubin et al., 2006). The results illustrated that 54% to 75% of the

100 homeless children who participated scored below grade level compared to 22% to 50% of the students who were raised in a permanent housing environment (Rubin et al., 2006). The researchers also found that homeless children were nearly five times more likely to repeat a grade compared to those students that are not considered homeless.

Buckner et al. (2013) also completed a study that took the results of this issue a step further. The purpose of Buckner et al.'s examination was to measure the impact of residential mobility, school mobility, and housing status on the educational outcomes of low income students in the North Carolina area. This study was made up of 80 homeless children and 150 students who were considered permanently housed. The researchers compared standardized test scores between these two groups of students and noted that all of the children sampled had similar socioeconomic profiles, coming from single-parents homes. The authors also focused on a series of control variables which were introduced to this model with the hopes of capturing how these factors affect a student's everyday life stressors, and these factors were then examined to analyze whether they influenced academic achievement. They used school mobility to measure how the number of schools a child attended affects their development.

The results of their study revealed that school mobility has a negative impact on test scores when a child attends more than two schools in a 5-year range. Residential mobility and housing status also had a negative impact on children when factors were unfavorable (Moore, 2014). For example, both homeless children and permanently housed children had a drop in their standardized tests when there was abuse in the household or their parents were not available to spend quality time with them (Buckner et

al., 2013). Buckner et al.'s findings are important to this study because it indicated that the effects of homelessness as a whole can hinder the academic success of children in a number of ways. The authors highlighted that the effects of homelessness on a student can cause academic setbacks and social development problems as a student progresses throughout school (Buckner et al., 2013).

While it is known that students who are homeless are affected in a variety of ways, in this study, I also wanted to identify whether these factors are long term. Rafferty et al. (2015) conducted a study using data collected by the New York City Department of Education to determine whether the issue of homelessness has long term effects on children. The researchers explained how homeless children who are raised in unstable living environments are five times less likely to attend college compared to children who are not homeless (Rafferty et al., 2015). The authors completed a longitudinal study focused on the reasons why children choose a lifestyle of crime and do not instead of seeking higher education. Their conclusion focused on the idea that homeless children oftentimes view themselves as the *forgotten students* and feel they do not have equal potential or opportunity compared to that of an average student. As a result, these students do not seek higher education and will oftentimes engage in criminal activity.

### **Statement of Problem**

Child homelessness has become an increasing problem in North Carolina (Holgerson-Shorter, 2015), and it effects a child's academic and social development by increasing their stress factors and willingness to reach their fullest potential (Barnes, 2013; Buckner, 2001; Moore, 2014). In order to address the issue of child homelessness

in North Carolina, in this study, I shed light on the idea that many homeless students will engage in criminal activity because they do not view themselves as equal members of society. Students who are homeless also have a lower desire to seek continuous education because they do not see the value in it (Moore, 2014). Nevertheless, homeless students in North Carolina are generally not aware of the assistance programs which are made available to them, and as a result, they tend to make poor decisions (Saxberg, 2014).

In this study, I used a descriptive quantitative approach to analyze the issue of child homelessness and determine whether homeless youth in North Carolina will further their education beyond high school or instead engage in criminal activity. The goal of this study was to determine whether the effects of child homelessness in North Carolina, high stress and low self-esteem, lead students to drop out of school and engage in criminal activity. In this study, I focused on students between the ages of 5 and 18 to determine what options are made available to them. I also explored the roles of teachers and the school system as well as preexisting programs made available to students, parental involvement, the student's educational background, and the role of service providers.

### **Purpose of Research**

The purpose of this study was to use quantitative methodology to either confirm or reject the identified hypothesis. This project was unique because I requested the assistance of the North Carolina school system, assistance programs, educators, and parents in order to address this social issue. There are many aid assistance programs, such as the Service Provider 1, Service Provider 2, and Service Provider 3, that are available to



homeless children in North Carolina, and the results of this study should cause many organizations to take needed ownership to become more involved in their communities.

### **Rationale for Research Methods**

The unit of analysis for this study was teachers and administrators. Although I focused on the behaviors of students in this study, information was gathered from teachers and administrators to gain additional support. Prior to collecting information, I examined two social issue theories, poor environment theory (neighborhood factors) and stress theory, that relate to child poverty in North Carolina. The poor environment theory examines the notion that neighborhood factors contribute to the actions and behavior of children by focusing on the aspect of social environments as a critical factor for the development of at-risk children. The stress theory was developed by McCurdy et al. (2015) to portray the direct correlation between poverty and economic stress. In the theory, the authors explained how the effects of poverty influence decision making and causes parents and children to make irrational choices.

Based on the foundation of these two theories, in this study, I used a quantitative analysis to examine the data collected. Rudestam and Newton (2007) indicated that in order for a problem statement to be effective, specific variables and relationships must be examined and reported. I used an OLS regression to analyze the variables of likelihood that homeless students in North Carolina will further their education after high school and likelihood homeless students in North Carolina will live a life of crime.

Through this examination, I used a survey methodology adapted from Dillman's (2015) design. Dillman indicated that when collecting information gathered through

surveys, the survey itself must first be tailored by the researcher in order to meet the needs and characteristics of the study. I collected data by using a self-administered survey design that was sent out through e-mail. Additional information and data were also collected from the following sources:

1. Surveys administered to teachers and principals through e-mail.
2. Questionnaires answered by teachers, principals, and directors addressing their personal involvement.
3. Interviews with practitioners who had directly worked with homeless students
4. Analysis of documented reports and reviews, notes, discoveries, meeting minutes, and strategic plans.
5. Interviews with teachers, principals, and leaders of assistance programs and organizations to form an opinion on their personal views and their organization's position.

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**I developed the following research questions and hypotheses to guide this study:

RQ1: How do administrators in a metropolitan area in North Carolina understand and deal with the problem of student homelessness?

RQ2: What is the relationship between child homelessness and the likelihood that students with further their education after high school and/or engage in criminal activity?

$H_0$ : The effects of child homelessness in North Carolina, such as high stress and low self-esteem, cause students to drop out of school and engage in criminal activity before the age of 18 (Buckner et al., 2013).

$H_{a1}$ : There is a relationship between the high stress and low self-esteem that afflicts homeless students and the likelihood that those students will attend college.

$H_{a2}$ : There is a relationship between child homelessness and the likelihood that a student will engage in criminal activity.

### **Limitations**

The ability to collect accurate and reliable data from participants during interviews and questionnaires were the primary limitations of this study. Oftentimes, within such settings people have the tendency to tell the collector what they want to hear. However, in order to protect the integrity of my research, I strove to avoid these biases in my participants. In order to control or manage these biases, an understanding of transfer bias along with selection bias was needed. Prior to seeking participants, I employed transfer bias, a specific hypothesis and corresponding analytical tool that mitigates a majority of any biases by ensuring your questions are controlled and monitored (Barnes, 2013). Selection bias focuses on the idea that you should select your participants prior to forming or asking questions and includes informing all participants that their responses are strictly confidential (Barnes, 2013). Limitations also included but were not limited to:

1. The response rate of participants could not be controlled. This was due to the self-reporting nature of the instruments and errors and bias in the participants' responses.
2. Due to the nonexperimental nature of the study, extraneous variables could not be controlled.

### **Terms and Definitions**

*Homelessness*: According to the Stewart B. McKinney Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11301, et seq. (1994), a person is considered homeless if they "lack a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence." The term homelessness also refers to a child who lacks a primary night time residency (Page, 2016). For example, a child is considered homeless if they do not meet the following guidelines: (a) a child stays in a supervised environment which can be public or private which is designed to provide temporary or permanent living accommodations; (b) a child lives in an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or (c) a child resides in a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (Moore & Vandivere, 2015). The term *homeless individual* does not include or refer to any child who is imprisoned or otherwise held against their will according to the Act of Congress or a state law.

The education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act also includes a more comprehensive definition of the term homelessness (Page, 2016). This act argues that the term *homeless child and youth* refers to children who do not have a permanent residence (Adler, 2013). According to this particular act, this definition includes children and youth

who are sharing housing or living with a relative due to unfortunate situations. Some of the primary reasons why a child becomes homeless are because of loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (Adler, 2013). When this occurs, homeless children then only have a few options that must occur before they are placed in the custody of the state: The child can stay with a relative, live in a homeless shelter, live in motels with their parents or await foster care placement (Adler, 2013). The last definition of child homelessness that I examined according to the McKinney Act described children and youth who are living in “cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings” (Page, 2016). These individuals are considered homeless because they do not have a stable and safe place to reside. In addition, in order for a child in North Carolina to be considered homeless, they must meet the above criteria’s (Page, 2016).

Other federal agencies that play a direct role in striving to reduce child homelessness include the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Such agencies tend to interpret the McKinney-Vento definition slightly different. The HUD defines child poverty as “children who are living on the streets or reside in shelters” (Anderson et al., 2015). However, unlike the McKinney Act, HUD indicates that a child can also be considered homeless if they face imminent eviction, which means that the child has within a week to find a permanent housing environment or seek housing in a shelter or institution (Saxberg, 2014). Lastly, according to the HUD, a child is also considered homeless if they do not have a subsequent residence or any resources made available to them to seek or obtain housing (Anderson et al., 2015). According to this

definition, the term child poverty can be used to explain thousands of children who are currently facing the issue of homelessness in North Carolina's urban communities.

The HUD is especially significant in explaining how many children in North Carolina who reside in rural areas also do not have the same opportunities as those who stay within urban areas. For example, if a child is homeless in a rural area, it is likely that they have a greater chance of not seeking a homeless shelter compared to those who stay in urban areas (Barnes, 2013). This is primarily because country areas in North Carolina do not have the same housing arrangements made available to people who are homeless. In reality, for every four homeless shelters that are present in urban cities, there is only one shelter present in rural areas (NC DHHS, 2016).

*Affordable housing:* Housing, either ownership or rental, for which a household will pay no more than 30% of its gross annual income (NC DHHS, 2016)).

*At-risk factors:* Factors that have been identified which directly affect children. Oftentimes such factors are uncontrollable and cannot be prevented. However, they deeply shape the outcome of situations by causing favorable or unfavorable conditions. Such factors include the following: being raised by single parent, being financially dependent, poor living conditions, living below the poverty line, educational restraints, poor communication skills, developmental issues, and not having a stable residence (NC DHHS, 2016).

*Caregiver:* People who have been given the task of making certain that the basic needs of a child are being met (Barnes, 2013).

*Chronic homelessness:* Federally defined as an unaccompanied individual or child who has a disabling condition. This person has also experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the past 3 years (American Library Association, 2012).

*Continuum of care:* An organization of service providers who are established by the HUD whose primary goal is to oversee community planning around homelessness. The purpose of continua is to work with community agencies to develop strategies to assist those in need and prioritize funding for supportive housing services (American Library Association, 2012).

*Emergency housing:* Temporary housing that is available to homeless children which is offered on an emergency basis. When a child or family attends this housing, the time that they can stay varies. For many programs, emergency shelters are the first step in a series of steps as homeless adults and youth move from emergency to transitional to permanent housing (American Library Association, 2012).

*Hidden homeless:* People and children who are temporarily housed and at eminent risk of becoming literally homeless. These people or children tend to live with friends or relatives for a short period of time or sleep in cars. The term hidden homeless indicate that the person is homeless but it is not visible (American Library Association, 2012).

*High risk:* A student who has at least five of the at-risk factors (Community College Leadership Program, 2015).

*Low risk:* A student who has one or no at-risk factors (Community College Leadership Program, 2015).

*Moderate at-risk:* A student who has from two to four of the at-risk factors (Community College Leadership Program, 2015)

*Forgotten students:* Students within the school system that are oftentimes overlooked because they have fallen so far behind, there is no hope. These students are generally “passed” along and promoted to their next grade level with little expectation that they will continue further education. In order to reach this group, legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act was passed (Tanabe et al., 2015).

*Poverty rate:* The percentage of people (or families) who are below poverty (Moore, 2014).

*Throwaway youth:* A term that is commonly used to describe two types of circumstances. The first way that a youth can be considered throwaway is by a parent or other household adult requiring a child to leave the house without adequate alternative care being arranged for the child by a household adult. The second way is through a parent preventing a child from returning home. In both cases, the child has been kicked out of their residence and is considered homeless (American Library Association, 2012).

*Transitional housing:* A more stable housing unit compared to emergency housing. Children and families can reside at a transitional housing unit for about one to two years. However, although it is more secure than emergency housing, transitional housing should be viewed as permanent housing (Wilder Research Center, 2013)

*Supportive housing:* Offers of subsidized housing to children or families who are without a permanent living facility. These people generally come from the streets or have been turned away other emergency shelter. With respect to this definition, supportive



housing may also be classified as transitional or permanent housing. Transitional housing means that a person can stay there for up to 2 years. Permanent housing indicates that there is no time length of time that a client may stay (American Library Association, 2012).

*Working poor:* People who are working but still fall under the official definition of poverty (Moore & Vandivere, 2015).

### **Summary**

The information I presented in this chapter indicates that homelessness directly affects education. Children between the ages of 5 and 15 who are considered homeless oftentimes perform below average academically (Barnes, 2013). From analyzing the data collected, I found that educators, policy officials, and public school systems must do a better job in reaching this target group. It can be extremely difficult to diagnose a student who is highly mobile because tracking their progress is very challenging. As a result, schools in North Carolina must continue to rely on social programs that target homeless children specifically. Schools along with these service providers must make it their goal to provide these children with permanent shelter while also meeting each student's educational needs (Barnes, 2013).

In this chapter, I discussed the need for this study to determine why homeless children make certain decisions. I also provided background information, the foundation for the study, and the theoretical framework from which the specified purpose and research hypotheses emerged. In Chapter 2, I will take this process a step further by reviewing existing literature related to this study.

## Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

In order to build upon the literature of homelessness in North Carolina, in this chapter I will focus on social assistance programs, service providers, and preexisting programs that provide leverage to homeless children in need. This chapter also includes a review of the subjects individually and searches for common threads among the subjects. This review is valuable in providing a presentation of the extant research literature on the effects of child poverty and how it effects youth decision making.

### **Inclusion Criteria**

To ensure that thorough coverage and a wide spread of literature was analyzed in this literature review, I conducted a search using Ebsco, Google Scholar, and the databases accessible through Walden University's library. The Ebsco portal link allows its users to search a wide spread of available research by simply typing in specific keywords. The Ebsco tool bar also provides access to the Ebsco Host Electronic Journal Service, Digital Dissertation Abstract International, and the Educational Research and Information Center. To locate literature for this review, I used the following keyword search terms: *child poverty, at-risk students, youth decision making, poverty and North Carolina, social recovery program, the role of school systems, child service provides, the role of parents, and homeless shelter recovery*. The use of all of these phrases added to the credibility of the research data collected. These searches also resulted in a wide variety of academic resources, including peer-reviewed articles, reports, books, conference papers, literature reviews, and dissertations.

## Demographics

In order to understand and address the social issue of homelessness in North Carolina, it is important to first identify the demographics that many homeless students face daily and the primary reasons why students become homeless. In a recent article, Grant (2016) explained two specific trends that have occurred and caused poverty rates in North Carolina to increase drastically in the last two decades. The first trend that was addressed is a growing shortage of affordable housing. The authors explained that the effects of the economy have played a role in increasing rates of poverty in cities all over North Carolina (Grant, 2016). Over the past two decades, unemployment all over the country has been at an all-time high while families are continuously struggling to pay for their everyday necessities (Moore, 2014).

When unemployment rates are high, it is correct to assume that rates of homelessness across the United States will also be high. The authors' theories supported this statement by expressing that if a person is living in poverty, eventually, they will become homeless (Grant, 2016). According to Grant (2016), the second trend that has occurred in North Carolina within the past two decades is a growing percentage in homeless demographic groups. For example, the rate of certain ethnicities has increased in the last 10 years as it relates to homelessness (Grant, 2016). Certain demographic groups who experience high rates of poverty are also more likely to experience the effects of being homeless (Grant, 2016). For this study, it was important to examine these demographics so that it was made evident who these homeless students are. In North

Carolina, studies indicated that a homeless student can be summarized by the following demographics.

### **Age**

In 2014, children in North Carolina under the age of 18 accounted for approximately 37% of the state's total homeless population (North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness, 2014). This study was important because it shed light on the idea that out of the 37% of children who are homeless, 41% of these children were under the age of 5 (North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness, 2014). These numbers signify that children make up a large portion of the homeless population in North Carolina. This same study also expressed the idea that unaccompanied minors make up 5% of the urban homeless population.

It must also be noted that the elements and location of a city affect its homeless rates. For example, in inner-city cities and especially in rural areas, the numbers of children experiencing homeless are higher than those in the non-urban areas (Page, 2016). Nevertheless, the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (2012) also indicated that nearly 25% of all homeless children were between the ages of 10 and 15.

### **Gender**

Researchers have concluded that most homeless adults and children are more likely to be male than female (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2016). In 2013, a survey was put together by the U.S. Conference of Mayors in order to emphasize homelessness across America (Page, 2016). Their research indicated that out of the 36% of North Carolina's homeless people who were examined, all of them were considered the head of

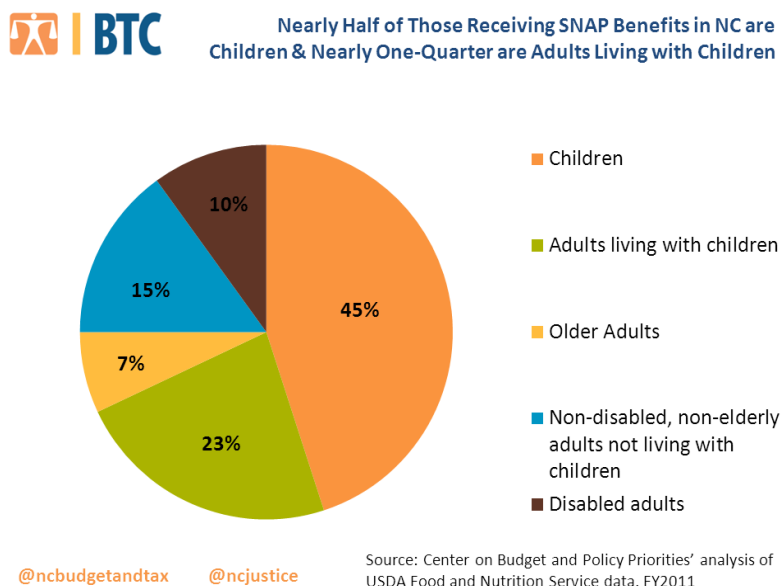
household and had children. They also found that 67.5% of the single homeless population is male (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2016). The researchers did not explain why men are more likely to be homeless than women though. The primary conclusion that I drew from this question was the idea that males are considered more independent by nature. They would rather live on their own and try to survive than to rely on the assistance of someone else.

### **Families**

In the past decade, the number of homeless families with children has significantly increased. In North Carolina, families who have children are considered one of the largest and fastest growing segments of the homeless population and make up approximately 30% of North Carolina's homeless population (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2016). In a 2013 survey, the U.S. Conference of Mayors conducted a survey that focused on 25 American cities. They concluded that homeless families who had children comprised 23% of the U.S. homeless population (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2016).

When comparing these two results, it can be concluded that there are higher rates of homeless families in North Carolina than the national average in the United States. In addition, these proportions are likely to be even higher in rural areas (Shepard & Booth, 2014). Research from this study also suggested that homeless families in the United States are generally made up of single mothers (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2016). This is also true in North Carolina since single mothers and children make up the largest section of people who are considered homeless in rural areas (Shepard & Booth, 2014).

For this purpose of this study, I examined 19 cities in North Carolina that had high poverty rates. It was noted that in the last 5 years, all 19 cities had undergone a recent increase in the number of families requesting food assistance for the first time (NC DHHS, 2016). These statistics are noteworthy because they describe how homelessness has continued to rise all over North Carolina and is affecting children in great ways. What makes this statistic even more alarming is the understanding that this increase was heavily notable among working families (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2016). Figure 1 indicates the percentage of North Carolina's population that is considered homeless. The chart illustrates that almost half of the homeless population are children.



*Figure 1.* Title of figure.

From examining figures such as this chart, it is evident that the number of families experiencing homelessness continues to rise. One reason why this study is significant is because in it I shed light on a cause and effect relationship. A cause and effect relationship means that as one thing takes place, this action will cause the reaction of something else. For example, as the percentage of homelessness in North Carolina continues to rise, this also means that the number of affordable housing units and homeless shelters will decrease. In regards to homeless families in North Carolina, their average stay at a shelter is 4.6 months (Adler, 2013). This indicates that for approximately five months, families are able to reside at shelters provided by state and local funding; however, once this time period is up, they must find another means of housing

### **Ethnicity**

In a 2013 survey that examined the demographics of people who are homeless in North Carolina, it was estimated that 42% of all homeless children in North Carolina are African American (Page, 2016). In comparison, 32% of the homeless children were found to be Caucasian, 20% were Hispanic American, 4% were Native American, and 2% were Asian American (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2016). Surprisingly, these North Carolina figures are similar to those of the total U.S. homeless population (Page, 2016). Across the country, African Americans make up the largest ethnicity of homelessness followed by Whites (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2016; see Table 1). However, such living conditions can vary depending on a person's geographic location. For example, people who tend to experience homelessness in rural areas are much more likely to be

White (Page, 2016). In comparison, homelessness in urban areas or heavily populated cities are highest amongst African Americans (Bassuk, 2015).

### **Victims of Domestic Violence**

The last category that I will explore in this subsection in terms of demographics is victims of domestic violence. The idea that homeless students do not have active guardians present in their lives is a common misconception (Page, 2016). Oftentimes, a guardian is present there they are just unable to provide the child with adequate living arrangements. Women who are victims of domestic violence make up the second largest population of families that are homeless in North Carolina (Barnes, 2013). Women who are victims of domestic violence tend to become homeless because they get fed up enduring emotional and physical abuse. In order to avoid their abuse, these women seek protection in the form of shelters. North Carolina has shelters across the state that provides a safe living environment for women and their children. However, some women do not seek homeless shelters and live with their children on the streets or with a relative or friend. These women and their children by definition are still considered homeless (Barnes, 2013).

It is unfortunate that battered women who live in poverty are required to choose between living in an abusive relationship or finding themselves homeless and living out on the streets. In order to shed more light on this group, the researcher conducted a study of 750 homeless parents in 10 specific states, which included North Carolina. A majority of the participants in this study were single mothers who had been abused in the past. Twenty-five percent of the participants said that the primary reason why they left their



last place of residency was because of domestic violence (Homes for the Homeless, 2014). When examining the response of the mothers who resided in North Carolina it was noted that a majority of these mothers would rather be homeless than have their children live in an unsafe environment (Home for the Homeless, 2014).

The results of the study also revealed that if a mother is being abused, chances are her children will also become victims of abuse (Homes for the Homeless, 2014). In later chapters, I will discuss how being the victim of abuse has a direct correlation to behavioral problems later on in life. For example, when a person is abused they tend to show signs of anger, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Page, 2016). All of these traits lead to aggressive behavior in and out of the classroom. Nevertheless, if researchers were to study this topic in more detail then it would reveal that this is a serious and growing problem not only in North Carolina but across the United States.

### **Effects of Homelessness**

Every year, thousands of families in North Carolina become homeless (Moore, 2015). What is more alarming is the idea that thousands more of these homeless persons are children (McCurdy, Gorman, & Metallinos-Katsaras, 2015). Such families and children are hidden from societies view simply because they do not have the means to provide their families with adequate shelter. Homeless families move quite frequently, and are sometimes doubled-up in apartments that are very overcrowded (Page, 2016). If a parent can find housing, they will sometimes prefer to stay with a relative or friend in hopes that they do not have to continuously move. Those who cannot stay with a family member or friend are forced to sleep in their cars or find refuge in a campground.

In many cases as well, a parent will send their children to stay with a relative so that they will avoid the poor conditions of a shelter (Moore & Vandivere, 2015). If a child in North Carolina is placed in a shelter, this can be stressful. Oftentimes shelters are extremely noisy, they are very chaotic, and they lack privacy (Barnes, 2013). Students who live in a temporary shelter do not perform well in school because of this daily chaos. Living in a noisy environment means that the student cannot focus when doing homework and lacks the privacy needed to study (Moore & Vandivere, 2015). In reality, one of the main effects of homelessness is that it also increases the likelihood that a family will separate over time (Barnes, 2013). This means that the child will more than likely not grow up with their biological parents. Studies show that children who are raised by both their biological parents are more likely to succeed in the classroom (Saxberg, 2014). This then indicates that if a student is not raised in a stable household with both their biological parents then they will have a more difficult time excelling in school. Saxberg (2014) then explained that parents are vital to the development of students because they personally encourage their children to perform well in school and reach their highest potential. If a student does not have these morals invested within them, they tend to not strive to perform well academically compared to students who have high values (Saxberg, 2014).

In addition, family homelessness is oftentimes caused by a variety of factors. One reason why a family may be considered homeless is because they lack of affordable housing. The parent of the homeless family may be unemployed and as a result they have limited access to resources and support. Shepard and Booth (2014) explain that homeless

parents may also be undergoing mental and health challenges which can have negative effects on their children. With all of these challenges, homeless students have many barriers that they must personally overcome before they reach the classroom. What is more unfortunate is the understanding that these factors are uncontrollable which means that the student cannot avoid them. While the effects of homelessness can take a toll on parents it ultimately has a harder effect on children. The effect of homelessness on a student alters the way that the child thinks, feels, behaves, relates, and copes (Holgerson-Shorter, 2015).

In a broader sense, if you analyze child poverty across the United States, it was noted that nearly 1.2 million students in public schools are considered homeless in 2015-2016. This number is alarming because it indicates that nearly 70% of these students are now homeless as a result of the recession (Barnes, 2013). The recession has played a direct relation to increased rates of child poverty. Similarly, Barnes (2013) explains that more than 1 in 9 children across the country lack access to adequate food in 2013. This is a rate of 23% higher than before the recession (Barnes, 2013). These statistics then make you analyze just who are these children in North Carolina which are homeless. When exploring the data in more detail, Black and Hispanic children are more than twice as likely to lack access to adequate food compared to White children (Tanabe & Mobley, 2015).

Another key point of this dissertation is to bring attention to the impact that homelessness has on mothers. Oftentimes these mothers are single parents and as a result

of this reality, they are not able to care for their children. As a result of this, many mothers who have experienced the effects of homelessness explain that they undergo periods of anger, fear, hopelessness, sadness, and self-blame (Bassuk et al., 2014). These mothers who are considered homeless have also expressed that that at some point in their life, they experienced repeated violence during mainly during their childhood. In other words, over 92% of homeless mothers have experienced severe physical and/or sexual abuse (Bassuk et al., 2014). In order to provide a more accurate break-down of their experiences, the National Center on Family Homelessness (2015) illustrates the following data:

- 43% were sexually molested, usually by multiple perpetrators.
- 44% of mothers lived outside their homes at some point during childhood. Of these women, 20% were placed in foster care.
- Foster care placement has been identified as a childhood risk factor that predicts family homelessness during adulthood.
- 63% of homeless mothers have experienced severe physical assault by an intimate male partner.
- 32% report that they have been the target of severe violence by their current or most recent partner.

- Almost 27% reported needing medical treatment because of a partner's violence.
  - Mothers experiencing homelessness struggle with mental health issues.
  - They have three times the rate of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (36%) and twice the rate of drug and alcohol dependence (41%).
  - About 50% of mothers experienced a major depressive episode since becoming homeless.
- Homelessness and Crime**

It has oftentimes been stated that the effects of homelessness can lead children and adults to a lifestyle of crime (Anderson et al., 2015). Although it can be challenging to conclude whether or not this statistic is true, it is important for this study to focus primarily on this fact in order to reject or accept the null hypothesis. Studies have indicated that there does seem to be a direct correlation between homelessness and criminal behavior (Roman et al., 2014). According to a study that was completed years ago, it was discovered that between nine to 12% of all prisoners in North Carolina during 2008 who were 15-18 indicated that they were homeless during the time of their arrest (Holgerson-Shorter, 2015). The author then explained that after the majority of these prisoners were released from jail they will continue to be homeless (Holgerson-Shorter, 2015).

In comparison, other research has suggested that more than 30% of the entire homeless population has either been arrested at some point in their life or served time in prison (Adler, 2013). Each of these observations is important because they emphasize the correlation between homelessness and deviant behavior. These facts ultimately specify that children who are homeless will more than likely engage in criminal activity.

Research has also suggested that the effects of homelessness make children more aggressive. If a child is homeless during the developmental stages, they are more likely to experience problems with delinquent and criminal behavior. In a study conducted by Wilder Research Center (2013), the authors pointed out evidence to suggest that if a child is homeless they will show signs of being withdrawal, disobedient, and destructive. In comparison, another study was conducted in which 66% of parents who had children who were homeless at one point in their life, participated in fights, exhibited signs of restlessness, or experienced depression as a result of being homeless (Citizen's Committee for Children, 2014). These two studies are significant because they emphasize that homeless students have a greater chance of displaying aggressive behavior than students who are not homeless. In reality, oftentimes students who are disruptive in school tend to engage in criminal behavior later on in life (Wilder Research Center, 2013).

Fortunately, there does seem to be a solution that has reduced criminal activity amongst homeless children. Housing assistance programs have been known to reduce crime rates compared to any other type of social and supportive program. Homeless people who have been to prison between the ages of 15-18 have indicated that family

support is vital to recovery. For individuals who do not have family, housing assistance has also been an important tool in helping them to remain productive members of society and out of prison (Barnes, 2013). Additional programs that have been proven to reduce crime rates amongst homeless children are known as supportive housing. Permanent supportive housing provides children with adequate shelter, food, and healthcare services (Saxberg, 2014). Nevertheless, preliminary studies have shown that housing assistance programs and supportive housing are a great tool for homeless families in giving them the care that they need while also remaining cost-effective (Furman Center, 2014). However, if these resources are not made available to students who are in need of them then they are ineffective.

### **Role of Parents and Teachers**

Parents and teachers play a vital role in the effects of homelessness on children. Being homeless is never an easy circumstance to face. Families must move around from shelter-to-shelter seeking housing which causes stress and uncertainty. Moore (2014) indicated that even if a family is homeless, it is important for parents to stay active in the lives of their children. Children rely on their parents and teachers for daily guidance and direction so when one or both of these role models are unavailable, a student will make irrational decisions (Moore, 2014). When both parents and teachers show concern for the well-being of homeless students, they child is more likely to live a normal and productive life (Page, 2016). However, when homeless students are overlooked, they tend to become disruptive and disobedient (Page, 2016).

One out of eight students in North Carolina, who are classified as homeless, live with a parent or family members who is working (Bassuk et al., 2014). It is inappropriate to assume that just because a family is homeless, the parents within the family are not working. Oftentimes, homeless families have parents who are working however they do not make enough money to support the family's expenses (Moore & Vandivere, 2015). These parents are oftentimes referred to as the working poor. When a parent or guardian cannot support their child, they are then asked to stay with others relatives until stable income is generated. If this occurs, again Page (2016) suggests that it is the role of parents is to continue to provide emotional support and nurture to their children. This should take place even though there is an understanding that the parent cannot provide financial support. By still being present in the child's life, the parents are demonstrating that they have not simply abandoned the child (Barnes, 2013). Such efforts go a long way in the development of children and their success in school.

Students who experience homelessness may also find regular school attendance difficult. Each time that a homeless relocates to another school, studies show that they student will lose between four to six months of academic progress that they learned that year (Adler, 2013). Changing schools also causes adjustment issues. The National Association of State Coordinators for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (2015) point out that homeless children are nine times more likely to repeat a grade, they are four times more likely to drop out of school, and three times more likely to need special education programs compared to students who have a permanent residence (pg. 23).



It is the role of teachers and school staff to identify these issues and develop strategies to assist students who are homeless (Adler, 2013). The first thing that a teacher must do is stabilize the child's basic needs. This includes seeking assistance programs that can provide medical care, food, clothing, shelter, and transportation to students who are less fortunate (Roman & Travis, 2016). Teachers can also assist students by providing parents with a community resource list which includes agencies that cater to homeless children. Educators must also make an objective to understand the overall ways in which homelessness affects a child's ability to learn. If the child is having challenges learning, they will not succeed in school. Teachers must also be willing to help homeless children understand their legal rights, and how their school system can partner with parents and service providers to reduce the stresses of being homeless (Grant, 2016).

Teachers must also be willing to conduct educational assessments on each individual homeless student to determine their level of academic ability (Shepard & Booth, 2013). This assessment allows the teacher to determine the academic standing of the student in regards to reading, math, and writing. In addition, teachers must provide homeless student with structure and consistency. This is necessary so that the child can feel comfortable with their environment and know what to expect (Wiley & Ballard, 2013). Being patient is also needed throughout this process. A teacher never knows what a student experiences at home. By knowing that a child is homeless, the teacher should be willing to give them more attention to meet their needs.

### **Child Service Providers**

In 2010, North Carolina approximately 16% of children between the ages of five and 18 were considered homeless (NC DHHS, 2016). Although this statistic alone is troubling, more alarming is the idea that nearly 60% of these students did not take advantage of the aid assistance programs that are offered to them. Programs such as the Service Provider 1, Service Provider 2, and Service Provider 3, were established to help those in need. Chapter 2 of this dissertation focuses on the idea that many organizations within North Carolina must take accountability for their role in this epidemic. Such agencies must realize that they can do more to help and come up with new strategies to become involved in their communities.

When understanding the issue of child poverty in North Carolina, it is important to consider the quote, “it takes a village to raise a child.” With this concept in mind, in order to reach homeless children in need, aid assistance programs must collectively become involved in order to see positive social change. As a result, the primary role of child service providers is to inform students of the programs made available to them (Holgersson-Shorter, 2015). By teaching educators how to relay this knowledge to those in need, the community as a whole is better preparing these children and teaching them how to make positive decisions in life.

Although child poverty in North Carolina is a growing epidemic, it is even a larger social problem across the country. At any point in time, on average, there are approximately one million children who are homeless in America. Oftentimes these children come to the attention of the United States welfare system in hopes of giving them additional support. Many of these children have experienced abuse or neglect, they

live with a family member who is impaired, or reside in a homeless shelter (Barnes, 2013). One of the key roles of service providers is to assist principals, educators, and parents on how to identify these traumas and develop ways to begin early intervention.

Such interventions are necessary in order to assist these homeless children who have been victimized, traumatized, and malnourished. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network is a helpful organization in North Carolina that specifically caters to homeless children in North Carolina. The goal of this organization is to help children develop strong verbal and analytical skills which will allow them to be successful not only in school but in life as well (Moore & Vandivere, 2015). This organization also collaborates with other service providers such as: caseworkers, front line staff, welfare administrators, and other mental health personnel to assist homeless children in need.

In addition, in 1987 the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act was passed which provides homeless children and youth with additional support, guidance, and equal protection for their educational needs (Rafferty, 2015). The primary purpose of this new legislation was to ensure that states such as North Carolina enforce the policy that local educational agencies should not create a separate education system for homeless children. In past years, it was brought to the attention of policy officials that there was a great disparity among the educational standards between homeless children and that of their peers. This law requires all states to make certain that the issue of homelessness alone does not separate students from equal and adequate education. This law also requires schools systems not only in North Carolina but around the United States to avoid isolating or stigmatizing homeless children (Berck, 2012). One of the

responsibilities of service providers are to help guarantee that laws such as this one are carried out.

The NC DHHS\ (2016) has estimated that nearly 40% of all homeless children who have reported being abused or neglected did not receive post investigation services (pg. 10). This meant that oftentimes children who were placed in an inadequate home were not heavily monitored by the court system. This center also shed light on the growing concern on the amount of children in North Carolina who are in foster care. In 2016, 101,719 children were in foster care waiting adoption and more than 25,000 youth aged out of the system after being 18 years or older. These children were not returned to their homes or families but were asked to start a new adult life with little assistance (NC DHHS, 2016). Studies show that when children are not raised in a stable and loving environment, then they are more likely to make poor decisions (Barnes, 2013). For according to the author, 4,028 out of all children who are arrested each day are noted to be either homeless or have been raised in an unstable environment (Barnes, 2013). These statistics are alarming because they present the idea that consistency is needed in the upbringing of a child.

### **Social Assistance Programs**

The Interagency Council for Coordinating Homeless Progress (ICCHP or Council) was developed in 1992 as a way of addressing child poverty in North Carolina. It is a program that was created in to advise the Governor and Secretary of the NC DHHS on issues that affect people who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless (NC ICCHP Annual Report, 2012). The role of this social assistance program is to come up

with new and innovative ways in which child poverty and homelessness in general can be greatly reduced. One concept that the ICCHP acknowledges is the understanding that homelessness in North Carolina will never be 100 percent cured as whole (McCurdy et al., 2015). This means that the government does not have the resources available to provide housing for all people in need. However, it is the objective of this specific Council to provide recommendations and ways in which cooperative efforts can be made to encourage homeless adults and children.

Another social assistance agency that partners with the ICCHP is the NC DHHS which was outlined earlier. The NC DHHS is responsible for identifying the demographics of people who are homeless and then come up with ways in which the local, state, and federal government can cater to those in need. In addition, this department works closely with a homeless policy specialist who is based in the DHHS Secretary's office. The purpose of this collaboration is to develop special initiatives aimed at addressing and ending homelessness in North Carolina (NC ICCHP Annual Report, 2016).

Despite numerous efforts made by the ICCHP, NC DHHS, and homeless service agencies across the state, there continues to be an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness in North Carolina. In order to change this pattern, efforts have been made to gather and analyze specific data that can help researchers in addressing this issue. For example, it is now the mission of social assistance programs to seek to understand who is experiencing homeless in North Carolina. Their objective is to also examine how these people are accessing homeless and mainstream services. Finally, their

goal is to monitor when and how people exit the homeless service delivery system (Anderson et al., 2015).

Gathering information on these topics is needed in order to help communities better understand the factors that affect low income families. For in reality, low income families are more likely to experience homelessness than any other group. Understanding the concepts presented by Anderson et al. (2015) also important because it focuses on the usefulness of prevention and intervention strategies. The results of these categories are then used to emphasize how North Carolina can respond to child poverty by developing plans to strategically utilize the resources that are preexisting in a way that would be most helpful.

The goal of all social assistance programs which are catered to ending child homelessness in North Carolina is to decrease the effects of homelessness rather than increase them (Saxberg, 2014). Furthermore, the purpose of these programs along with their research is to highlight interventions that have been established to reduce the length of time that a child is considered homeless. By reducing the amount of time that a child is considered homeless, the child will have a greater chance of doing well in school (Moore, 2014). In order to make certain that this is the goal of social assistance programs, policies must be implemented in North Carolina that move away from preventive measures which were unsuccessful in the past. State legislation should strive to implement new and improved methods that will be useful in the future.

Federally, the US government has taken small initiatives to end child poverty across the country. The government has sought to end homelessness for both adults and

children by implementing several acts that address this growing issue. For example, President Obama signed an important piece of legislation entitled the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Once this act was passed, \$1.5 billion was given to the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program or HPRP (HPRP, 2015). This new policy was significant in allowing the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) major cities and states across the country that was in need of assistance. Specifically, North Carolina was one of the states selected to receive federal aid after this act was put into place. HPRP is important because it reduces the amount of students who will be effected by the stresses of being homeless (HPRP, 2015). As this chapter has expressed, by reducing the effects of homelessness on a student, the child is more likely to perform well academically in school and set themselves up for continuing their education.

Nevertheless, the goal of the HPRP is to provide adequate financial assistance and relief to social assistance programs who aim to end homelessness in North Carolina. One of their primary objectives is to prevent children from becoming homeless in the first place and they are, they help them to quickly become rehoused. After this act was implemented, North Carolina used the funds received by this program for: house relocation, stabilization services, and rental assistance support (HPRP, 2015). One way in which stabilization services were used in North Carolina was to help families who were on the verge of being homeless pay for their rent, utility payments, childcare payments, etc.

Locally, one way in which North Carolina has tried to assist homeless children is by increasing their commitment to children in need. For example, North Carolina implemented a plan in 2011 which was labeled: The North Carolina Plan to End Homelessness. This plan is made up of public officials who play a direct role in providing financial aid to agencies at the state and local level. One of the primary objectives of this homeless plan was to implement aggressive prevention strategies and develop more permanent supported housing to adult and children (Tanabe et al., 2015). Since child homelessness has become a growing problem in North Carolina, this plan was created to reduce the amount of time that a student would be homeless (NC DHHS, 2016). The North Carolina plan to end homelessness includes a 5 year and 10 year action plan which is monitored by officials for effectiveness.

Research suggests that the ICCHP believed that the North Carolina 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness along with its 5 year action plan would only be effective if it relied heavily on research and data to track the progression of both adults and children (NC DHHS, 2011). The ICCHP indicates that as of 2012, North Carolina did not have all of the research and data that is required to see tremendous change from incorporating these action plans. In order to improve these conditions, the 10 Year Plan now describes a strategy that will allow users the opportunity to develop guidelines, set final goals, identify strategies for meeting those goals, and then committing to the needed resources (NC ICCHP Annual Report, 2015). All of these strategies are important when tracking the development of homeless children because it ensures that the action plans are actually improving the lives of students. Nevertheless, the 5 Year Action Plan also requires the



ICCHP to set specific 5 year goals based on information and data that becomes available in the future.

In order to track the progress of both the 5 Year Action Plan and the 10 Year Action Plan, agencies have set four benchmarks in place. The first benchmark that will be examined in this dissertation is Benchmark I. This benchmark indicates that the local government must create 1,250 supportive housing complexes for homeless adults and their children who have disabilities. In many cases, children who are disabled are extremely vulnerable. One reason why the 5 year action plan along with the 10 year action plan is beneficial is because they strive to move homeless children who have disabilities into supportive housing in a way that is cost effective. Again, benchmark I is a strategic plan that is used to demonstrate to users how to incorporate new units of supported housing in a manner that is continuing to assist those in need.

Benchmark II will focus on creating 1,250 tenancies to prevent homelessness for people and children who are being discharged from publicly funded systems (NC DHHS, 2016). It was noted that at some stage during a homeless child's life, 68% of them will be discharged from at least one or more publically funded systems (NC DHHS, 2016). In order to prevent this from occurring, it is goal of the local government to create at least 1,250 tenancies that will cater to people who are in need of housing.

The third Benchmark which will track the progress of the 5 and 10 year action plan, focuses on creating 1,000 tenancies for North Carolina's homeless families and single persons. This benchmark caters to homeless people who do not have any disabilities but are still experiencing homelessness. According to the NC DHSS (2016),

homeless families and single persons who do not have a chronic disability make up the largest group of the homeless population. With this in mind, tenancies must continue to be created in order to assist this group so that there can be a decrease amongst this subpopulation.

Finally, Benchmark IV was enforced to create 300 new shelter beds with the intention of using these bed to assist communities that had no shelter facilities (McCurdy et al, 2015). As previously stated, most of North Carolina's rural areas do not have acceptable shelter facilities. For example, in a rural area, homeless shelters may be available for men but not for women. In the same likelihood, homeless shelters may be available for women but if they have children they cannot stay. In order to provide adequate shelter for homeless children in need, North Carolina's local government is striving to fund pre-existing shelters where they can purchase at least 300 new beds specifically catered to children (NC DHHS, 2016). If this benchmark is achieved on plan, this will be added over the next 5 years. Furthermore, all of these benchmarks are important because it sheds light on how North Carolina can continue to assist pre-existing programs to help end child homelessness. One way that the government can do this is by supporting housing agencies that are designed at catering to homeless students in need.

Table 2 illustrates a process of continuum of care that many homeless children and parents undergo:

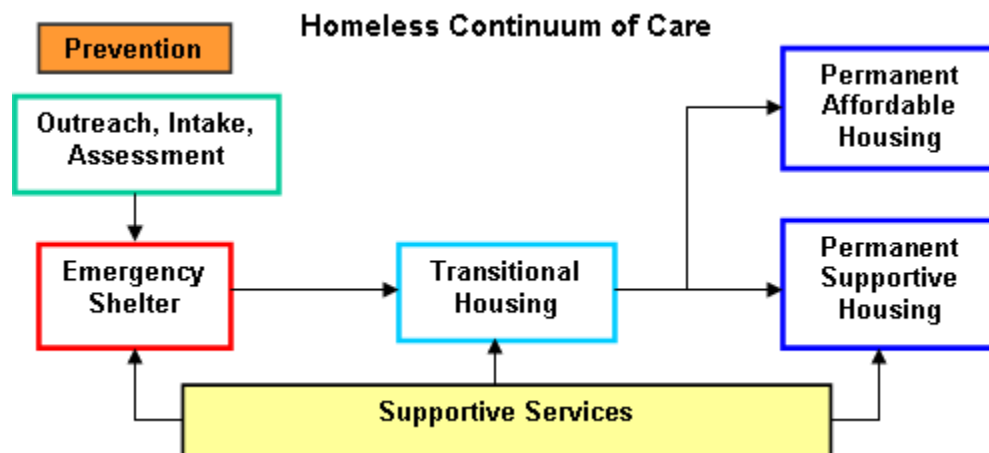


Figure 2. Title of figure.

### Policy Issues

The issue of homelessness in North Carolina faces many obstacles. For example, a child who is homeless in North Carolina may experience a decrease in enrollment, attendance, and overall success in school (Tanabe et al., 2015). When a student attends school regularly they have the opportunity to learn the courses material sufficiently and ask questions if do clarify their understanding. However, homeless students who do not attend school regularly are more likely to make poor grades because they are not present to learn the material (Saxberg, 2014). As a result, this dissertation will assist school officials and service providers in developing new innovative ways to cater to homeless students. This includes not punishing the students academically for factors that are outside of their control.

It is important to understand that student homelessness in fact a social issue and is currently present in state schools. During the 2008-2009 school years, North Carolina

public schools experienced as 8% increase in homeless children and youth (Holgerson-Shorter, 2015). It is noted that these figures will only continue to grow unless policies are put into place to resolve this issue. One way that Congress has assisted with the issue of homelessness across the United States is by reauthorizing the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act of 2002 (Adler, 2013). The reason this act was reauthorized was to keep information updated and to change some of the responsibilities of school districts and states. As of 2014, school districts within North Carolina are required to have homeless education programs in place to build awareness in the school and community (NC ICCHP, 2016).

As time progresses, officials now understand that the issue of child homelessness is not only a North Carolina problem, but a concern across the United States. It is the goal of such policies such as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act of 2002 to shed light on this topic and implement programs that can raise awareness (NCDHHS, 2016). However, such programs cannot be utilized unless proper funding is given. As a result, in order to make a tremendous impact across the state of North Carolina, the local and state government must take initiative to increase funding.

### **Summary**

This section is valuable in explaining how homeless children are affected by their living conditions and how these factors affect their performance in school academically and socially. This section also recognizes the types of children who are more likely to become homeless along with service providers and pre-existing agencies that have been created to assist these children in need. In addition, another important aspect of this

chapter is identifying the role of parents and teachers in and out of the classroom. It is important that both parents and teachers play an active role in the lives of homeless students so that they have a greater chance of making good grades and refraining from participating in criminal behavior (Moore, 2014). Nevertheless, this chapter expresses how child homelessness is caused when there is a lack of affordable housing present. As a result, the child is then subject to experience numerous long-term setbacks that effect their developmental growth. Grant (2016) explains that children who face constant factors such as high anxiety, high stress and, low self-esteem while being homeless have a harder time being productive citizens of society.

Grant (2016) also reveals that children who are experiencing homelessness also are four times more likely to become sick than their housed peers. This means that homeless students will miss more school days than their peers who live in stable housing and fall further behind. Nevertheless, this chapter emphasizes the idea that a stable home is needed in order for children to excel academically. When this cannot be provided, it is important that parents and teachers step up to assist them with their other basic needs. Research has indicated that while children are undergoing the effects of homeless, it is vital that they remain in school (Barnes, 2013). For homeless children, school is one of the few places that offer them a stable and secure place to develop. School is most commonly viewed as an important place that is needed in order for homeless children to acquire new skills and escape their reality.

For the purpose of this dissertation, it is the goal of this chapter to explain how children are not in control of their living arrangements. As a society, we must not fault

them for not having a permanent place of residency because it is not in their control. In order to make sure that all homeless students have the same opportunities as their peers, it is the role of North Carolina service providers, the local government, teachers, and parents to make certain that all resources that could help a student in need is made available to them. This includes providing additional training to teachers throughout North Carolina so that they can identify homeless students who may be at-risk of dropping out of school. Chapter 3 will shed more light on this issue.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between child homelessness in North Carolina and to determine if these factors affect whether a student will further their education beyond high school or instead engage in criminal activities. In this study, I used the quantitative method and collected data using self-administered surveys, focusing on Dillman's (2015) strategy of mail and Internet surveys. An OLS regression was used to analyze the correlation between the following two dependent variables: the likelihood that homeless students in North Carolina will further their education after high school and the likelihood that homeless students in North Carolina will live a life of crime. I used these variables to either accept or reject my hypothesis. I also explored the additional variables of gender, race, age, years teaching, grade teaching, teacher concerns, witnessed behavior, policies, and training.

In this study, I focused primarily on students between the ages of 5 and 15; however, I relied on the responses of both teachers and principals. This chapter will include a description of the design, population, sample, instruments, and the descriptive and regression analysis used to assess the data.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

RQ1: Is there a relationship between homeless factors, such as high stress and low self-esteem, and the likelihood that a student in North Carolina will attend college?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between child homelessness and the likelihood that a student will engage in criminal activity?

$H_0$ : The effects of child homelessness in North Carolina, such as high stress and low self-esteem, causes students to drop out of school and engage in criminal activity before the age of 18 (Buckner et al., 2013).

$H_{a1}$ : There is a relationship between homeless factors, such as high stress and low self-esteem, and the likelihood that a student in North Carolina will attend college.

$H_{a2}$ : There is a relationship between child homelessness and the likelihood that a student will engage in criminal activity.

$H_{a3}$ : There is a difference between the average perceptions of service providers in North Carolina regarding their perceptions of community support.

### **Research Design and Methods**

I collected data based on the reasons homeless children in North Carolina drop out of school at an early age and engage in criminal activity. Multiple regression techniques were used to analyze data in an effort to predict these behavioral patterns. The primary advantage of using regression analysis in research is that it allows the researcher to assess the effects of more than one independent variable at the same time (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2016). In this particular study, I attempted to determine the specific reasons why homeless children in North Carolina choose to further their. From a practical standpoint, I



determined whether outside factors increased the chances that a homeless student would choose one or the other. In this study, I attempted to identify a variety of choices that both homeless children and non-homeless children face on a regular basis, including behavioral patterns, time spent talking to teachers, grades, study time, etc.

The main disadvantage of using regression analysis is that researchers tend to be tempted to assess all possible variables at once (Gall et al., 2006). When this is done, it is commonly referred to as gathering information by going on a *fishing expedition* (Page, 2016). When research is based on a fishing expedition, many authors have argued that information gathered can lead to significant findings that are caused because of false correlations rather than a logical or theoretical rationale (Welge, 2014). Another disadvantage of using correlation research is that the greater the number of correlations assessed, the more complete the interpretations become (Gall et al., 2006). Lastly, a disadvantage of correlational designs is that they cannot establish a cause-and-effect relationship (Page, 2016). These disadvantages must be noted and considered prior to forming a conclusion based on my findings.

I used surveys, questionnaires, and interview methods as the primary sources for gathering data in this study. Survey research methods are valuable because they allow researchers to cover a large geographical area at a minimal cost (Welge, 2014). In this study, I applied the use of surveys in a metropolitan area in North Carolina. One specific method of surveys that I used to gather information was the electronic survey approach. This was administered via computer systems and used to analyze data immediately upon

entry. Electronic surveys were beneficial because their functions could prompt the respondent if an abnormality in the data was discovered.

Studies show that researchers prefer surveys because they are easy to administer and quick for the respondents to complete (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). As a result, the data are frequently gathered and ready to analyze faster. Oftentimes, respondents prefer the survey method and are more comfortable answering questions compared to questionnaires and interviews (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Nevertheless, questionnaires and interviews are valuable to data collection because researchers can acquire information through them that cannot be readily assessed through surveys. For example, when administering an interview, the interviewer can note body language and facial expressions. This cannot be observed through the use of surveys. Questionnaires are also viewed as quick methods that are straight to the point and avoid biased responses (Hinkle et al., 2014). This is because they provide respondents with a level of anonymity; some respondents prefer to remain anonymous in their communication which allows them the opportunity to give truthful responses (Gall et al., 2006).

A disadvantage of using surveys is the possibility that the researcher will receive no response. I attempted to avoid this result in this study by sending electronic surveys that could be easily completed and returned. Studies have also shown that respondents of a survey are less likely to return it if they are held accountable for their participation (Hinkle et al., 2014). As a result, I gave respondents sufficient time to complete the survey while making them aware of specific deadlines. In comparison, the main disadvantage that I discovered when administering questionnaires and interviews was the

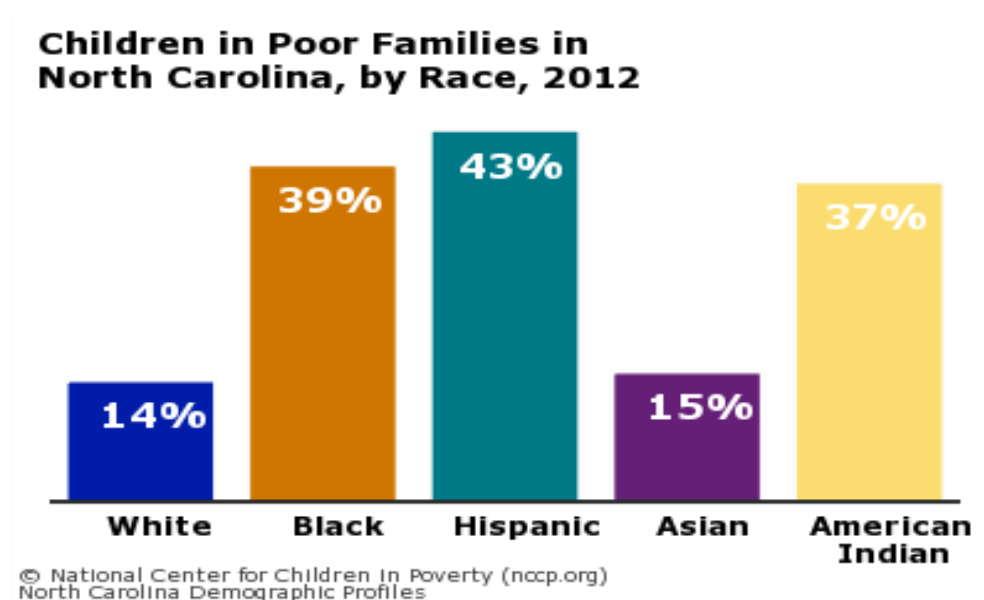
halo effect. The halo effect suggests that respondents will rate their responses to an average or higher level, even if this is not how they feel, and base their responses on the perception of others (Gall et al., 2006). This is viewed as a disadvantage because their responses are not always truthful. Untruthful responses in the survey data will cause there to be threats the validity and reliability of the results (Welge, 2014). In addition, another disadvantage that surveys, questionnaires, and interviews have in common is that the items can be misunderstood and misinterpreted by participants.

### **Population**

The population of this study consisted of homeless children and non-homeless children located in the North Carolina area. When examining this topic, it was also important to study the actions and behaviors of teachers, officials, and service providers. By visiting schools and homeless shelters across North Carolina, I gained an understanding of what procedures were available for helping children experiencing poverty. This is important to the reader because it provides an in-depth analysis on how children are dealing with such issues. As a result of these visits, I was also able to then compare these programs to the resources available to students who are not considered homeless. Through these encounters, I relied on personal observations and discussions in order to gain a better perception on the primary similarities and differences between these two groups.

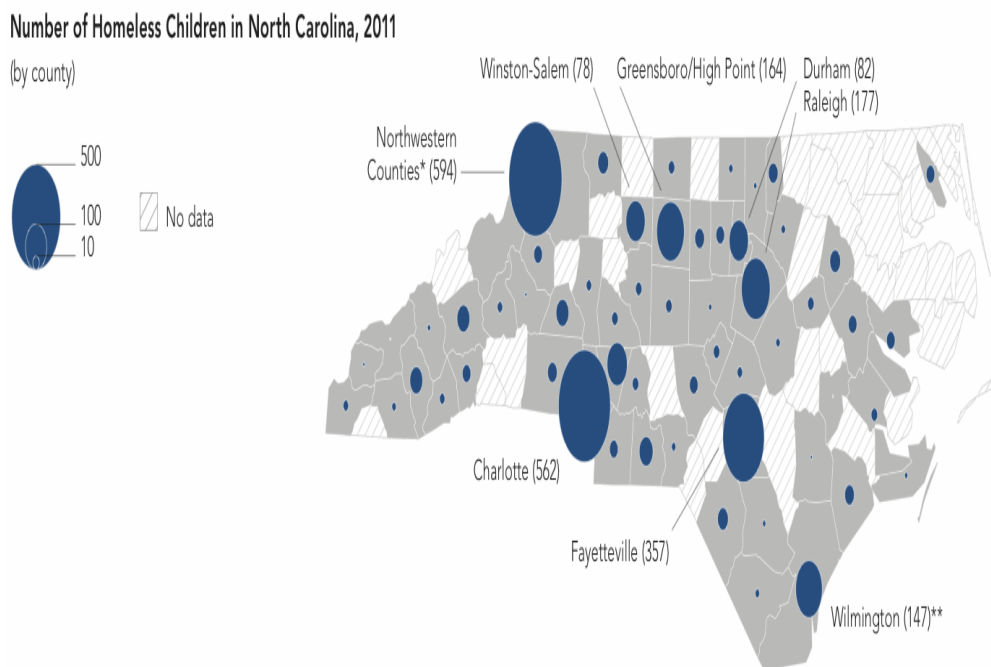
I selected this particular population because of the easy access to end users through the use of e-mails and personal visits. In most cases, I was also able to call in

advance and schedule appointments with the directors of several homeless programs located in North Carolina. It was through these forms of communication that interviews, surveys, and questionnaires were administered. During the observations, I was able to record detailed notes explaining things that affected my research. These observations included methods of patterns, themes, and stories. Figure 3 shows a detailed comparison of students of all races who are considered homeless in North Carolina.



*Figure 3.* Title of figure.

Figure 3 indicates that the primary groups that make up child homelessness in North Carolina are Hispanics, African Americans, and American Indians. Figure 4 illustrates the top three cities that experience the highest rates of child homelessness in North Carolina.



*Figure 4.* Title of figure.

### Sample

In correlation studies, researchers have suggested that a minimum sample size of approximately 30 subjects be used in order to generate a normal distribution (Gall et al., 2006). However, other statistical methodologies have argued that researchers should try to calculate a more precise sample size (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). I determined the appropriate sample size for this study based on the factors of alpha of .05, with 2-tailed directionality, and a power of .80. According to Hinkle et al. (2014), a .30-.50 effect size defines a moderate to medium effect (pg. 22). By setting the projected power to .80, this means that there is an 80% or higher chance of finding a statistically significant result if in fact there is one.

I used a G-Power analysis in order to provide enough statistical power to support statistical significance. The primary reason a G-Power analysis was conducted was to help increase the probability that the test will find a statistically significant and notable difference (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2015). The type of G-Power statistical test selected focused on the difference between two dependent means (Ho1). The number of participants (n = 150) who responded to e-mails, phone calls, and personal visits determined the sample size of this study. The sample is based on the variables identified in the population. This includes samples from the top three cities in North Carolina along with an analysis of the top three races that demonstrate high rates of child homelessness. In order to gather information, the researcher used a convenience sample drawn from four e-mail discussion list in order to obtain information.

The target sample selected for this study was a cross-section of officials, teachers, and principals who work with students who are considered homeless in an urban area in North Carolina. The academic, social, and mental progress of these students was then examined. The participants in the study were then compared to other students their age who were not considered homeless. Since the sample is diverse, I will be able to draw a generalized conclusion based on the information collected.

Prior to releasing any surveys, questionnaires, or interviews, initial contact with all participants will be done through e-mail or phone notification. I spoke with the directors of each agency to ensure that no privacy issues were violated. Children were not interviewed directly; however, 70% of the studies participants were (105) teachers and 30% were (45) officials who work with these children.

### **Instrumentation**

Data were collected using two self-reporting surveys which were contrasted by Betts (2008). The first survey which was administered was developed for teachers. The second survey as administered with the hopes of gathering more information about the perception of principals and directors. The major sections on the teacher survey identified four key sections. They included (a) demographics, (b) educational background, (c) teacher/faculty response, and (d) self-assessment. Likewise, the survey which was developed for principals focused on four primary sections as well. They include: (a) demographics, (b) educational background, (c) faculty assessment, (d) principal responses. Sections on both surveys (teachers and principals) consisted of open and close questions, except for the assessment section. If a question was open, respondents were given the option of adding information to the survey. On the other end, closed ended were easier for the researcher to enforce because they made analysis of the results more controllable (Gall et al., 2016).

The demographics section of the surveys consists of 10 items. Majority of these questions include personal information such as: age, gender, race, job title, job description, and number of years the respondent has taught children. However, four additional items were explored which are directly related to the respondents viewpoints on child homelessness. The section regarding educational background is introduced as a comprehensive five-question survey to determine the educational experience, of each teacher, how involved they are with students, and policies and procedures that are used by teachers and principals who interact with at-risk students.

This study examines four distinct assessments: two for teacher self-assessment and two for principal/administrators assessment of faculty. These assessments are important because they give respondents the opportunity to rate their personal effectiveness on a Likert scale with 5 indicating *strongly agree* and 1 indicating *strongly disagree*. Both teachers and administrators can then identify and acknowledge how their actions have led to the growth of students. At the conclusion of these surveys, the researcher will analyze the data and provide responses to each participants.

Each survey is administered through the use of email communication or personal visits. Each survey is preceded by the appropriate cover letter addressed to the participant along with a short statement thanking them for their participation. Attached is a cover letter which includes detailed instructions for completing and returning the survey. The surveys also include a statement concerning confidentiality and explains the purpose of the survey. The data is collected by the researcher is then used to determine the success each program is having on children across North Carolina.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis focused on the ten hypotheses which were previously discussed in Chapter 1. The two dependent variables which are used in this study include the: likelihood that homeless students in North Carolina will further their education after high school and the likelihood homeless students in North Carolina will live a life of crime. The criterion variables are decision making, behavioral patterns, and educational pursuits. In order to test the 4 hypotheses outlined in this study, a bivariate correlation analysis, factorial analysis of variances, and multiple regression analysis was used.



A bivariate correlation analysis was conducted to test Hypothesis 1 and 2 in order to rule out the possibility of any positive or negative relationships between homeless children and their decision making. A multiple regression analysis was used to employ the testing of Hypotheses 3, 4, 5, and 6. For Hypothesis 3, the multiple regression analysis was also used in order to determine the relationship between the two variables: educational background and decision making. For Hypothesis 4, a multiple regression analysis was generated to decide the likelihood that the variables would explain how a person's finances affect whether or not a child will be homeless. Hypothesis 5, a multiple regression analysis was utilized to determine how the two predictor variables might explain the relationship between furthering your education and a student's reading habits. Finally, in Hypothesis 6, a multiple regression analysis was used to determine the degree to which family support aids a student and their willingness to succeed in life.

Analysis of variance procedures was used to test Hypotheses 7, 8, 9, and 10. For Hypothesis 7, this study relied on factorial ANOVA to evaluate how teachers and the community influence homeless children and in what ways. Similarly, for Hypothesis 8, factorial ANOVA was employed to evaluate whether there is any evidence that homeless children in North Carolina experience a higher likelihood of engaging in criminal activity. This is compared to children who are not homeless. Hypothesis 9, utilizes factorial ANOVA to determine how the effects self-motivation has on youth decision making. Lastly, for Hypothesis 10, factorial ANOVA was used to establish the effectiveness of North Carolina school systems and their role in educational development.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 is beneficial in discussing the research hypotheses, design, methods, population, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis. It also provides a detail analysis on how children in North Carolina are effected by child homelessness. Chapter 4 will discuss the research findings of these methods.

## Chapter 4: Research Findings

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to determine how administrators in North Carolina understand and deal with the problem of student homelessness. In this chapter, I will present the results of the study based on Kingdon's (2003) multiple streams statistical analysis of data collected from responses to research interviews, surveys, and questionnaires. Data were collected based on information that was sent to teachers, administrators, and service providers/directors in a metropolitan area of North Carolina.

### **Sample**

The sample included 10 specific schools from a North Carolina metropolitan area school district. The schools that were targeted are classified as Schools A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J. Each of these 10 schools provided 10 participants totaling 100 participants overall. With this sample, I aimed at receiving feedback from teachers by utilizing the method of questionnaires and surveys. I sent 50 surveys to each of the 10 schools, totaling 500. From this number, 295 teachers chose not to participate in the study, 46 responses to the surveys were not usable because there was missing or incomplete information, and 59 surveys did not follow directions and included their names which I deemed unusable. This brought the total of possible responses to 100 participants, whose responses were completed, returned, and deemed usable.

I also chose to target three specific service providers in the in the study site metropolitan area of North Carolina: Service Provider 1, Service Provider 2, and Service Provider 3. . I focused primarily on these service providers in order to best understand

their willingness to deal with the problem of student homelessness. Of the three service providers targeted, five individual responses were received from the Service Provider 1, five responses were received from Service Provider 2, and five responses were received from Service Provider 3. Listed below, Table 5 shows a detailed chart illustrating the participation pool targeted.

**Table 5:**

<b>North Carolina</b>	Service Provider 1	Service Provider 2	Service Provider 3
<b>Participants: 200 total</b>			
Director	1	1	1
Service Providers	5	5	5

In order to gain the most accurate responses, I distributed surveys during November 2017. Prior to the distribution of these surveys, cover letters or pre-notice were sent to participants for the purpose of informing them about the study and how their participation would be significant. Dillman (2015) suggested that when conducting research with human contacts, researchers should plan to have three contacts with the participants within their sampling frame. I planned to utilize this approach to include the delivery of a prenotice letter, the survey itself, and a follow-up postcard. The method of contact that was used for this research sample included e-mail and face-to-face communication.

In order to distribute the surveys effectively to teachers, I sent an introduction of the sample to all participants including their consent form. Once each participant

reviewed the consent form, they agreed to participate by responding, “I agree,” to the e-mail. Once a participant agreed to the e-mail, a link was then forwarded to them which included the survey itself. The survey was generated and conducted through SurveyMonkey. The e-mail method of communication was valuable because it allowed teachers the opportunity to complete the survey at their own pace and to anonymously participate in the study without the principal of their school knowing of their individual response.

Again, the completed sample included the participation of 10 specific schools and three service providers in a metropolitan area of North Carolina. The data I gathered included a response rate of 20% with respect to all of the targeted schools. It was hard for me to conclude why some teachers responded and others did not. It is possible that some teachers did not have the time to participate or did not want to voice their concerns. However, it was beneficial to my data that at least 10 teachers responded from each school. In addition, 100% of the directors who were targeted responded with usable feedback. This number was five times higher than the feedback response rate from the teachers. I concluded that the directors were more willing to participate because they were each asked to sign a Letter of Cooperation granting me with preapproval, while the teachers were selected randomly.

In the following section, I will provide an analysis of the reliability of scores from the sample. Items used for grounding this study will also be examined along with the independent and dependent variables. This information will be vital to the credibility of this study.

### **Reliability of Scores**

I concluded that as a whole, the teachers and directors who participated in the study were reliable. However, it is important to emphasize again that there were limitations associated with this study. For example, the ability to collect accurate and reliable data from participants during interviews and questionnaires were the primary limitations of this study. Oftentimes within such settings people have the tendency to tell the researcher what they want to hear. In order to avoid this from occurring, I ensured all participants that their responses would remain anonymous in order to control the variables.

I relied on my understanding of both transfer bias as well as selection bias to avoid many limitations. However, some limitations occurred despite my attempts to mitigate them. Again, transfer bias is a specific hypothesis and corresponding analytical tool that is used prior to seeking participants and it takes away a majority of any biases because it's use allows a researcher to control and monitor their questions (Bassuk et al., 2014). Selection bias focuses on the idea that I should select the participants prior to forming or asking questions (Bassuk et al., 2014). I accomplished this by specifically selecting schools and participants prior to administering the surveys. Other limitations were avoided because I informed all participants that their responses were strictly confidential. This information was included in the prenotice letter.

I gathered several demographical items from each survey, including age, race/ethnicity, gender, grade teaching, and years teaching. Table 6 presents the frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency for these variables.

Table 6

*Frequencies, Percentages, and Measures of Variables*

<b>Variables Name</b>	<b>Variable description</b>	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Distribution</b>
Age	Age of participants	Age in years	Mean = 41.3
Ethnicity/race	Ethnicity/race of participants	Whites: 0 Non-Whites: 1	82.30% 17.70%
Gender	Gender of participants	Female: 0 Male: 1	81.60% 18.40%
Years teaching	Consecutive number of years	Number of years teaching	Mean = 11.732 Median = 8
Grade Taught	Grade level taught	Elementary school: 0 Middle/high school: 1	54.60% 45.40%

*Note.*  $N = 100$ .

Age was presented as a continuous variable. For this variable, I asked participants to record their age in years. The ages of teachers ranged from 24–65 years old. The average age for all teachers in this sample was 41 years old. I also asked respondents to list their race/ethnicity, gender, years teaching, and grade teaching. With the variable of ethnicity, I asked teachers to indicate their race. A majority of the teachers (82%) identified as White, and 18% of teachers identified as non-White, including African Americans, Hispanics, etc.

The gender of all participants was also analyzed in this study. Across the country, a majority of teachers are women (Bassuk et al, 2014). This study also expressed similar results. Out of the participants who responded, 92% were women, while 8% were men. I then examined why more women tend to choose a career in teaching compared to men and concluded that teaching is still viewed as a female dominant profession because it requires the teacher to display traits of patience, nurturing, and compassion which are all viewed as female characteristics (see Holgersson-Shorter, 2014). This is not to say that men are inferior to women in this field; however, women tend to feel more comfortable in this profession because these are traits that they already possess.

Concerning the variable of years teaching, I asked respondents to record the consecutive number of years they had been teaching. Previous research suggested that it takes beginning teachers more time to recognize at-risk students compared to veteran teachers (O'Brien, n.d.). O'Brien (n.d.) categorized new teachers as those with less than 5 years of teaching experience, beginning teachers as those with 5 to 10 years of experience, and veteran teachers as those with more than 10 years of service. For this research sample, the consecutive number of years the teachers had served ranged from 0 to 34 years. For this item, the mean score was approximately 12. When comparing the mean of this sample to O'Brien's study, the average teacher in North Carolina in my sample would be considered a veteran teacher.

In addition, the grade teaching variable had participants in this study specifying the grade level that they were currently teaching at the time of the study. The sample selected included respondents who taught grade levels that ranged from kindergarten



through 12th grade. When referring to the chart, it is illustrated that approximately half of the teachers in the sample were elementary school teachers (54.60%) while the other half were middle school teachers (15.1%) or high school teachers (30.3%) in the sample.

In order to generate more efficient results, I ran an ANOVA test for middle school and high school teachers in order to check for similarities and differences between these groups. The following variables were examined: support, hours spent on lesson plans, and teacher satisfaction level. When reviewing the results, I found no significant differences between these groups in any of these variables. As a result, middle and high school teachers were grouped together for analysis. For this study, I also grouped these teachers together because research supports that middle and high school teachers notice more behavioral problems due to outside factors such as homelessness and abuse during higher grades (Snow, 2015). The grade teaching variable was recorded as 0 for elementary school teachers and 1 for middle and high school teachers for analysis purposes.

### **Correlation of Survey Responses and Hypotheses**

In the literature review section of this study, I identified how administrators deal with the problem of child homelessness and how additional factors such as stress and high anxiety can lead to behavioral problems with students. As a result, the role and responsibilities of teachers and parents have increased over time (Holgerson-Shorter, 2014). For the purpose of this study, I developed a survey to ask teachers a variety of questions that correlate to their responsibility within the classroom. I was interested in determining whether teachers have identified at-risk students in their classroom, the

number of hours spent on lesson plans, the role of the school system, and whether teachers take the time to have serious conversations with their students. Table 7 includes information about the following five concepts: teacher concerns, witnessed behavior, perception of parents, training, and policy.

Table 7.

Concept	Concept Description	Coding	Distribution
<b>Teacher Concerns</b>			
Curriculum/lesson plan	Course Content	Range 1-5	49 teachers (43.8%)
No Child Left Behind Initiatives	School Policy/Programs	Range 1-5	37 teachers (29.6%)
Student Behaviors	Student Conflict	Range 1-5	35 teachers (18.5%)
Student Assessments	Student Grades	Range 1-5	29 teachers (8.1%)
<b>Witness Behavior</b>			
At-risk students vs. Disruptive Students	Teacher observed behavior during 2014-2015 academic year	0=No 1=Yes	1=64.2%
Talk with students before-administering punishment?	Teacher observed behavior during 2014-2015 academic year	Likert 3 Point-Frequency Scale	56.3%= Occasionally 34.5%= Frequently 9.2%=Never
Serious conversations with- Homeless Students	Teacher observed behavior during 2014-2015 academic year	Likert 3 Point-Frequency Scale	64.1%=Never 26.5%= Occasionally 9.4%= Frequently
<b>Training</b>			

Received training catered to- Homeless Students	Teacher received formal training	Likert 3 Point- Frequency Scale	55%=Never 37%=Occasion ally 13%= Frequently
Would like more training	Teacher desired more training	0-100%	Mean = 56.52% Median = 50%
<b>Policy</b>			
Formal Policy or not	Awareness of Existing Policy	0 = No 1=Yes	0=50% 1=50%

*Note.*  $N = 100$ .

### Teacher Concerns

For teacher concerns, teachers were asked to rank order the following four items: student behaviors, student assessments, curriculum/lesson plan, and no child left behind initiatives. Specifically, teachers were asked to rank these items on a scale from 1 – 5. One indicated their highest concern and five indicated their lowest concern. Table 7 displays the frequency count for each of the four ranked items. Frequencies are then provided which illustrate the number of teachers that ranked each concern the highest (1).

For this sample, 49 teachers (43.8%) ranked curriculum/lesson plan as their highest concern. No child left behind initiatives was ranked as the second highest concern by 37 teachers (29.6%). Student behavior was ranked as the third highest concern by 35 teachers (18.5%). The significance of these findings served to illustrate what areas in the classroom teachers focus on primarily. Furthermore, the above information emphasized that many of the teachers who participated in this sample consider other professional responsibilities such as curriculum and no child left behind initiatives as greater concerns

the studying student behavior. This signifies that teachers are not taking the time to learn the behavior of their students and to cater to students who are at-risk. This research is important because it suggest that teachers must make it their priority to recognize common behaviors that may be the result of a student who is homeless.

Witnessed behavior.

The second category presented in Table 7 includes information about whether or not teachers observed any behaviors in their classroom that is considered at-risk and whether or not they considered those behaviors at-risk. Specific examples were proposed to teachers and they were then asked to give their opinion. For example, teachers were asked to acknowledge whether they know the difference between an at-risk student and a disruptive student. Respondents were also asked, If a student in their classroom is very disruptive and displaying signs of behavioral problems, do they take the time out to talk to the student before punishing them for their actions.

Furthermore, teachers were asked to indicate “how often they have serious conversations with students who are considered homeless?” These questions were beneficial to the population because all of these behaviors were witnessed by a majority of teachers in the sample. Majority of teachers (64.2%) indicated that they do in fact know the difference between an at-risk student and a disruptive student. Although this number is plausible, this specific statistic can be overstated. Teachers were not asked to write down their personally definition of an at-risk and a disruptive student. In reality, their definition of at-risk students and disruptive students may not be accurate. Using a Likert 3-point frequency scale, teachers were also asked to identify how they would

respond, if a student in their classroom is very disruptive and displaying signs of behavioral problems, do they take the time out to talk to the student before punishing them for their actions? The results of this question indicated that from the participants sampled, (56.3%) occasionally talk to their students before administering punishment. In comparison, never (34.5%) of teachers frequently talk to their students about their behavior prior to administering punishment and (9.2%) of teachers never talk with their students regarding their behavior before administering punishment.

Furthermore, teachers were asked to indicate “how often they have serious conversations with students who are considered homeless? An interesting finding was that (64.1%) of teachers sampled have never had conversations with students who are considered homeless in their classroom. These findings are consistent with the literature, which suggested that oftentimes teachers do not take the time needed to identify students in their classroom who are homeless or they do not have the training needed to have serious conversations with these students (Golden Door Scholars, 2012). In addition, (26.5%) of teachers have identified students in their classroom that they consider homeless and have had serious conversations with them occasionally while (9.4%) of teachers frequently have serious conversations with homeless students.

### Training

The teachers survey was also valuable in exploring the training that each school provides teachers with in regards to addressing student homelessness in the classroom. Teachers were asked, “Have you received any training for responding to homeless children since being hired at your school?” A vast majority of teachers (55%) in the

sample indicated they had never received special needs training catered to homeless children since being hired at their respective schools. Likewise, (37%) of teachers indicated that they have received occasional training while (13%) indicated that their school provides them with frequent training.

Teachers also identified the number of training hours that they had received during the 2017 academic school year. Majority of the teachers who responded to this section indicated that they received less than 10 hours of training during the academic year. Out of the teachers who responded, (57%) of the teachers also expressed that they would like to receive more training in the future.

#### Policy

Teachers in the Raleigh area were asked to respond to the question, “Does your school have a formal anti bullying policy currently in place that is applied and enforced?” According to the results, 94% of respondents indicated their school district in North Carolina did in fact have an anti-bullying policy in place that is currently being enforced. The interesting aspect of this finding is teachers were then asked explain the anti bullying policy as it related to their specific school. Their responses varied in nature which led the researcher to conclude that although a policy for school districts are in place, teachers are not collectively aware of what it means. In fact, eight teachers out of the 100 teachers which were questioned responded “no” when answering this item on the survey. However, in 2009 North Carolina passed the School Violence Prevention Act.

The School Violence Prevention Act seeks to assist administrators, teachers, and parents in recognizing the signs, patterns, or gestures of any physical act or threatening

communication that takes place on school property or at any school event (NC ICCHP Annual Report, 2012). The School Violence Prevention Act was revised and adopted in 2009 to ensure the safety of students at school after growing numbers of students were dropping out due to being bullied at school. Such events were viewed as reported and unreported.

#### Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variables

A narrative policy analysis (Roe) was used to explore the relationship between the dependent variables identified in this case study. More specifically, the descriptive statistics for the dependent variables used are the likelihood that homeless students in North Carolina will further their education after high school and likelihood homeless students in North Carolina will engage in criminal activity Table 8 is imperative to this research study by analyzing the first dependent variable, the likelihood that homeless students in North Carolina will further their education after high school.

Table 8:

“2015 Education completed vs. Income and Unemployment”

	<b>Annual Income</b>	<b>Unemployment Rate</b>
High-school diploma	\$419	6.8%
Bachelor’s degree	\$962	2.3%
Doctoral degree	\$1,441	1.4%

(Moore & Vandivere, 2015)

Table 8 illustrates that students who attend college earn a weekly income of twice as much as student who have only attained a high school diploma. This indicates that if a

homeless students obtains a bachelors degree or doctoral degree, they are more likely to have the financial gains available to prevent themselves from being homeless. Students who go on to obtain a doctoral degree earn up to three times the weekly income as a high school diploma graduate. Table 8 explains that the unemployment rates in 2015 were higher for high school graduates compared to doctoral students.

Table 9: Teacher Responses

“Do You Encourage Your Students to Attend College”

School A	7-Yes 3-No
School B	9-Yes 1-No
School C	8-Yes 2-No
School D	6-Yes 4-No
School E	8-Yes 2-No
School F	5-Yes 5-No
School G	7-Yes 3-No
School H	9-Yes 1-No
School I	7-Yes 3-No
School J	8-Yes 2-No

Table 9 supports the first dependent variable, the likelihood that homeless students in North Carolina will further their education after high school by expressing how teachers in 67% of the schools surveyed in encourage students to seek higher education. In recent chapters, the role of a teacher was greatly emphasized. Teachers were viewed as role models who have great influence on students. Teachers indicated that they went above and beyond the standard role of a teacher in order to encourage students to seek higher education. This included providing students with resources on local colleges and having guest speakers who attended college return to the classroom and



discuss the benefits of higher education. Amazingly, 88% of the teachers surveyed expressed the importance of encouraging their students to attend college.

The second dependent variable that is analyzed in this dissertation is the likelihood homeless students in North Carolina will live a life of crime. Criminal activity is oftentimes explored in order to survive the harsh reality of living on the streets or living in unfit conditions. A 2010 study was conducted in North Carolina to explore the correlation between homeless youths and criminal behaviors. The study found that as the length a youth is homeless increases, the likelihood that the youth will engage in criminal activity or become arrested also increases (NC DHHS, 2016). The main reason why criminal behaviors increases was because the homeless children are forced to steal food or sleep in abandoned buildings in order to survive. This study also emphasized that children who experienced longer periods of being homeless also turned to substance abuse in order to cope with their reality. As a result of their substance addictions, this in turn lead them to commit more crimes (NC DHHS, 2016).

### **Service Providers Interviews**

I met with three directors at three different local service providers in order to gain a more accurate description of how effective each organization is in dealing with student homeless. Each director was asked the same five interview questions and all responses were generated and formed based on the same principles as Kindon's multiple streams framework. Kindon (1984) states that some window openings are triggered by events such as a crisis. As it relates to public policy the researcher would compare the issue of student homelessness as an ongoing crisis.

1. How effective is your organization with catering to homeless children?
2. In what ways do you think your organization can improve to best meet the needs of homeless children?
3. What resources are available to homeless children in need that come to your shelter?
4. Does your organization partner with other local agencies within the community to expand upon your mission?
5. Based on your experience, what impact does homelessness have on the lives of children?

### **Summary**

The effects of high stress and low self-esteem are characteristics that play a vital role in the development of children. This section also indicates the importance of the role of teachers and their responsibility in shaping children to reach their highest potential. Studies have shown that by a teacher encouraging a student to attend college, they will have a greater desire to attend. Teachers and administrators play a vital role in making certain that students have met the requirements to needed in order to be eligible for college. This includes maintaining a specific grade point average and passing the SAT. Service providers also assist in providing valuable resources that children need in order to be successful. Teachers in an urban area in North Carolina all express an interest in providing their students with academic resources that encourage students to seek higher education after high school. Specifically teachers in School D develops many programs that cater to higher education such as the

End of the Year celebration where college graduates come in to discuss with high school students the benefits of attending college. There are many benefits to seeking higher education such as earning higher wages annually and learning vital skills that are necessary in order to be successful in any work environment. Nevertheless, this section also summarizes the aspect that student homelessness and criminal activity are directly related. A student who experiences a long period of time being homeless will more than likely engage in criminal activity. Chapter 5 will utilize this information to discuss the Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations.

## **Introduction**

### **Chapter 5: Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

The purpose of this study was to determine how administrators in an urban area in North Carolina deal with the problem of student homelessness. Through the responses of teachers, administrators, and directors, I emphasized that a relationship exists between the students seeking further education and criminal activity. The sample population for this research study included teachers, administrators, and directors who worked with at-risk students. Data were collected using surveys and then analyzed using a quantitative approach. This chapter will include a discussion of the research findings, my concluding thoughts, and what recommendations I suggest for future research.

## **Discussion of Findings**

The results of this study confirmed that administrators and teachers play a direct role in whether or not a student in North Carolina will further their education or engage in criminal activity. The findings indicated that teachers, parents, and administrators are vital in assisting students reach their fullest potential. The first item that I will discuss will be the professional responsibility of teachers and administrators as it relates to helping homeless students in need. Logistic regression models will be presented to analyze how at-risk students have progressed over time, how much time teachers spend on their lesson plans, and the overall relationship teachers develop with their students. In my discussion, I will also explain the role of service providers and employees who work at shelters catering to the homeless, including how effective employees believe their services are and their relationship with helping homeless students in need.

Next, I will analyze the results that emphasize the role and responsibility of schools and the community in responding to the issue of student homelessness. This will include what administrators have done to reduce the number of homeless students in North Carolina in regards to the school system and other support agencies. Lastly, the results from the three OLS regression models will be discussed to examine whether homeless students are more likely to further their education or live a life of crime.

Being a teacher presents many challenges in itself. Oftentimes, teachers have to balance the duties of instructor, mentor, negotiator, crowd control, and social worker (O'Brien, n.d.). When examining the roles and responsibilities of teachers in the classroom, I developed several survey questions that allowed teachers to evaluate their effectiveness. Certain items were included within the survey that provided a framework that I used to analyze the larger results. These items first measured background information from all teachers that participated, including information such as age, ethnicity, gender, years teaching, and grade teaching. In order to make sure that each teacher remained anonymous, I did not ask the name of the participant or the school in which they taught. With this information, I was able to conclude several basic facts.

From my sample of teachers in North Carolina, women (81.6%) are more likely to teach compared to men (18.4%). When examining the responses, time spent on preparing their lesson plan was ranked as the highest concern by more teachers (42.7%). The second and third highest concerns were the school's participation in catering to at-risk students (26.3%) and identifying homeless students (12.5%). Homeless students are obviously a concern of teachers. Although many noted that identifying such students can

be difficult, there are several signs that these students tend to show. One teacher commented, “A lack of parent involvement, student expectations, and personal hygiene are all signs that a child is being neglected at home.” However, as this survey has shown, the topic of homeless children is not the highest concern of teachers.

### **Ensuring Positive Social Change**

In order to best help students in need, teachers must be aware of their responsibilities. Feldman (2015) explained that when a teacher accepts a job to educate students, they have both a professional and legal responsibility. Professionally, teachers who work for the North Carolina school system are responsible for helping students achieve specific goals set aside by the school board. In recent year, policies have been established to hold both teachers and students more accountable. For example, The No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, “requires states to create ‘challenging’ testing standards, test students regularly, and to sanction schools that fail to meet these regulations” (Saxberg, 2014).

Legally, teachers also have an obligation to always be aware of the actions and procedures that take place within their classroom. This is because they are considered *loco parentis*, or “in place of the parent” (Feldman, 2015)). Since they are considered classroom guardians, teachers can be held liable for the safety of their students (Feldman, 2015). It is important that teachers make it their objective to monitor the behavioral patterns of students and to check for any signs of malnutrition and homelessness. If a teacher suspects any of these signs, they must be willing to report their concerns.

Many teachers also personally view their profession as containing both academic and social responsibilities (Moore, 2014). In most cases, it is a teacher's desire for their students to obtain general knowledge and skills that they can use to apply to real-life scenarios. Teachers also want their students to develop confidence, self-esteem, respect for others, and the ability to make good decisions (Feldman, 2015). When students do not develop these traits over time, these are signs that the student has outside factors shaping their development (Moore, 2014). Nevertheless, it is important to remember that teachers have a multitude of responsibilities. They are held accountable by their school's administrative personnel, by state and federal policy-makers, by students, and by parents. As a result, teachers tend to need additional help.

Parent and family involvement in children's learning has always been recognized as a vital tool needed for educational growth. Over time, many teachers have indicated that parent involvement is a necessity to assisting children in overcoming learning difficulties (Dewey, 1898; Huey, 1908; U.S. Department of Education, 1987). Students who do not have the support of their family are more likely to face literacy problems (Dewey, 1898). The findings of this study concluded that most teachers (88.4%) prefer parents who are heavily involved with the success of their children. This includes attending parent/teacher conferences, volunteering in the classroom, contacting teachers by phone, etc.

In comparison, close to one-half of the teachers also believed that parents should not have a say in the reading curriculum. Their primary reasoning for this is because they do not believe parents have the knowledge and training of an educated teacher. The

perceptions that were expressed by teachers in this study seem to be fairly consistent with general educational findings (Wiley & Ballard, 2013). That is, teachers believe parent involvement is important and beneficial but also believe that many parents do not care or have the time to be involved with their children. Although teachers believe that parents should be involved, many teachers have indicated that they should only be involved on the teachers' terms.

Overall, out of the teachers examined in this study, many were dissatisfied with the involvement that they have witnessed from parents in the past. For example, the comment section of the survey provided me with in-depth data on how many teachers view parents. One teacher expressed that

In my classroom, parent participation is slim to none. I have sent home letters to parents asking them for their participation in classroom activities and have received little to no response. The only time I hear from parents personally is when it comes down to disciplinary actions regarding their child.

A student who begins to act in an unusual or disturbing type of fashion may be signaling the need for individual attention. Students who are at-risk tend to demonstrate the following behaviors: withdrawal from typical social interactions or discussion, unwillingness to communicate with teachers, obvious shyness or lack of social skills, complaints of loss of appetite or excessive appetite, and unexplained crying or outbursts of anger (Page, 2016). Oftentimes, teachers may view these behaviors as disruptive, but in reality the student is simply asking for help (Page, 2016). On some occasions the student may be acting out for no apparent reason, but in most cases, the student is



experiencing outside factors that are shaping their behavior (Page, 2016). Students who display these behaviors also are more likely to turn in incomplete work, have low test scores, and be making poor progress in the course (Page, 2016).

When this is the case, teachers must personally make it their responsibility to have a conversation with the student to get to the underlying issue. During these conversations, the student will sometimes disclose to the teacher significant life events or stressors that explain their behavior, including the death of a family member, difficulties in relationships, physical or mental abuse, or being homeless (Snow, 2015). Teachers must understand that when attempting to talk with a student about a personal or emotional situation they must be careful in their approach (Page, 2016). If done incorrectly, the student will lie, shut down, or become angrier with the teacher (Page, 2016). As a result, it is helpful for the teacher to perform several steps before initiating this conversation. First, the teacher should try to talk to the student in a private setting to avoid them feeling embarrassed (Snow, 2015). The teacher should then, listen actively, with interest and concern (Snow, 2015). During the conversation the teacher should avoid promising secrecy because if abuse or neglect is taking place, the teacher has a responsibility to take the appropriate steps for the well-being of the student (Snow, 2015). Lastly, the teacher should avoid making judgmental or moralizing remarks because this could do more damage than good (Snow, 2015).

After a teacher has recognized that a student is in need of help, they must take appropriate actions such as talking with the student's parents, talking with the principal of the school, and talking with the school counselor (Page, 2016). Teachers must also

encourage the student to make an appointment with the counseling center. In some cases, the student may not want counseling, but the option must still be presented to them (Page, 2016). A counselor is needed when a student presents a problem or requests information, which is outside the range of knowledge of the teacher (Page, 2016). If a teacher is unsure if a referral is necessary, contact the counseling center for a consultation (Page, 2016). At all times, teachers should encourage their students to talk with them openly, and this can be done by inviting the student in to discuss work or past academic performance (Snow, 2015).

Counseling services are also needed when the student is reluctant to discuss his or her concern(s) with the teacher (Snow, 2015). Nevertheless, teachers must be willing to take the necessary steps needed to ensure the safety of the student whether this is talking with a counselor, principal, or even the police. If a student expresses that they are homeless or in an abusive situation, social workers may also be called to make sure that student is placed in a safe and secure environment (Snow, 2015). Again, teachers must pay attention to the behaviors of their students so that they can identify those students who are at-risk. By understanding their behaviors, teachers can play a vital role in reducing child homelessness in North Carolina.

In order for a person to become a teacher in the United States they have to undergo a series of training; each state has a specific requirement that teachers must meet prior to entering the classroom (Anderson et al., 2015). In order for a person to earn a North Carolina teaching credential they must complete the appropriate amount of undergraduate coursework and standardized tests, along with participating in an

accredited certification program such as Teachers of America (Anderson et al., 2015).

This program allows teachers to experience hands on what they will encounter their first day on the job (Anderson et al., 2015) Such programs also give teachers the opportunity to determine how to recognize at-risk students and help them succeed academically. If a teacher does not pass this program, they will not be hired by a school district in North Carolina.

In many ways, like others jobs, teachers learn best through experience. They learn what works and does not work in the classroom along with how to effectively interact with students; such skills require training, patience, and determination. First year teachers tend to feel overwhelmed but after a while, they get the hang of things (Saxberg, 2014). Nevertheless, the government has put policies in place that monitor the performance of teachers such as the No Child Left Behind Act, and this act requires teachers to meet specific milestones academically and punishes schools that do not (Saxberg, 2014). Training programs in North Carolina emphasize to teachers the importance of meeting state regulations (Saxberg, 2014). Teachers who have a high pass rate tend to receive bonuses for their success (Saxberg, 2014).

After examining the importance of adequate teacher training, I have concluded that although the No Child Left Behind Act is beneficial in holding teachers responsible, it does take away from other aspects of their job. For example, if a teacher's primary focus is on achieving educational milestones, they have little time to determine the personal circumstances of each student. As a result, I hopes that this study will encourage teachers to take the time needed to talk with their students and uncover the root of their

issues. In many cases the student who a teacher writes off as a ‘problem child’ generally has outside factors influencing their behavior (Snow, 2015).

#### Implementation of New Policies

According to my research, specific steps should be taken prior to implementing new policies within any school district. When implementing a new policy or procedures the school must first make certain that there is visible support for the policy from the board of directors, executive director, and school board leaders (Snow, 2015). Before the policy reaches principals and teachers, the policy should outline a core values section in which there is a statement regarding the human rights of all students. This includes a confidentiality statement along with the purpose of the new policy. Once this is emphasized, the policy should then address the role and responsibility of teachers and principals in ensuring the safety and well-being of homeless students within the school.

It is important that both principals and teachers recognize their duties so that they know how to accurately respond in situations that need immediate attention. When administering new guidelines it is also important for schools to offer conflict resolution along with specialized training for teachers. In many cases, new teachers will not have the experience needed to effectively respond to homeless children without specialized training. As a result, training workshops must be required so that teachers know what questions to ask students. Teachers must also be trained with recognizing the signs of an at-risk student along with what resources are available to these students.

When implementing new policies into a school district it is imperative that plain language is used for policy implementation information. This is vital so that teachers and

principals can effectively comprehend what they are reading and how to apply the new information into their everyday tasks. Nevertheless, in order to track the progress of new policies each school should plan to evaluate and measure the policy every two years. This includes reviewing the level of use, the policies effectiveness, accessibility, tracking confidentiality, and the perceptions and trust of the policy (Wiley & Ballard, 2013).

### **Regression Analysis**

Two specified dependent variables were used for this study: likelihood that homeless students in North Carolina will further their education after high school and likelihood homeless students in North Carolina will live a life of crime. As previously discussed, these two dependent variables were further explored to include other factors such as teacher's involvement, support agencies, the role of the community. OLS regression analyses for dependent variables related to the likelihood that students would further their education after high school was presented first. Next, results of logistic regression analysis for dependent variables associated with the additional factors are presented.

Regression analysis for likelihood of furthering education revealed that there is a perceived seriousness towards homeless students. All models presented suggested that this is a growing concern in North Carolina that deserves immediate attention. These findings are consistent with prior research, which also report a seriousness to responding to students who are homeless (Barnes, 2013, Moore & Vandivere, 2015, Roman & Travis, 2014).

It seems logical that homeless students would want to further their education so that they could put themselves in a better position to earn income. When a student is considered homeless, they tend to feel all alone like they do not have any options available to them. Oftentimes, these types of students perform poorly in school unless they receive immediate help. One can assume that teachers along with other school officials might welcome strategies that help them to address this growing concern. In order for teachers to be effective in assisting homeless students, they must undergo training that teaches them how to respond. In addition, certain guidelines such as grade teaching and number of years teaching was found statistically significant for the likelihood teachers will intervene in personal matters ( $b = -17.600, p < .01$ ). Since grade teaching and number of years teaching was coded dichotomously, and the slope was negative, these results indicate that elementary school teachers are more likely to respond to a student's personal matters compared to middle/high school teachers.

Teachers are more likely to respond to the needs of elementary school students because younger students are less difficult to observe (Snow, 2015). In elementary school, students are with one teacher throughout the entire day. However, as students get older, and attend middle school and high school, they begin to interact with multiple teachers throughout the day. Since students interact with multiple teachers, it becomes more difficult to observe the signs of homelessness.

This study also concluded that teachers are more likely to pick up on the behavioral patterns of students at an early age. When students are in elementary school, they begin to undergo a variety of transitions. Their bodies begin to change along with

mental and social growth. During this period, a student's individual personality also begins to emerge which sets them aside from their peers. Feldman (2015) suggest that when students are young, they do not see themselves as different from anyone else. They all want to do well in school and it is during this time that they select their careers. Students who have family issues such as being neglected also demonstrate a willingness to please adults and stay in school (Feldman, 2015).

When a student chooses to enter into the work force right after college, their weekly income drastically decreases. Table 9 showed that a person's weekly income is directly related to the education in which they have received. Students who only completed high school earned a weekly amount of 60% less than a person who earned a doctoral degree. Although these are understood facts, it is important for officials to remember that it is ultimately the decision of the student on whether or not they wish to further their education or drop out of school.

In North Carolina, a student has the option of dropping out of school at the age of 16 with or without the consent of their guardian (NC DHHS, 2011). At this age, a student or parent can file the required formal declaration of intent to terminate school enrollment with the school district. This declaration makes both students and parents acknowledge that by leaving school this will likely reduce the students earning potential. After this paperwork is filed, the student is legally able to drop out and fend for themselves. In North Carolina, approximately 5% of all students will drop out before completing the 12th grade (Norris, 2014). The top five reasons North Carolina students drop out of

school is because of: attendance, enrollment in a community college, lack of engagement with school and/or peers, unknown, and academic disabilities (Roman & Travis, 2014).

I then examined additional reasons other than the top five reasons which are presented, to examine why students choose not attend college. An additional reason why some students do not attend college right after high school is because of their grades (Saxberg, 2014). In order to attend many colleges and universities across the country, a high school student must meet certain requirements. According to a National Association of College Admission Counselors (NACAC) 2011 survey, if a student does meet the GPA requirements set by a school their chances of being accepted become drastically reduced.

On average, many colleges set a GPA baseline of around a 3.0 for incoming freshman (NC DHHS, 2011). This means that the student had to uphold a “B” average in high school to meet this requirement. An average student who earns the grade of a “C” would not be eligible for college. In addition to meeting these GPA requirements, students must also take the SAT. The national average admission score for the SAT is 1540 (US Conference of Mayors, 2013). This score is made up of a combination of math, reading, and writing sections of the test.

If a student does not wish to take the SAT or performs poorly, they have the option of opting to take the American College Testing exam or ACT. Like the SAT, the ACT also tests a student’s ability to perform in the areas of math, reading, and writing. The average ACT score is between 20 and 21. Scoring anywhere near these averages indicates that a student has a good chance of being accepted into quite a few colleges and



universities. By not scoring in this ballpark, a student should consider retaking the exam or choosing a career that does not require a college degree.

There are many jobs that a person can obtain that do not require a degree after high school. For example, a student may wish to work as a gas plant operator, transportation inspector, gaming manager, elevator installer, or police officer (Norris, 2014). Although these jobs require additional training, the minimum educational requirement is a high school diploma. In order to advance in these fields, strong work ethic and dedication is needed. However, if a person cannot obtain a promising career, the likelihood that they will struggle financially increases.

The second main reason that high school students do not attend college is because they believe that they cannot afford it. Decades ago, many students would not further their education because they had to work in order to support their family. As times have become more modern, students are not forced to drop out of school as in recent years and are given the option to further their education. If a student cannot afford college, they have the option of applying for financial aid or receiving grants. There are federal grants available to students of low-income families that give them this opportunity.

Such grants include the Federal Pell Grant program which issues the greatest number of grants to low-income or homeless students (NC DHSS, 2011). These grants include tuition assistance, room and board, and meal plan assistance. Another grant that is available is the Federal Supplemental education Opportunity Grant. This grant is only accessible to students with considerable financial needs. Nevertheless, athletic and

academic scholarships are given to high school students who perform exceptionally well in sports or in the classroom.

If a high school student does not receive federal aid, grants or a scholarship they will not be able to attend college. In 2014, the average in-state tuition and public fee price for a public four-year college was \$8,893 a year. This can be expensive and seem unrealistic if support is not given to the student. Nevertheless, by not going to college and not obtaining a steady job, high school students become more likely to engage in criminal behavior (Shepard & Booth, 2013). Nevertheless, studies show that it is a parent's responsibility to provide the basic elements that a child needs to survive. This includes food, water, shelter, and clothes. It is also the parent's role to enlist in a child their morals and values which are deemed fit in society (Bassuk et al., 2015). The primary reason why children are taught to respect adults and not steal is because it is ethically right. However, what happens to children who are not raised with this guidance?

If a child does not have adequate shelter or food they will grow up in a more stressful environment than kids who do. Children who are homeless tend to go into survival mode which means that they will do anything necessary to meet their basic needs. This includes stealing from others in order to stay alive or not respecting adults. In many instances, homeless children do not have the same morals as kids who are not homeless because they are forced to fend for themselves. Stealing becomes a daily part of life because homeless children are not left with many other options. Research shows that if a child engages in criminal activity when they are young (under the age of 12), they are

five times more likely to continue to engage in this behavior as they become adults (Berck, 2012).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The enthralling search for causes of child homelessness has yet to be thoroughly expressed. Many researchers have noted that children tend to live a life of homelessness if they are raised by a single parent. Additional factors that can affect this issue are a child being raised with numerous siblings, having a parent who abuses drugs, or having a parent earn below minimum wage. Unfortunately, the exact process of determining whether children will allow their lifestyle affect their future is uncertain. Future research proposals should consider both quantitative and qualitative methods as an approach for understanding child homelessness. For instance, teachers commented that it would be easier for them to address students who are homeless if the student came to them first rather than the teacher assuming. In order for this to take place, teachers are emphasizing that homeless students must have the courage to speak up if they are being neglected.

Oftentimes this does not occur in schools because they do not trust the teacher, the student does not want to go into foster care, or the student does not want to get their parent into trouble (Page, 2016). In order to avoid this scenario, part of the goal of this dissertation was to encourage teachers in the North Carolina school system to become more observant in their classroom. Although this study has assisted teachers in recognizing the signs of student homelessness, there are still steps that they must also be willing to take.

In addition, several teachers and employees indicated that their school or facility has a system in place to respond to homeless students although it could use some revamping. In the future, a qualitative research study would allow more flexibility for exploring different circumstances that warrant different responses. It is important for schools and community organizations to remember that not all students are alike. This means that they must be willing to cater to the needs of students individually and not always collectively. For example, when examining the results of the respondents for this study it was revealed that not all teachers would respond to students the same way if it was discovered that they were homeless. For example, some teachers expressed that they would immediately contact the principal. Others stated that they would immediately contact the counselor. Teachers also stated that they would call the parents to find out more information prior to seeking the response of social workers.

The scaled independent variables (i.e., policy and support) which were used for this study also require further examination. While factor analyses and scale reliability tests deemed these scales to be acceptable, in the future, steps could be taken to strength the overall validity of these measures. It was assumed that it was the goal of all teachers to encourage students to further their education. However, this was also not the case. Many teachers expressed that it is the individual desire of each student whether or not they will further their education. Furthermore, it may prove beneficial if teachers were required to teach the importance of attending college. Whether or not this would increase college enrollment rates in North Carolina would be suited for qualitative inquiry. Therefore, this idea requires further testing, analysis, and evaluation.

Further research endeavors also should consider collecting data from school counselors and the parents of homeless students in North Carolina. Most research about child homeless tends to focus on teachers and organizations that cater to these students. However, very few studies have included the perception of school counselors, school nurses, and parents. It may prove beneficial to examine these viewpoints and then compare to them with the perceptions of this study. By gaining a mutual understanding among principals, teachers, school counselors, students, parents, and researchers this will add value to the development of the growing issue of child homelessness.

### **Conclusions**

Student homelessness is a difficult concept to measure. This is because it can be extremely challenging to identify students who are considered homeless. When addressing child homelessness in North Carolina, it is important for policy makers to understand the true definition of being considered homeless. A person is considered homeless if they do not have live in a fixed residence (Holgersson-Shorter, 2014). Although many people view student homelessness as an outside concern, it becomes a growing problem when these factors affect a student's schoolwork and interactions with others.

This study has revealed how both administrators and teachers play a major role in identifying students who are homeless. It is their responsibility to be observant within their classroom so that when these students are recognized, steps can be taken to assist these children. Service providers and the community as a whole also have a responsibility

to support homeless students and make sure that they have all the resources that they need to become successful later on in life.

This study has also expressed the need for teachers to also encourage at-risk students (i.e. homeless and abused students) to further their education so that they can ultimately support themselves financially after they get out of school. In 2014, the national Bureau of Labor Statistics indicated that 65.9% of students who graduated from high school had enrolled in college (Norris, 2014). In North Carolina, 61% of high school graduates will go directly to college (NC DHHS, 2013). Although this is a decrease in the national average, these statistics do show a willingness of North Carolina students to further their education (more than half). Table 5 indicates that if a student does not further their education after high school, they will earn 60% less than a student who does or end up unemployed (Golden Door Scholars, 2012). By a student continuing their education, they reduce the likelihood that they will be homeless or engage in criminal activity. Table 8 illustrates that by students continuing their education they will earn more money over time than students who do not. This will reduce the likelihood that a student will become homeless or engage in criminal activity because of a lack of financial means.

When a person becomes unemployed they tend to live below the poverty line and seek other means of income. This includes engaging in criminal behavior or illegal activity. As a result, the goal of this dissertation was to first identify how child homelessness in North Carolina has become a growing issue. Secondly, whether or not students who are considered homeless will further their education after high school or live a life of crime. This study has concluded that students who are homeless tend to want

more and desire to continue their education. Teachers play a great role in influencing this decision by giving students the resources that they need to succeed in the classroom and be eligible for college. Thus, it is important for teachers and support agency members to strive to encourage students to reach their fullest potential at all times. By going to college or beyond, a student is less likely to engage in criminal activity and more likely to become a productive member of society (Buckner et al., 2014).

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## Appendix A: Likert 5-Point Scale for Teachers

Please complete and return.

**Background Information:**

*Age:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Ethnicity:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Gender:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Grade Teaching:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Years Teaching:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: If you are answering these questions through email, please **bold** your desired responses.*

**Likert 5 point satisfied/dissatisfied scale**

Please indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the following item:

**My school has policies in place that cater to homeless students?**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Not sure/Not applicable

**Likert 5 point satisfied/dissatisfied scale**

Please indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the following item:

**The participation of your school district in catering to homeless students.**

- Very dissatisfied

- Dissatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Not sure / not applicable

**Likert 5 point agree/disagree scale**

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement:

**I have identified the students within my class that need extra help and have made arrangements to meet their needs.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Not sure/Not applicable

**Likert 5 point agree/disagree scale**

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement:

**I understand how to deal with students that are considered homeless?**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree

- Strongly Agree
- Not sure/Not applicable

### **Likert 5 point agree/disagree scale**

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement:

**I know the difference between an at-risk student and a disruptive student?**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Not sure/Not applicable

### **Likert 3 point frequency scale**

**If a student in my classroom is very disruptive and displaying signs of behavioral problems, I take the time out to talk to the student before punishing them for their actions?**

- Never
- Occasionally
- Frequently
- Not sure / not applicable

**Likert 3 point frequency scale**

**Please indicate how often you have serious conversations with students who are considered homeless?**

- Never
- Occasionally
- Frequently
- Not sure / not applicable

**Likert 3 point frequency scale**

**Have you received any training for responding to homeless students in your classroom since being hired at your school?" In addition, please write down the number of hours your school has spent this academic year training you to recognize homeless students. \_\_\_\_\_**

- Never
- Occasionally
- Frequently
- Not sure / not applicable



## Appendix B: Teacher Survey

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Survey Respondent is: Teacher/Instructional Staff      Support Staff

*Directions:* Please respond to each statement fairly to avoid any biases that may occur from these results. If an area is marked with a D, please provide a written explanation. Your responses will remain confidential and will only be used to advance my dissertation research. Thank you.

Key: E – Exceeds expectations of performance      M – Meets expectations of performance

D – Demonstrates unacceptable performance      N – No basis for judgment

- Place an "X" in the appropriate box.

The Principal/Director...	E	M	D	N
1. Is interested in building a quality program which provides quality education for everyone.				
2. Maintains open lines of communication with employees.				
3. Has policies in place that track homeless students.				
4. Provides routine training to all staff members on the effects of student homelessness.				
5. Treats everyone with respect and compassion regardless of their background and living situation.				
6. Has identified resources that cater to homeless students within your school.				
7. Has a desire to help at-risk students.				
8. Encourages academic excellence from all students.				
9. Has an open line of communication with parents.				
10. Monitors behavioral signs regularly.				

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: School Principal/Administrator Survey

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Survey Respondents Job Position: \_\_\_\_\_

*Directions:* Please respond to each statement fairly to avoid any biases that may occur from these results. If an area is marked with a D, please provide a written explanation. Your responses will remain confidential and will only be used to advance my dissertation research. Thank you.

Key: E – Exceeds expectations of performance M – Meets expectations of performance

D – Demonstrates unacceptable performance N – No basis for judgment

- Place an “X” in the appropriate box.

Your Employees.....	E	M	D	N
1. Are interested in assisting children in need by helping you to build a quality program which provides quality education.				
2. Maintains open lines of communication with you.				
3. Tracks the progress of students regularly and reports to you if students are consistently under-performing .				
4. Makes helpful recommendation for improvement of performance.				
5. Treats everyone with respect and compassion regardless of their background and living situation.				
6. Are knowledgeable of the resources that are made available to students in your school who are considered homeless.				
7. Initiates change for the good of students .				
8. Are trained to help identify homeless students within their care.				
9. Maintains an open line of communication with parents.				
10. Offer extra help to students in need.				

Comments:

## Appendix D: Open-Ended Questions: Follow-Up Questionnaire

1. E-mail follow-up if respondent indicated dissatisfaction or disagreement in any of the above questions.

Example: You indicated that you were dissatisfied with how your school district responds to homeless students. Briefly, could you identify why this is the case?

2. E-mail follow-up if respondent indicated that more effort is needed for them to be effective.

3. If you would like to elaborate on any of the topics covered in this questionnaire, the questionnaire itself, or the survey process, please use the space below.

## Appendix E: Invitation to Homeless Shelters

Date  
Director  
Name of Homeless Shelter  
Address  
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Director,

The primary purpose of this letter is to introduce myself, the case study, and to ask for your support. My name is Cynthia Barfield and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am conducting a case study that involves research in a metropolitan area of North Carolina. My topic focuses on how administrators in the North Carolina community understand and deal with the problem of student homelessness. I have been granted permission to go out into my community in hopes of acquiring valuable information from service providers such as yours. I would like to interview you in hopes of learning more about how your organization offers emergency shelter to homeless children in need.

If you are interested in participating, please see the attached file which contains your informed consent form. The consent form explains your rights as a participant. Attached please also find the five interview questions which will be used to conduct the interview process. The interview itself should only take approximately 30 minutes of your time.

I will be phoning your office the week beginning \_\_\_\_\_ to discuss this in more detail and to possibly set up a time to conduct the interview. Should you have any questions beforehand, please do not hesitate to contact me directly. Again, thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Barfield  
Doctoral Candidate  
Walden University

## Appendix F: Interview Questions-Homeless Shelters

1. How effective is your organization with catering to homeless children?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. In what ways do you think your organization can improve to best meet the needs of homeless children?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What resources are available to homeless children in need that come to your shelter?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Does your organization partner with other local agencies within the community to expand upon your mission?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Based on your experience, what impact does homelessness have on the lives of children?