Understanding African American Teachers’ Perceptions of African American Students Who are Homeless

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The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student’s Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

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UNDERSTANDING AFRICAN AMERICAN IN-SERVICE TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS WHO ARE HOMELESS

by

SHARHONDA DAVIES

Under the Direction of Dr. Chantee Earl

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the perceptions of African American in-service teachers and their beliefs about the academic, social and emotional needs of African American students who were homeless. While research supports the importance of teacher perceptions in building the teacher-student relationship at school (Powers-Costello & Swick, 2008), this research has been limited primarily to white female preservice elementary teachers. There has been little research in the area of African American in-service elementary teachers’ perceptions of students who are impacted by homelessness due to systematic racial disparity and poverty.

This study included three African American female teachers at an elementary school located in the Southeastern United States. The following questions guided this study: (1) How do African American in-service teachers in a public elementary school perceive the academic, social
and emotional needs of African American students who are homeless? (2) What factors influence African American in-service elementary teacher perceptions of African American students who are homeless? An open-ended questionnaire, one-on-one interviews, and audio recorded reflective journals served as the primary sources of data.

Findings from a thematic analysis of the data generated three major themes: (1) It takes a village, (2) student assets, and (3) the role of the teacher. Implications of this study suggest additional support for in-service teachers, supporting parents, the importance of teacher-student relationships and changes in societal beliefs and policy that address circumstances of becoming homeless. Future research should continue to explore the perceptions of African American in-service teachers who teach students who are homeless.

INDEX WORDS: Homelessness, perception, in-service teacher, poverty, race, African American
Understanding African American Teachers’ Perceptions of African American Students Who are Homeless

by

Sharhonda T. Davies

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Degree of

Educational Doctorate

in

Curriculum and Instruction

in

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in the

College of Education and Human Development

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Atlanta, GA
2017
DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my mother Brenda Davies who has continued to support me through every educational endeavor possible. Your strength and sacrifices to ensure that I had what I needed to be where I am today is so appreciated.

Also, to my uncle, Elbert Jackson, I always wanted to make you proud because you encouraged me to always do my best and shoot for the stars! I miss you dearly and hope that I am still making you proud!

To Corey Jones, thank you for always being in my corner since the Summer of 2014 when I decided to pursue this degree. You have been my rock at every twist and turn, and I am truly blessed to have you in my corner.

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1 INTRODUCTION

To teach me...you have to reach me...to reach me you have to know me...

My name is Jasmine. I am eight years old. My family is made up of me, my mom, and my two sisters. At school, I try to be a good student, but I don’t have many friends. I stay quiet when I am supposed to, but I don’t always turn in things like my homework or other assignments. My teacher thinks I do this on purpose and that I am irresponsible...but what no one knows is that we are staying with my aunt because my mom lost her job and we lost our home. I wish my teacher and the other adults at school realized that I would love to have all of my important papers signed and turned in or that completing all of my homework is my goal if I had someone to help me. My mom gets home late from working and my aunt, who we are staying with, well, she just complains about all of “these people” being in the house. I mean, I wish they could see my perspective, I mean that I am a good kid wanting to do my best, but there are so many things blocking my way.

Jasmine's story represents actual experiences of many students who I have personally worked with during my time at Fortune Academy. Her story also depicts an unfortunate reality that close to 2,483,539 homeless students in the U.S. experience (America's Youngest Outcasts: A Report Card on Child Homelessness, 2014). This particular account draws attention to the growing epidemic that is childhood homelessness (Cunningham, 2014). Recent and past statistics indicate that children in families who are homeless are among the fastest growing group in the U.S. population (Yamaguchi, Strawser, & Higgins, 1997). It has been reported that from 2012 to 2013, the number of children experiencing homelessness annually in the U.S. increased by 8% nationally, increased in 31 states and the District of Columbia, and increased by 10% or more in 13 states and the District of Columbia (America's Youngest Outcasts: A Report Card on
Child Homelessness, 2014). But within these numbers and between the lines of Jasmine’s narrative are additional and critical points that should be discussed.

Ingram, Bridgeland, Reed, and Atwell, (2017) noted that student homelessness is difficult to track and measure for a myriad of reasons due to the heterogeneous nature of homelessness. They describe this diversity by explaining:

Some students may be part of a family that has lost their home due to a lack of income, recent trauma, or unexpected tragedy. These families may be living temporarily with other people, in motels or shelters, out of their cars, or on the streets. Other youth may be “unaccompanied,” on their own with no adult supports. These unaccompanied youths may have left their homes and families to escape abuse or poverty, or have been pushed out when they identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, or because they became pregnant and their families no longer accepted them. And while some young people may experience homelessness only briefly before regaining stable housing, for others, homelessness reoccurs intermittently, or becomes a chronic circumstance (p. 10).

However, as diverse as homelessness can appear, there is a deeper argument that would suggest homelessness and poverty in America require an examination of inequities within American society that are experienced more often by People of Color in underserved areas. Miller (2011) identified that in “a number of studies …People of Color- mostly African Americans- are disproportionately represented among families and youth who experience homelessness each
year” (p. 310). To this point deBradley (2015) argued that the social problems of society are deeply rooted and connected to homelessness and race, and that children and families of color who are homeless are an unfortunate example of this racialized process happening in the U.S.

This reality is an important one to address, and when the layers are pulled back to uncover who is heavily represented within the number of students identified as homeless, there is an “inextricable link” between poverty and racial disparities; two of the six leading causes of childhood homelessness (The National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009). This link cannot be denied nor should it be ignored, considering the disproportionate number of Students of Color who are homeless and enrolled in public schools.

A closer look at this disproportion shows that “[minorities] are 1.5 times more likely to be homeless, with African-Americans three times more likely when compared to the overall U.S. population. Although Black people comprise 12.5% of the U.S. population, [sadly] they make up 38% of those in shelters” (America’s Youngest Outcasts, 2014, p. 81). The highest rates of poverty are found in “families headed by single women, particularly if they are Black or Hispanic” (America’s Youngest Outcast, 2014, p. 78). Likewise, “nearly one-quarter of all Black families live in poverty—a rate three times greater than the White population” (America’s Youngest Outcast, 2014, p. 81). Mundy and Leko (2015) specifically researched this with children and highlighted a 2008 United States Bureau of the Census report that indicated “poverty… [was] not distributed equally among groups of children. In 2008, 33.9% of Black children, 30.6% of Hispanic children, and 10.6% of White children lived in poverty” (p. 1).

Over the past 30 years, the U.S. education system has sought ways to improve the educational experiences of students who are impacted by homelessness. The impact of childhood homelessness on educational outcomes indicate that homeless students come to school with
many concerns and unmet basic needs. Samuels, Shinn, and Buckner (2010) noted that students at any level who are homeless “are at significant risk for negative educational, behavioral, and mental health outcomes” (as cited in Chow, Mistry, & Melchor, 2015, p. 641) and “…exhibit delays at four times the rate of children in stable housing, especially in the domains of social–emotional functioning and academic achievement” (Wynne & Ausikaitis, 2013, p. 4). Despite the aforementioned impacts of homelessness on students in the classroom, The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children & Youth [NAEEHCY], 2010 reported that students who are homeless identify school as a place that they feel the safest and have a sense of consistency.

Legislation such as The Stewart B. McKinney Act (1987) aimed to define and address the educational rights of homeless children and youth through a subprogram titled, The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program. The guidelines and mandates for schools and districts under the EHCY Program work to reduce barriers that exist for students who are homeless, such as “lack of transportation, residency restrictions, lack of personal and school records, guardianship problems, and lack of clothing and school supplies” (Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006, p. 38). However, while the McKinney-Vento Act policy intends to eliminate barriers and support the educational needs of students who were homeless, many researchers (de Bradley 2014; de Bradley 2015; Heybach & de Bradley, 2014) question the implications of this legislation in regards to race. Particularly, concerns have been raised regarding the “blanket [approach] to policy implementation and failure to address the racial realities for Students of Color receiving services under McKinney-Vento” (de Bradley, 2015, p. 842). These concerns over the McKinney-Vento Act imply that the policy itself may indirectly reflect societal structures of inequity that fail to view homelessness as a specific issue for marginalized groups. Concerns fur-
ther imply that a generalized outlook does not provide substantial and targeted support for marginalized groups such as African American children who are homeless which can limit or influence those that are expected to enact the policy in schools such as teachers, principals, counselors, and other school-level stakeholders.

The National Center for Homeless Education (2015) reported that during the 2013-2014 school year, the highest number of enrolled students who were homeless in the United States were found in the nation’s public elementary schools in Kindergarten-Fifth grade. Out of a total 1,301,239 enrolled students who were homeless in the U.S., students in grades Kindergarten-Fifth grade had a combined total of 656,436 students. Students in grades first (122,909) and second (114,906) had the highest totals of all grade levels (The National Center for Homeless Education, 2015). Specifically, the state of Georgia (where this study will take place) ranked 49 out of 50 reporting states for the potential risk of childhood homelessness. From 2011-2015 (see Figure 1) there was an increase in the total number of homeless students statewide (Georgia Department of Education [GADOE], 2016). Examining the racialized reality of the numbers, The GA-DOE (2016) Executive Summary of the McKinney Vento Act noted that during the 2014-2015 school year “Black students constituted 57.8% of homeless students, but only 35.7% of the total student population” (p. 5).

Table 1

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<th>State of Georgia Homeless Student Statistics</th>
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<td>School Year</td>
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Out of the most recent total of 39,113 identified cases of students who are homeless in the state of Georgia, the largest number of cases, 2,853, were found in the district where this study will take place. In this district the number of homeless students by subgroups showed that 97.22% percent are Black, 0.18% are American Indian, 0.27% are White, 0.00 are Asian, 1.75% are Hispanic, 0.04 % are Pacific Islander, and 0.54% are Two or More Races (GaDOE, 2016, p. 23). These staggering statistics indicate an imperative need to conduct a critical inquiry of childhood homelessness that specifically questions and examines Students of Color who are homeless, specifically those who are Black.

This critical inquiry can, in turn, provide a critical lens into the implicit and explicit ways in which race plays a role in the social structures, policies, and daily interactions felt by African American students at school. It can further raise awareness to the way that marginalized homeless student populations are discussed in research and policy initiatives. In essence, discussion about African American children who are homeless does not in any way dismiss the importance of the larger issue of childhood homelessness across the nation and the overall impact it has on the children who live through it; however, “failure to engage in a racialized discourse of homeless students’ experiences in schools ignores the institutional structure of racism embedded in school structures” (deBradley, 2014, p. 842).

**Statement of the Problem**

de Bradley (2015) noted that “schools should serve as vital spaces of stability and care” for the students who enter daily (p. 94). This type of consideration for the educational well-being
of students is even more vital when considering the instability of homeless students and particularly those who are African American. However, safety and stability cannot be accomplished if those charged with their care (i.e. administrators, teachers) have a lack of awareness or hold perceptions that are limited and dismissive about that group of students. Research has proven that teachers are an extremely important part of the school success that students experience (Kenyatta, 2012). In that regard, great value should be placed on the voices of African American teachers who work primarily in schools where African American students who are homeless attend. Though the percentage of African American teachers in public schools is far less than White teachers, it is important to note that a greater percentage of Teachers of Color, including African American teachers, teach in the inner city or urban areas. In particular, with Georgia, many African American students who are homeless are enrolled in inner city and urban areas. According to The National Center for Education Information (2011), “more than half of Black and Hispanic teachers are teaching in cities compared with 28% of White teachers” (p. 12).

African American teachers contribute greatly to the success of their African American students in and out of the classroom (Wilder, 2000; Case, 1997; Stanford, 1997; Haynes & Comer, 1990). Likewise, they possess a knowledge of understanding and experience that allows for them to connect with their students in a way that teachers of other races may not understand (Case, 1997). As such, it is especially important to understand and receive the perceptions of African American teachers who interact with African American students who are homeless students.

Powers-Costello and Swick (2011) argued, that “the prevailing culture in which we function can foster a distorted or limited perspective about people who may be under extreme stress” (p. 208). If applied to the school environment, this perspective can become even more complex and distorted for a teacher who is expected to work within systems that do not readily recognize
the connection between race and poverty. However, for African American teachers this connection is recognized, engrained and evident in their practices and understanding their purpose in the classroom as social justice thinkers for the Black students they teach (Stanford, 1997). Over the past decades, policy such as the McKinney-Vento Act have attempted to generalize solutions for all homeless students, but have fallen short by not addressing systemic inequities in American society (de Bradley, 2015; de Bradley, 2014; Heybach & de Bradley, 2014) question. The implications of this concern has a significant influence in the way that teachers approach the learning and understanding of African American students who are homeless. Neito (1999) emphasized, “it [is] important to note that schooling mirrors society” (p. 40). This parallel highlights how homelessness at the macro-level of society can find its way into the micro-level of schooling inequitable through policies, practices and perceptions of adults.

As schools seek to find solutions and strategies to support students who are homeless, it is important to understand the perceptions of all teachers who teach students that face housing instability. Powers-Costello and Swick (2008) noted teacher perceptions and beliefs are important to the teacher-student relationship at school, especially when considering students who are homeless. These perceptions can impact the instructional decisions made for the students they teach in the classroom. Barton (1998) argued that “how teachers view children who are homeless impacts their teaching style with these children” (as cited in Powers-Costello & Swick, 2008, p. 242). It is important for teachers to be reflective and recognize the many sources from which they base their perceptions. Sources such as the media, other research, and personal beliefs held by fellow educators, or family could result in deficit views about the reality and facts of homelessness among teachers and the public (Powers-Costello & Swick, 2011).
Previous research into understanding teacher perceptions has primarily focused on White middle class female preservice teacher beliefs of students who are homeless. There has been very limited research, consisting of a few studies about in-service teacher perceptions and even fewer that have included African American female in-service teacher perceptions of African American students who are homeless. Sealy-Ruiz, Lewis, Toldson and Allen (2014) acknowledged the plethora of evidence in the literature that has demonstrated how the special connection between African American teachers and their Black students positively impacts student achievement and provides a different narrative to the disparities that is commonly discussed in the literature (Irvine & Irvine, 1983; Irvine, 1988; Foster, 1997; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003; Stewart, 2007; Watson & Woods, 2011). It is the level of expectation as a warm demander (Ware, 2006) that makes African American teachers important to the lives and narratives of their Black students, especially those faced with traumatic experiences such as being homeless. As warm demanders African American teachers set expectations lovingly high because they understand the demands of the world that await their students once they leave the classroom.

In reviewing the research on students who are homeless, it is scarce in its discussion of African American students who are homeless and narratives of in-service African American teachers who educate this group of students. This scarcity in the literature further indicates the need to examine African American teachers who serve African American students who are homeless. Past research focuses on the dominate perspective by highlighting the experiences and stories of white teachers. This type of storytelling, “privileges Whites, men, the middle and/or upper class, and heterosexuals by naming these social locations as natural or normative points of reference” (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002, p. 28). Through this research, I argue that this intentional absence ignores the reality of the large numbers of African American students who are
homeless and the voices of minority educators (African American teachers) who can provide a counter-narrative to the dominant narrative that is limited in perspective on this topic.

The voices of African American in-service teachers have significant value in understanding African American students who are homeless. Since a large majority of the homeless student population in public schools are concentrated in urban areas where Teachers of Color, specifically African American teachers, are employed, it is further imperative that the stories and perspectives of this group of teachers speak to their reality. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) noted:

U.S. history reveals that White upper-class and middle-class stories are privileged, whereas the stories of People of Color are distorted and silenced. We further ask, what are the experiences and responses of those whose stories are often distorted and silenced? (p.36)

The aforementioned statement underscores the reality of what has and continues to occur within research on the experiences People of Color and just how dominant narratives have defined what should be celebrated and acknowledged in the literature on teachers and students. Giving voice to African American teachers regarding their experiences with African American students who are homeless will eliminate the guessing and provide substantial and legitimate insight into who these students are and what they need academically, socially and emotionally to be successful in the classroom.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions that African American in-service elementary teachers have concerning the academic, social and emotional needs of African American students who are homeless. This study also sought to understand factors that influenced how
these teachers spoke about their students. Since schools are the microcosms of the larger society, Critical Race Theory served as both a theoretical framework and methodological tool to honor the voices and experiences of African American teachers through counter narratives. These counter narratives described the students in which they interacted in ways that spoke to their uniqueness and strengths, contrary to dominant discourse or research that focus on student deficiencies. This study sought to account for the number of African American teachers who work in classrooms with African American students who are homeless. Their voices about their perceptions and experiences are valuable and will substantially benefit the limited literature on this topic.

The teachers in this study were important contributors to the “silent areas about African Americans in education” (Milner, 2012, p. 6). Research has found that the educational research literature on African American students centers on deficit perspectives irrespective of economic or social circumstances (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Further, Ladson-Billings (2000) posited “that the educational research and literature has been silent on the issue of teaching African American students” (pp. 206-207). To this end, it is important to demystify this deficit paradigm that is prevalent in the educational research on Students of Color, specifically African American students, and highlight the voices and experiences of African American teachers who serve African American students.

**Research Questions**

In an effort to gain greater understanding of in-service African American elementary teacher perceptions of African American students who are homeless, the following research questions guided this research:
1. How do African American in-service teachers in an urban public elementary school perceive the academic, social and emotional needs of their African American students who are homeless?

2. What factors influence African American in-service elementary teacher perceptions of African American students who are homeless?

**Theoretical Framework**

*Race has nothing to do with how to teach my kids living in poverty. What does it matter? Really!* -Elementary teacher (Milner & Laughter, 2014, p. 344)

The theoretical framework is an essential component of “the underlying structure, the scaffolding or frame of [a] study” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 85). This study is framed by a Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework that argues that race is at the center of many decisions made in society that have an adverse impact on People of Color. Race, according to CRT, exists within “structures in the broader society that were created and maintained by a tradition of inherently racists practices” (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 261). Within education, CRT deconstructs and exposes oppressive structures and discourses in the curriculum, instruction, assessments, school funding and educational policies that take deficit, color blind and neutral approaches to the education of Students of Color (Ladson-Billings, 1998). It further “[heightens] awareness about racism and educational inequity” (Kohli, 2009, p. 237).

CRT research focuses on the participants “naming their reality” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p.13), and “[providing] the necessary impetus for significant changes in the way that communities of Color are studied and written about” (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 272). Many CRT scholars (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Milner,
2007; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Tate, 1997) have contributed significantly to the existing tenets of CRT (Milner & Laughter, 2014) as seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Tenets of CRT

CRT as a framework provides a closer look into the intersectionality of race and class and the absence of this kind of discussion about homeless Students of Color. It allows for the researcher to intentionally consider where families and children of Color appear in this vast number of homeless cases in the U.S. and question how current societal structures and systematic injustices influence the views and treatment of Students of Color who are homeless. It further aids in “theorizing, examining, and challenging the manner in which race and racism explicitly and implicitly impact social structures, practices, and discourses” (deBradley, 2014, p. 844) as it relates to perceptions about Students of Color who are homeless.

Soloranzo and Delgado Bernal’s (2001) tenets of CRT (see Figure 1) provide a closer look into the focus of this study. Centrality of race and racism informs the intersection between...
race and class and "the role that racist and classist systems and structures play in perpetuating the status quo and maintaining white privilege" (Milner & Laughter, 2014, p. 343). Challenging the dominant perspective challenges, the majority narratives presented in research that is dominated by the perspectives of White, middle class preservice women teachers. This tenet also assists in questioning how educational research and society speak about and believe in the abilities of Students of Color who are homeless. Commitment to social justice draws attention to the need for teachers who are diverse and racially conscious (Kohli, 2009). Following this tenet can ensure that African American teacher perceptions are heard and valued in the research. This can also serve as a starting place for transforming the way in which homeless Students of Color are educated, discussed, and valued. Valuing experiential knowledge further demonstrates the power and value that is given to African American in-service women teachers when they are able to share their narratives.

Taking an interdisciplinary research approach in this study utilizes different ways of capturing these perceptions from the teachers, other empirical research, and CRT itself. Utilizing this framework in this manner not only makes it a theoretical lens into the perceptions of African American in-service teachers about homeless Students of Color, but a critical methodological structure by which this information is collected and analyzed. Essentially, the stories of the African American in-service teachers can be used as theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical tool to challenge racism and classism and work toward social justice in education.

Significance of the Study

This work was significant to the larger field of education and to a body of research that was limited in its inclusion of African American teachers’ perceptions of African American students who are homeless. It contributed to an effort that strives to “create research and teaching
strategies that acknowledge racial minority teachers as insiders… and as valuable assets in the fight for educational justice” (Kohli, 2009, p. 250). Prevailing studies focus on white preservice teachers thinking and discourse about students who are homeless and are not reflective of the experiences African American teachers who work directly and more frequently with African American students who are homeless. In addition, there was little research on how teachers address African American students who are homeless once they leave the preservice classroom experience and become in-service teachers within schools. For this reason, it was imperative to research and understand the perspectives of in-service teachers, particularly African American in-service teachers, who were engaged in the daily work of educating and supporting students who are experiencing homelessness.

Milner (2012) encouraged future work that would continue efforts to interrupt and correct the damaging perceptions of Black teachers. He further added that his hope is that “researchers, theoreticians, and practitioners continue exploring Black teachers’ perceptions and practices, and practitioners continue engaging in dialogue that trouble and disrupt what we know and what we think we know about teachers and especially Black teachers” (p. 44). This perspective is foundational to this research as I served as both an African American Researcher and Educator who works with other African American teachers and students who are homeless.

This work encouraged local schools and school districts to revisit generalized policies outlined for homeless students' educational well-being so that current practices can be revisited in order to ensure that teachers of students who are homeless are well informed, receive adequate resources, and are knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities in teaching them.

This work also called attention to the ways in which teachers are being prepared and informed to work with homeless populations in pre-service programs (Kim, 2013) as well as in-
service professional development (Chow et al., 2015; Powers-Costello & Swick, 2008). Furthermore, this study significantly added to the larger field of inquiry about in-service teacher perceptions of students who are homeless and will hopefully emphasize and encourage the need for ongoing research of preservice and in-service.

**Assumptions**

My assumptions regarding this study centered on the premise that African American teachers would be more aware of the issues that impact African American students who are homeless (Kohli, 2009). These assumptions were further impacted by the research that spoke to the complexities that teachers faced while educating students who were homeless and addressing their social and emotional needs in the classroom. However, I believed that the teachers would also provide a high level of empathy with this group of students. Milner (2012) noted that “…Black teachers maintain high expectations for their students… and they empathized with rather than pitied the students…” (p. 30). My assumption was that these teachers would develop a better understanding of the intersectionality of race and class as it related to African American students who were homeless. I would argue that these teachers have lived a racialized experience and have a higher level of awareness regarding race and its systemic impact in our society. They would further understand how race and racism play a factor in the perception of African American students in classrooms. While I do not believe that these teachers will hold a similar view about African American students who are homeless like the majority of preservice and in-service teachers from previous research, Solorzano and Yosso (2002) cautions researchers not to assume that minority teachers will not share ideas similar to dominant perspectives on African American students. They discussed the reality that some People of Color engage in “minority majoritarian
storytelling” (p. 28). This type of storytelling occurs when People of Color share stories or beliefs similar to “a majoritarian story” which in CRT, “is a story that privileges whites, men, the middle and/or upper class, and heterosexuals by naming these social locations as natural or normative points of reference” (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002 p. 28).

Kohli (2009) noted that previous experience with Teachers of Color reveals an awareness “of the trauma that racism can cause students” (p. 236). With current movements such as Black Lives Matter and the experiential accounts as African Americans in this country, I believed that teachers in this study would provide valuable narratives that included heightened awareness and sensitivity to the issue of race and homelessness among their students. While I believed that there would be some level of awareness expressed by the teachers (Kohli, 2009) in this study, this research did not assume that being an African American teacher would guarantee complete understanding or a better outlook of African American students who were homeless.

**Overview of the Study**

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an overview of the study. It included an a.) introduction with background information about the problem, b.) research questions, c.) purpose statement, d.) theoretical framework, e.) significance, f.) assumptions and g.) definitions of terms. Chapter two will provide an extensive review of the relevant literature for this study. Chapter three will outline the methodological approach for the study inclusive of: a.) participants and setting, b.) instruments of data collection and analysis and c.) procedures. Chapters four will present the findings with salient themes. Chapter five will discuss: a.) study conclusions, b.) educational implications, c.) suggestions for future research, and d.) final thoughts by the researcher.

**Definition of Key Terms**

The following terms were used frequently with this study. Aware that in other studies there
may be gradations of the meaning of the terms than what is reflected here, the researcher preferred the following meanings for the terms:

**Black:** “people of acknowledged African descent” (Tatum, 2017, p. 95). Tatum acknowledged that “African American is also a commonly used term” (p. 95). Both terms are used interchangeably throughout this paper.

**Homelessness:** The education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act includes a more comprehensive definition of homelessness. This statute states that the term ‘homeless child and youth’ means:

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

(B) includes: (i) children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement; (ii) children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a private or public place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings... (iii) children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings, and (iv) migratory children...who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii). McKinney-Vento Act sec. 725(2); 42 U.S.C. 11435(2) (Retrieved online from http://www.nationalhomeless.org/fact-sheets/Whois.pdf)
**In-service teacher:** Teachers who are currently certified and teaching in a classroom; experienced teachers

**Perception:** “Perceptions are thoughts, beliefs and opinions of someone or something. They are also thought of as a way a person or group of people understand, or interpret something” (Norman, 2016, p. xii; Miller, Kuykendall, & Thomas, 2013)

**Poverty:** Jensen (2009) defined poverty as “persons with income less than deemed sufficient to purchase basic needs-food, shelter, clothing, and other essentials-are designated as poor” (pp. 5-6). He also acknowledged poverty “as a chronic and debilitating condition that results from multiple adverse synergetic risk factors and affects the mind, body, and soul” (p. 6).

**Race:** “Notion of a distinct biological type of human being, usually based on skin color or other physical characteristics” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 170).

**Student/Person of Color:** “individuals of indigenous, African, Latina/o, Asian/Pacific Island descent” (Kohli, 2009, p. 250).

**Urban area:** Noguera (2003) explained that the term urban is less likely to be employed as a geographic concept used to define and describe physical locations than as a social or cultural construct used to describe certain people and places” (p. 23). He also suggested that “demographers and planners may regard any neighborhood or residence within a standard metropolitan area as urban” specific to socioeconomic, race and terms such as inner-city, poor, and non-White.
2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to understand African American in-service teachers’ perceptions of the academic, social and emotional needs of their African American students who are homeless. This chapter will present a review of the literature relevant to the purpose of this study. Literature for this review was selected in a careful search of the university’s online library databases. A basic search for the phrase "teacher perceptions of homeless students" began the initial phase of searching for literature. This search retrieved numerous articles. To minimize this number, I applied a criterion of “Scholarly (peer-reviewed), “Academic Journals,” with a date range from 2006-2016. This particular date range was chosen to include the most recent information on the research topic. The search adjustment returned an abundant number of articles. To reduce this number, an advanced search was conducted using the following terms and phrases, "African American in-service teacher perceptions or beliefs" AND "homeless Students of Color" AND "elementary school." This search returned a reduced number of articles, but still too large to thoroughly review. I continued to narrow the search phrases to lessen the number of articles and to ensure relevancy. To do this, I added these additional phrases to the existing advanced search, “elementary classroom teachers” AND “public school teachers” AND “homeless students” AND “highly mobile students” AND “perceptions or beliefs or attitudes or views.” Adding the additional phrases minimized the article selection significantly, and a close review of article titles and abstracts was done to determine if the articles returned from the search could be used in this review.

After careful review of the retrieved articles, I noted that there were very few articles related to the study's specific focus on African American in-service teacher perceptions of African American students who were homeless. Topics related to educating homeless students, homeless
education policy (HEP), urban teacher education, students in poverty, social justice, and White preservice and in-service teachers use of critical pedagogy were retrieved. It is also important to note that the search returned many articles related to perceptions on student poverty; however, those articles were not included. There have been several questions on the separation between students who experience poverty and those experiencing homelessness. As will be revealed later in a section of this chapter, poverty is a leading cause of homelessness and students and families living in poverty experience similar personal and educational outcomes (Masten, Fiat, Labella, & Strack ,2015). However, Miller (2011), Chow, Mistry, and Melchor (2015), and Biggar (2001) discussed the importance of considering the extent of homelessness separately because of the specific risks and impact on students and families. Likewise, I believe that by not viewing childhood homelessness as the major epidemic further complicates the challenge of defining and understanding it. By considering a focus solely on perceptions of homeless students I bring needed focus and attention back to a group of children who are considered the “most invisible and neglected individuals in our nation” (America's Youngest Outcasts: A Report Card on Child Homelessness. ,2014, p. 10).

Focusing specifically on literature about students who were homeless revealed just how limited the research is concerning African American in-service teacher perceptions about African American students who are homeless. This gap in the literature only attested to the need for further research into this area and indicated some inconsistencies and neutral discussions about homelessness and education that did not give specific consideration for African American students and perspectives from African American in-service teachers. Kim (2013), Torres (2003) and Swick (1996) acknowledged a general lack of research on in-service teacher perceptions of homeless students as well. In many cases the literature on teacher perceptions of students who
were homeless focused on preservice teachers’ who were white, middle class women (Zelenka, 2016; Mundy & Leko, 2015; Kim, 2013; Kim, 2012). There were quantitative studies about teacher attitudes or perceptions of in-service teachers (Brown, 2012; Cartner, 2007; Nabors, Rofey, Sumajin, Lehmkuhl & Zins, 2005). However, because this was a qualitative case study that took importance in valuing the voices and experiences of African American in-service teachers, it was important to locate studies that did the same. Norman (2016), Powers-Costello and Swick (2008), Torres (2003), Swick (1995), Swick (1996) were some of the few qualitative studies specific to in-service teacher perceptions of students who were homeless. An effort to review all of these and other sources helped to inform the organization for this literature review into the following sections:

1. Defining Childhood Homelessness
   a. Who is represented?
2. Impact of Homelessness
   a. On parents and teachers
3. Educational Policies for Students who are Homeless
4. Teacher Perceptions and African American Students
5. Teacher Perceptions of Students who are Homeless
6. African American Teachers in the Classroom
7. Theoretical Framework

**Defining Childhood Homelessness**

To gain an understanding of how educators view students who are homeless in the classroom, it is imperative first to understand the perception of homelessness and children who are
homeless in the literature. This understanding should be obtained through a comprehensive definition and discussion of homelessness (“America’s Youngest Outcasts: A Report Card on Child Homelessness,” 2014). Previous research into understanding homelessness has uncovered various explanations and complications of how homelessness is defined (Haber & Toro, 2004; Cunningham, Harwood, & Hall, 2010; America’s Youngest Outcasts: A Report Card on Child Homelessness”, 2014). The National Center on Family Homelessness at American Institutes for Research discovered that despite various reauthorizations of federal policies concerning homelessness, there currently still appears to be no “unified federal definition” of homelessness (p. 9). Their work is “based on the most recent federal data that comprehensively counts homeless children” (“America’s Youngest Outcasts: A Report Card on Child Homelessness,” 2014, p. 6). The National Center on Family Homelessness at American Institutes for Research indicated a variance in the definition of homelessness, creating “confusion in states, cities, agencies, and the public regarding estimates of homeless populations and eligibility for services and housing” (p. 9). Haber and Toro (2004) echoed this sentiment in their literature review and organized their review of homelessness into three broad categories: a.) adults who were homeless, b.) families that were homeless and c.) adolescents who were homeless and on their own. The category of families that were homeless was important to the discussion because they noted: “children who are homeless are almost always embedded with a family” (p. 133). This was a significant finding that addressed the difficulty of defining this category because in some cases where these families were “doubled up with extended family and friends,” these families did not consider themselves homeless (p. 126).
Despite the challenges to define homelessness, there exist at least two definitions of homelessness that are most widely used. Cunningham et al.’s (2010), examination of the existing homeless policy, the McKinney-Vento EHCY Program, also included a discussion about two of the most used definitions offered by HUD and the United States Department of Education. Their research indicated that though both entities worked to help homeless students, both “provided fundamentally different services based on [the] two different definitions of what constitutes homeless” (p. 3). The notable difference that was shared between the two definitions was that HUD’s definition was “narrower” than those of the Departments of Education (ED), Health and Human Services (HHS), Labor, Justice, and Agriculture (America’s Youngest Outcasts: A Report Card on Child Homelessness, 2014, p.9). Cunningham et al. (2010) noted that HUD’s definition also included “children doubled up due to hardship or loss of housing and migrant workers and their children who are living in the conditions described previously. [Furthermore, it also includes] children temporarily living in motels” (p. 3). In addition, America’s Youngest Outcasts: A Report Card on Child Homelessness (2014), highlighted HUD’s definition expansion in 2009 by the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH). HEARTH included “people fleeing domestic violence as well as some children and youth considered homeless under other federal definitions” (p.9). It also included children “who [were] homeless [and] qualified under various” sections of policy one being the McKinney-Vento Act and the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.

The language of defining homelessness in both HUD and the McKinney-Vento Act are similar, but the McKinney-Vento Act’s definition is referenced frequently in various research (Cunningham et al., 2010; America’s Youngest Outcasts: A Report Card on Child Homelessness, 2014; Masten et al., 2015) about homeless students and children. Thus, this review will use the
McKinney-Vento definition because it is a policy that will be explored later in this review. The McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness states that individuals or families are considered homeless if they are:

1.) lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; 2.) living in a residence that is a public or private place not designed for human beings (e.g., car, park, abandoned building); 3.) living in a shelter providing temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels), congregate shelters and transitional housing; 4.) an individual who resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting as institution where he or she temporarily resided; 5.) an individual or family

Varied definitions of homelessness related to children or youth was discussed in a review of laws and school-based service delivery for homeless students from unstable environments (Sulkowski & Joyce-Beaulieu, 2014). Sulkowski and Joyce-Beaulieu (2014) referenced the

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act [definition of] homeless youth as individuals who are ‘not more than 21 years of age . . . for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative and who have no other safe alternative living arrangement.’ They also noted the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Improvements Act, “the first and only federal law that directly pertain[ed] to the education of homeless youth.” In this Act youth homelessness was defined “as youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (p. 711).

It is important to note that in 2001 there was a reauthorization of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Improvements Act under the No Child Left Behind Act which intended to provide revisions and clarity to the definition of what qualified students as homeless.
The U.S. Department of Education (2004) noted that students

who do not have a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and find themselves in any of the following situations: waiting for a foster care placement or being abandoned in a hospital, staying in a shelter, abandoned building, or motel, staying at a campground or inadequate trailer park, living out of a car or in a bus or train station, staying with friends or relatives as a result of no housing, staying in any public or private space not designed for or used as a regular sleeping place for human beings, or staying in any of the described locations because they are from migratory families” should be considered homeless (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006, pp. 39-40).

This review of literature that defined homelessness offered insight into the definition and varied meaning of homelessness. The explanations offered by The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act and the McKinney-Vento Act offered insight and examples of youth homelessness. Additionally, the literature lends itself to further considerations in the research to define the groups of children and youth who are homeless and in urban settings. Consideration for this specific group of students who are homeless would provide greater analysis and targeted focus into what it means to be homeless and clearer understanding of the experiences that these students go through this in turn could address the barriers that they face.
Becoming homelessness does not have one root cause nor does it bare the blame of one person. It can occur for many different reasons and in some cases with multiple causes. The National Center on Family Homelessness at American Institutes for Research noted six major reasons for homelessness among young children:

(1) the nation's high poverty rate; (2) a lack of affordable housing across the nation; (3) the continuing impacts of the Great Recession; (4) racial disparities; (5) the challenges of single parenting; and (6) the ways in which traumatic experiences, especially domestic violence, precede and prolong homelessness for families ("America's Youngest Outcasts: A Report Card on Child Homelessness", 2014).

Chronic poverty was a key cause of homelessness discussed by Swick and Williams (2010), in their study to understand experiences of homeless single mothers and their children. They stated “poverty not only perpetuates the onset of chronic homelessness but also exacerbates the problems associated with being homeless” (p. 49).

Hinton and Cassel (2013) noted additional reasons for becoming homeless from their study to understand the experiences of young mothers and their children ages four to eight. In their explanation the mothers stated the following reasons for becoming homeless: “a.) unhappy childhood, b.) teenage pregnancy, c.) multiple children, d.) high school dropout, e.) drug use, f.) spouse (father) abandonment, and g.) jobless” (p. 460). Though not all of the eight participants noted these as consistent reasons for their homelessness: their understanding and experiences
with homelessness provide first-hand accounts and also mirrors some of the causes listed in previous research cited. These causes can have a profound impact on the daily classroom tasks and expectations set for students who are homeless.

Who Is Represented. Not only is it essential to consider how childhood homelessness is defined and its causes. It is equally important to know who these children are and their statistical presence in the research of defining and experiencing homelessness. Understanding the statistics behind who is represented in the research and discussion of students who are homeless is imperative according to Milner (2014). Milner (2014) discussing homelessness in urban communities, argued that the difficulty in defining homelessness has caused the issue of homelessness to seem "a much smaller epidemic than it actually is…" (p. 5). His argument stemmed from work by Finley and Diversi (2010), "that the numbers of homeless individuals have been distorted, leading those in society to believe the fallacy that the homelessness situation is not as bad as it seems" (p. 5). Why is this significant? When we don’t recognize the totality of who homelessness affects, there is a failure to recognize just how varied the circumstances of homelessness can be (Miller, 2011,). Yamaguchi, Strawser, and Higgins’ (1997), article about implications for teachers who teach students who are homeless, noted that no one is excluded from being homeless based on race, gender, educational level and background. In this same article they mentioned a report given to Congress in 1995 by the U.S. Department of Education. In this report it was stated “that of the school aged children and youth (ages 7-17) who were homeless, 57% were elementary students…” (p. 91). This is much similar to current statistics from The National Center for Homeless Education (2015), who reported that during the 2013-2014 school year, the highest number of enrolled students who were homeless in the United States were found in the nation’s public
elementary schools, in grades Kindergarten to Fifth grade. Out of a total 1,301,239 enrolled students who were homeless in the U.S., students in grades Kindergarten to Fifth grade represented a combined total of 656,436 students. Students in grades first (122,909) and second (114,906) had the highest totals of all grade levels (The National Center for Homeless Education, 2015).

However, looking deeper beyond these general statistics, Miller (2011) acknowledged that in “a number of studies … People of Color- mostly African Americans- are disproportionately represented among families and youth who experience homelessness each year” (p. 310). Haber and Toro (2004) echoed that sentiment by acknowledging that “African Americans and Latinas, tend to be heavily overrepresented among families that are homeless, especially in urban settings where most family shelters are found” (p. 135).

There have been years of complication to accurately identify the number of students and families who are homeless because not all of them reside in shelters that report to agencies. Cunningham and Henry (2007) estimated between 2.4 and 10 million people were homeless on a given night in the U.S. during the time of their research; however, not all individuals had been identified. Geographically Tobin (2016) noted, “…. experts believe that homelessness may actually be more prevalent in rural areas…” of the U.S. (p. 198). However, the majority of research of counts that are taken for people who are homeless are mostly done in cities because of the accessibility of shelters and other agencies. What that implies is with the vast number of individuals who are homeless being between 2.4 and 10 million, one can only imagine the actual number of children that are impacted. Not to mention consideration for the countless other children who have not been included in the count. Some children may fly under the radar because they are in doubled-up situations where they are sleeping on the couch or in the home of close family or
friend for the time being (Miller, 2011). Miller further discussed this issue by presenting the statistics from a HUD survey. The survey suggested, "that the annual shelter and transitional housing program usage [included] about 1.5 million people…40% of whom [were] African American…" (p. 310).

In considering the question of who is represented in the research and numbers of childhood homeless cases, the literature on the labels used to identify students was examined. Instead of following a typical situational approach that uses homelessness as the initial identifier of children who are facing homelessness, a “justice-centered approach,” which recognizes structural inequalities to address the children as students first and the situation of homelessness second was critical. This type of consideration was also considered and applied in work by deBradley (2015) with youth who were homeless in Chicago. Most of the youth from her research "did not see themselves as homeless. Instead she argued that "referring to students’ situations, can broaden and reframe the discourse by placing the student first; rather than saying someone is 'homeless', it can be framed as an individual experiencing 'housing instability’" (deBradley, 2015, p. 100).

The importance of addressing the student first places emphasis on the student or their family living within systemic conditions of housing instability.

**Impact of Homelessness**

**On Students.** In this section of the review, I detail previous research and studies that have focused on understanding the impact of homelessness on students. I also acknowledge research that has identified the effects of homelessness on the teacher and parents of these students. Understanding the impact of homelessness, it is essential. The affects of homelessness permeate students’ academic, social and emotional lived experiences. By acknowledging the impact of home-
lessness on the academic, social and emotional well-being of students, it is also necessary to understand the critical role that teacher perceptions play in their understanding of the conditions of homelessness and how it might impact a teacher’s engagement with students and families who are homeless (Powers-Costello & Swick, 2011).

Chow et al. (2015) noted in their study concerning the impact of homelessness on students social and emotional well-being and teacher competencies, that risk factors experienced by homeless students are similar to those who live in high poverty situations. Chow et al.’s (2015) finding mirrored a sentiment shared by Cunningham et al. (2010) in their discussion of the policies for homelessness. They discussed the difficulty in “disentangling” the circumstances of children who are in chronic poverty and those who are homeless. Expanding on this idea, Miller (2011) critically analyzed student homelessness through a review of literature. In his findings, he acknowledged that "homeless students' conditions are not discrete from residentially stable low-income students’ conditions, conversations about the service and outcome of the two groups find considerable intersection" (p. 326). Masten, Fiat, Labella, and Strack (2015) also indicated that conditions experienced in extreme poverty by students were also shared by students facing homelessness. However, Tobin (2016) acknowledged that the research addressing whether “students experiencing homelessness fare worse at school than their housed peers from low-socioeconomic stats (SES) backgrounds” is inconclusive (p. 198).

Schmitz, Wagner, and Menke’s (2001) mixed methods study examined the effects of poverty and homelessness with students 8 to 12 years old. In their discussion they stated, “…homelessness is a life event having traumatic effects beyond poverty” (p. 69). They also noted that the conditions of homelessness only compound the issues of living in poverty. Miller’s (2011) analysis of student homeless research cited several scholars (Anyon, 2005; Berliner,
2006, 2009; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Evans, 2004; Jencks & Mayer, 1990; Mayer & Jencks, 1989; Sirin, 2005) who acknowledged that children who experience homelessness are a result of the effects of poverty. However, he discussed other studies that found no significant difference in students who live in poverty and those who experience homelessness. One study conducted by Ziesemer, Marcoux, and Manvell (1994) in Wisconsin noted no distinct difference in students who were homeless and those living in poverty. This study compared the academic outcomes for 145 elementary homeless students and 142 students living in low-income housing. They found no differences in academic outcomes for both groups of students. However, there were several other scholars that Miller discussed that posited differences between students in poverty and those experiencing homelessness. This difference according to Miller was based on the high mobility rate, age, and physical situation of students who are homeless.

Chow et al. (2015) emphasized that students who are homeless are still battling “risks and stress [only] unique to homelessness” (p. 642). Miller (2011) echoed this idea, arguing that students who are homeless require multiple sites of comprehensive and specific support. He also added that students who are homeless have higher rates of school mobility and other academic and social and emotional needs that are beyond the scope of students who are in low-income situations. The impact of these risks and stressors due to periods of high mobility can result in students who are homeless having lower reading and math success. It was also noted by Shaw and Goode (2008) that “young children subjected to experiencing homelessness are ‘twice as likely to experience learning disabilities and three times as likely to experience an emotional disturbance’ compared to housed children” (as cited in Hinton & Cassel, 2013, p. 457). They also cited Samuels, Shinn, & Buckner (2010) who emphasized that in comparison to children who live in “normal” housing situations, children who are homeless “exhibit higher levels of internalizing
(depression and anxiety) and externalizing (aggressive, hyperactive, and noncompliant) behavior” (p. 642). Likewise, Anooshian’s (2003) work on the social isolation of homeless students, noted that some students who are homeless also show feelings of withdrawal which can also have an impact on their academic success. Another effect of homelessness on children is a lack of basic needs not being met such as consistent meals and clothing. A lack of these things can impact a student’s ability to stay focused in school and give their all each day (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006).

Also, Milner (2014) cited barriers that exist to impact students who are homeless at school based on a study conducted by Mawhinney-Rhoads and Stahler (2006). They found restrictions in the form of residency, guardianship, transportation to and from school, and challenges with socio-emotional needs. Milner also discussed the difficulty many students who are homeless have with interacting with others students due to concerns and worries about their living situation. Masten et al. (2015) echoed those sentiments and discussed that the educational risks for students experiencing homelessness can include numerous absences from school and constant school changes. In comparison to students with stable living situations, the health of children who are homeless is concerning due to limited access of preventative healthcare (Hendricks & Barkley, 2012).

It is apparent that the impact of homelessness on students has devastating effects on their academic, social and emotional well-being. However, research also acknowledges the perseverance that students who are homeless possess despite the barriers and obstacles they encounter. It is imperative that the resilience of many of these students and their families is included and celebrated in the research. (Aviles de Bradley, 2015; Mohan & Shields, 2014). However, Masten et al. (2015) identified this lack of focus on the resilience of homeless students and their families as
a major gap in the research. They argued that a majority of research spoke to "the educational risks associated with homelessness than on the educational successes…and their resilience" (p. 325). Similarly, an article by Douglass (1996) that reviewed current literature about children who were homeless, noted that there has almost always been an exclusive focus of homeless educational research on deficits and psychological issues of the students, while neglecting to discuss areas of strength. Milner (2014) also agreed about the importance of acknowledging that students who are homeless are able to push through their circumstances to beat the odds and succeed. Masten et al. (2015) identified this as a gap in the research. They also added that "to date, little research exists on the effectiveness of any interventions designed to promote school success or learning for [students who are homeless]" (p. 325).

In some cases, the perseverance shown by students who are homeless have come via the support of their family, school, and community. Hinton and Cassel’s (2013) research to understand the experiences of homeless single mothers and their young children provided one example of this. In their study, they described how one mother noted that even though they were living in a shelter, she felt that her child was benefiting from the constant routine associated with the stability of living in the shelter. Masten et al. (2015) continued the conversation by identifying possible interventions such as “summer programs, computer training, and high-quality early childhood programs…” that could be used to promote or support resilience for these students (p. 325).

The lack of hope or focus on the resilience of the students who experience homelessness is another reason why this study is essential. Allowing the teachers from Fortune to speak about their beliefs of these students can provide a counter-narrative to what is most commonly heard in the research of homeless students.
On Parents and Teachers. Not only has researched detailed the impact of homelessness on students, but researchers have also acknowledged the affect of homelessness on parents and teachers as well. Chow, Mistry, and Melchor (2015) acknowledged that teachers could be impacted emotionally by the homeless experiences that their students face. From their findings, they noted that teachers "may experience [emotional turmoil] when working with vulnerable students, such as those experiencing homelessness" (p. 654). Teachers are also faced with challenging instructional decisions, with the transition of students who are homeless. Hallett, Low, and Skrla (2015) acknowledged challenges faced by teachers in the classroom, in their qualitative case study concerning initiatives for homeless students. They noted that "...inconsistent enrollment that [required] them to repeat lessons and manage disruptive behavior" proved to impact their daily instruction (p. 695). They suggested that it was important "for teachers to also receive support and strategies in how to work with families experiencing homelessness, including training in how to regulate their emotions" (p. 654).

In regards to parents, Holgersson-Shorter (2010) shared a point of view by Sarah Benjamin, an education advocate for the board of Cooperative Educational Services in Eastern Suffolk County, NY. She noted that parents are also traumatized by their homeless experience and are under significant mental stress. This impairs their cognitive thinking and leads to a survival approach of fight, flight, or freeze. Hinton and Cassel (2013) echoed this thought from their study with eight families living in a homeless shelter by acknowledging "homelessness by itself is considered a powerful source of stress [for] parents with young children" (p. 457). They also uncovered that the conditions of living in a shelter often impeded on the parents’ sense of control and independence. In addition, Yamaguchi, Strawser, and Higgins’ (1997) article about implications
for teachers who teach students who are homeless suggested that dealing with the stresses of being homeless also causes parents angst about losing custody of their children. In some cases, like a study conducted by Koblinksy, Morgan, and Anderson (1997), mothers who are homeless tend to show "…less warmth and [provide] their children with less cognitive and social stimulation" (as cited in Haber & Toro, 2004, p. 136).

Parents of children who are homeless can go through considerable amounts of stress to ensure the safety and well-being of their families. Haber and Toro (2004) cited qualitative research from Baynard (1995) that showed that "many young mothers who are homeless rely on their children as a coping strategy for enhancing their motivation..." (p. 136). Some studies suggest that it should never be a question of how much parents of children who are homeless love and want the best for their children. Instead, it should be recognized that parents are resilient and want the best outcome for their children. Swick and Williams’ (2010) work with single mothers who were homeless acknowledged that parents desire to do what is right for their children by focusing much of their attention on their children. They also noted that these mothers, in particular, though without typical middle class parenting skills or resources, were skilled at developing creative responses to the needs of their children. Whether a parent has been impacted negatively or positively by homelessness, in all cases some level of support is needed and recommended. Research has supported the idea of providing support for the parent through classes or counseling sessions.

**Educational Policies for Students Who are Homeless**

The reality of homelessness and the barriers that impact students and their families are unfortunate and require intentional courses of action. This next section discusses a review of the literature concerning homeless education policies (HEPs) that have spanned more than twenty
years in addressing the educational experiences of students who are homeless. In connection with this study, a review of the literature about HEPs will speak to the portrayal of students who are homeless and addressing their needs. In a broader context, this impacts how schools and teachers interpret or perceive the work they are charged to do.

In 1987 “Congress authorized the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act to protect the rights of homeless students and to ensure that they receive[d] the same quality and appropriate education that other students receive[d]” (Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006, p. 37). A separate subsection, Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY), was specifically written into the Act to "provide state and federal funding, mandating certain actions by any state that [agreed] to accept funding under the act" (deBradley, 2014, p. 841). Before 1987 legislation attempting to address the problem of homelessness for individuals or children and families did not exist. The Act sought to address the barriers experienced by children and adolescents who were homeless and also contribute to their academic success (Cunningham et al., 2010; Markward, 1994; Cochrane, 1990). According to work from Project Hope (2008) and (Hendricks & Barkley, 2012), between 1988 and 1994 the Act went through various revisions in hopes of addressing issues of noncompliance through incentive programs (Markward & Biros, 2001). These revisions still could not tackle the barriers related to providing optimal support for schools and personnel working with students who are homeless.

However, through a major revision in 2001-2002 under No Child Left Behind, the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program was reauthorized to mandate programming that correctly identified students who were homeless, eliminated barriers related to school enrollment and attendance, and offered varied services that would promote school success (Hendricks & Barkley, 2012; Cunningham et al., 2010; Chow et al., 2015). Within
this same timeframe, expectations by the U.S. Department of Education required that schools provide data on students who were homeless that included: "number of identified homeless students, types of services provided, barriers to education, and student reading and math scores" (Chow et al., 2015, p. 643). It is important to note that this reauthorization included groups of children in pre-school and those living in domestic violence shelters, groups that were not previously considered before then (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

The Act also mandated equal access to a quality education for homeless students and prohibited exclusion or separation of students based on their housing status. Likewise, the provisions of the Act were written so that students would benefit from mainstream experiences in the classroom and not be isolated and outcasted. It allowed students who became homeless to “either continue attending their schools of origin, which they attended before losing their housing or enroll in the schools closest to their shelters or other new places of temporary residence” (Miller, 2011, p.317). Moreover, under the McKinney-Vento EHCY, states were responsible for having a state coordinator and schools charged with having a local homeless school liaison (Hendricks & Barkley, 2012; Cunningham et al., 2010). This liaison would be responsible for reviewing attendance concerns for students as well as be responsible for providing professional development for teachers and principals aimed at addressing issues of sensitivity and awareness and outlining student rights, needs and concerns. (Cunningham et al., 2010).

Though the McKinney-Vento Act intends to address the educational well-being and stability of students who are homeless, it has come against great criticism and critique concerning its effectiveness. The EHCY Program had done little to address teacher roles and responsibilities in attending to the specific and varied needs of homeless students (Chow et al., 2015; deBradley, 2014; Cunningham et al., 2010; Markward, 1994).
According to the expectations set by the McKinney Vento Act, every school that has a homeless population is expected to have a liaison. de Bradley (2015) noted in her research to understand school support of homeless youth in two Chicago public high schools, that although both schools had adults working as homeless liaisons there were other “…structural factors inherent in the school system that limit[ed] their ability to do so” (p. 56). These individuals were not able to adequately serve in their role because they were either unaware of their responsibilities, selected for the position based on another job they already held in the school, or not fully supported in their efforts by district liaisons. Other liaisons identified in her research noted many hours of paperwork to be completed to ensure students received services such as free breakfast and bus tokens or cards for transportation to and from school. In addition, there was a lack of support from administration to help identify students who were homeless in the building and would in some cases turn students away from enrolling.

In addition to de Bradley’s research, others such as Chow et al. (2015) and Heybach and de Bradley (2014) have noted the critical role that schools play in the stability that students who are homeless experience, they mainly emphasized the role and knowledge of the teacher in that process. Swick’s (1996) research highlighted the experiences of South Carolina teachers as they participated in action research activities to help them improve their practices in the classroom to support the needs of their students who were homeless. In these experiences, teachers volunteered at shelters for abused mothers and their children. The teachers also identified ways that they could become advocates for students who were homeless and shared their experiences with other teachers at their school. Likewise, Powers-Costello and Swick (2011) noted teachers’ efforts to become more involved with their homeless students and families through food banks and
other outreach opportunities. These efforts were only useful because of the support of the entire school and community.

However, despite these experiences, Chow et al. (2015) determined that there still exists a lack of information about the role of teachers in working with homeless populations and the support offered by the school. Cunningham (2014) echoed this same point in his research to understand how the McKinney-Vento Act was being implemented in a Texas suburban high school, noting the definite gaps regarding how well schools were implementing the policies for homeless students and addressing their needs. This weakness or lack of research is even wider at the elementary level. However, Cunningham’s (2014) research about a suburban high school is offered for insight. His research indicated that there was a lack of district support and school needs related to homeless students and were not routinely addressed. District support was provided only in response to students in crisis, absent of proactive measures. In addition, there was insufficient training of teachers and staff regarding accurate identification of students who were homeless within the school building. de Bradley (2015) noted the importance of teacher training occurring within two months of the school year beginning to ensure that teachers are well aware of the needs of their students. Similarly, Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel’s (2006) summary of the 2001 reauthorization of the McKinney-Vento Act noted difficulties in “identifying homeless students, lack of awareness of the needs of homeless students and families, staff turnover, high staff to student ratios, and limited funding” (p.40).

deBradley (2014) specifically argued against the Act's "blanket' approaches to policy implementation, failing to address the racial realities for Students of Color receiving services under [the Act]” (p. 842). She further argued that because of these blanketed and colorblind approaches to HEPs and students, there is an assumption that taking such a stance will allow every
child an even playing field or starting point in the classroom, which is completely inaccurate. Instead the reality that Students of Color are disproportionately represented within the numbers of students who are homeless due to issues of unfair housing policies, extreme poverty in their neighborhoods or societal disadvantages continues to be ignored. deBradley’s argument is critical to the work of this study to understand perceptions about African American students. Teachers and schools are charged to follow and implement plans set out in the policy. If the policy lacks consideration for all subgroups of students who are impacted by the circumstances of homelessness, then no real interventions can take place, and the bigger picture of who is homeless and their needs is given little attention. Likewise, in the case of teacher perceptions, their beliefs are not challenged and in some instances stay generalized and stereotypical of the students and their families who are homeless. Also, the interpretation and implementation, or lack thereof, of the policy can serve as a source of influence on teacher perceptions. Without an examination of the "racial components of poverty and homelessness [within] the current discourse surrounding policy implementation for a large subset of the homeless student population", teachers’ perceptions remain rooted in stereotypical generalizations that negatively impact the educational experience of their students who are homeless (deBradley, 2014, p. 842). To support her claim, she cited Markward (1994), who wrote an article examining issues with the Act and also implications for social workers. Markward’s work acknowledged that educational institutions continue in categorization and practices that maintain privileges based on class and color.

Thinking critically about HEPs and the McKinney-Vento Act inclusive of race is essential to this study. The majority of this argument draws out of deBradley’s (2014) work that relies heavily on aspects of CRT as a theory and methodological tool. Her in-depth examination and critique of this legislation point to how HEPs place concern on class and not the historical and
current reality that African American youth are overly represented in the number of students who are homeless. Critiquing HEPs in this way also brings into question how others, such as teachers and school officials, interpret their support for and beliefs about African American students who are homeless.

**Teacher Perceptions and African American Students**

The perceptions that teachers hold about the students they teach are essential to their work and interactions in school. These beliefs have the power to shape and impact the expectations that teachers have for their students and the type of instruction they provide (Skiba, 2002). A review of the literature on teacher perceptions offered various viewpoints and outlooks about the definition of perceptions. In my search to find studies and research around the topic of teacher perceptions I uncovered wording such as viewpoint, beliefs, attitude, judgment, and opinion. Richardson's (1996) chapter titled "Role of Attitudes and Beliefs in Learning to Teach", in the Handbook of Research on Teacher Education, discussed that "attitudes and beliefs are a subset of a group of constructs that name, define, and describe...mental states that are thought to drive a person's actions" she added, "other constructs include conceptions, perspectives, perceptions..." (p. 103). Her discussion of attitudes and beliefs noted a separation of the two where attitudes were affective, and beliefs were cognitive.

Richardson’s (1996) research cited several studies and research conducted during the 1950's and 1960's around teacher attitudes, behaviors and beliefs. Within the research, there was a connection between attitudes and beliefs. Another similar definition of teachers’ perceptions included the thoughts, beliefs and opinions of someone or something. This definition of teachers’
perceptions evolved from Norman’s (2016) study focused on 10 middle class teachers’ perceptions of the socioeconomic class of their impoverished and advantaged students. For this study, Norman’s definition seemed most applicable.

In addition to considering how perceptions were defined in the literature, the review also uncovered discussion around the role perceptions play in the classroom, their impact on students, and how perceptions develop over time prior to teaching or while in the classroom (Skiba, 2002; Tyler & Boelter, 2008; Boggs & Szabo, 2009; Kenyatta, 2012; Norman, 2016). Teacher perceptions directly influence their attitudes and behaviors. This influence affects how teachers engage their students and overall student learning (Schein, 1992; Milner & Williams, 2008; Norman, 2016).

Several scholars highlight the relationship between teacher perceptions and student learning (Miller, Kuykendall & Thomas, 2013; Cakmak, Demirkaya, & Derya, 2011 Tyler & Boelter, 2008; Campbell, 2003; Redding, 1997). When teachers’ attitudes regarding the communities of children they teach were examined, it was uncovered that teachers “…knowingly or unknowingly, exhibit different behaviors to students according to socioeconomic class or status of the parents” (Miller et al., 2013, p. 139). Miller et al. (2013) added that these perceptions could possibly be influenced by conflicts in society faced by the teachers themselves and can influence the way teachers assess growth in their students because of where the students live. Norman’s (2016) review of the literature also uncovered that teacher perceptions can create barriers in students’ educational experiences whether teachers are aware of these ideas or not. These findings indicate that whether intentional or not, teachers’ beliefs about their students show up in different ways while in the classroom. If the teacher’s beliefs are positive, then students stand a better chance of
succeeding, if the teacher’s beliefs are negative, then the students have a harder time navigating their educational success.

In this regard, Kenyatta's (2012) discussion that explored current research on teacher perceptions and the degree to which those perceptions impacted practices in the classroom with African American males added, teacher perceptions can influence the way students perceive or view their abilities in the classroom. Kenyatta noted, “classrooms and teacher-student interactions within that context influence how students view and respond to schooling and can produce both social and academic disparities” (p. 36). She agreed with the stance taken by Noguera (2003) that students are victims of processes within schools that unfairly label them. These unfortunate processes, she believed were an outcome of the prevailing perceptions held by adults in the building, primarily teachers. Noguera (2003) explained that these prevailing ideologies and labels cause students to be viewed based on ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds which dictate their interactions or treatment other adults in the school environment. Kenyatta (2012) cited research from Alvidrez and Weinstein (1999) and Ferguson (2003) which concluded “that race [is] a deterministic factor in teachers’ perceptions of students’ achievement comparable to their non-minority peers. These biases often have implications for teacher-student interactions and affect curricular and instructional opportunities for students” (p. 38). Likewise, Ferguson (2003) discovered that teachers do not provide their African American students with sufficient feedback and support as much as their white students even if those teachers have not explicitly communicated negative perceptions about the students. To this, Ferguson (2003) added that there is an unfortunate but also common basis for teacher perceptions, expectations, and behaviors being rooted in racial stereotypes. Ferguson also cited possible influences of teacher perceptions in work by Sara Lawrence Lightfoot (1978) who wrote: “teachers, like all of us, use the dimensions
of class, race, sex, ethnicity to bring order to their perception of the classroom environment…

with the passage of time teachers’ perceptions become increasingly stereotyped, and children become hardened caricatures of an initially discriminatory vision” (Lightfoot, 1978, pp. 85-86).

Lightfoot’s sentiments, in some cases still ring true years later with the educational research presented about African American students. What has historically been discussed in the educational research about African American students in public schools often miss the innovation and intelligence that they bring to the classroom (Milner and Williams, 2008). Instead deficits are discussed before assets, causing others in society and school to label Black students as troubled, lacking, and without hope for success (Milner and Williams, 2008). Ladson-Billings (2000) echoed this sentiment by arguing that many Students of Color have been made to feel inferior to their white counterparts due to systematic changes made in society that also find their way into schools. Sealy-Ruiz, Lewis, Toldson and Allen (2014) argued that the rhetoric of this new millennium of teachers and Black students portray Black students in the literature as lacking and showing gaps in achievement. Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, and Bridgest, (2003), argued in a study about teacher perceptions of African American males’ behavior and achievement, that common beliefs found in the media and literature about African American males paints them as violent and hostile. Tyson (2002) noted that there is a dominant perception placed on Black students as a whole being disconnected from their learning which gives an unfortunate and unfair impression to the public.

To compound this reality of being Black and homeless brings with it questions about the multifaceted nature of race and class as well as concerns about the perceptions these students are faced with once they enter the classroom. In that regard, Baron, Tom and Cooper (1985) wrote:
“the race or class of a particular student may cue the teacher to apply the generalized expecta-
tions, therefore making it difficult for the teacher to develop specific expectations tailored to in-
dividual students (p. 251)” (as cited in Ferguson, 2003, p. 461). Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, 
and Bridgest, (2003) cited several scholars who made similar conclusions that the combination of 
social class and ethnicity have a negative influence on the expectations teachers have for their 
minority students. In essence, the intersection of race and class can have a strong bearing on how teachers may perceive their students and how students feel about themselves and the teacher who teaches them. In this consideration of how African American students are discussed in the litera-
ture I also move to a discussion of teacher perceptions of students who are homeless.

**Teacher Perceptions of Students Who are Homeless**

As discussed in the previous section, teachers’ perceptions are critical to student success. 
Even more important are teacher perceptions of students who experience homelessness. These 
perceptions can be both negative and positive in how they impact the students’ educational expe-
rience in the classroom (Brown, 2012). As Holgersson-Shorter (2010) shared in her discussion of 
supporting students who are homeless, teachers and schools are the front line defenders most of 
the time when describing support for students who are homeless. It would be imperative that 
teachers of these students, as a daily resource, hold optimistic and not deficit beliefs about them. 
An exhaustive search returned few studies that provided insight from African American in-ser-
vice teacher perceptions on the specific topic of African American students who are homeless.

Brown’s (2012) quantitative study on teacher attitudes of students who are homeless used 
a self-created measurement scale, Teacher Attitudes toward Homeless Students scale (TAHS) of 
teacher attitudes. She noted the difference in her scale compared to other previously used scales to measure attitudes towards people who were homeless was the inclusion of classroom teachers.
Her study included participation from public school teachers across 33 states, where the majority of teacher participants were from the southeastern United States. Her study noted majority participation from white female teachers, with close to a quarter of the total teacher participants coming from elementary schools. Her study discussed research that acknowledged negative teacher perceptions of students who were homeless due to a misunderstanding of policies and the circumstances of homelessness. From her study she found that teachers who viewed homelessness as an issue of society were more likely to have a positive attitude about their students who were homeless. She also noted from her study that there was no significant relationship between a teacher’s demographic or background characteristics. However, she did acknowledge that it was possible that the scale could not identify that type of relationship.

Nabors et al. (2005) conducted a quantitative study that observed the relationship between reports from mothers of students who were homeless, teacher perceptions of the behavior and emotions of their African American students who were homeless and behaviors in the classroom. The participants for the study were from an inner city summer camp in the Midwest. In the camp there were 53 African American students who were identified as homeless, ranging in age from 6 to 12 years old. The summer camp staff included 3 African American lead teachers and 6 high school or college teaching assistants, 4 assistants were White women, 1 assistant was an African American woman, and 1 assistant was a White male. The intent of the program was to support these students academically and with behaviors in the classroom. The results from the lead teachers of the study indicated that the teachers perceived these students to be functioning well academically. Findings from this study also indicated that older African American boys were
identified as a group at risk for lower perceptions of their behavior and emotions in the classroom. They also concluded that holding these types of perceptions can negatively impact the relationship between teacher and student.

Cartner (2007) conducted a quantitative study with 87 elementary classroom teachers in Texas, with a majority of the teachers coming from urban areas. The study focused on the level of teacher awareness for the McKinney-Vento Act and their attitudes towards students who were homeless. His review of the literature acknowledged that the level of training a teacher experiences influences their expectations of their students who are homeless in the classroom. This was similar to a discussion by Brown (2012). Cartner noted that previous research (Coach, 1998; Torres, 2004) has found that in general elementary teachers have positive outlooks about students who are homeless, however those teachers also required more training with the HEPs such as the McKinney Vento. From his study he noted that more than half of the teacher participants had a solid knowledge of the McKinney Vento policy and close to 80% of those teachers noted that they could identify a student who was homeless in their classroom based common identifiers such as living in a car. Likewise, his questions focused on teacher attitudes of students who were homeless returned positive attitudes levels from the majority of the teachers regarding the ability to succeed on standardized tests, enjoying working with students who are homeless and the ease of teaching students who are homeless. He did note that a majority of the teachers were undecided on whether students who were homeless could excel academically in the classroom and if academic expectations should be lowered as well as considering if teachers make special consideration for the academic needs of their students and show patience. His findings suggested that the more teachers are informed and trained on the policies and situations that their homeless students face the higher their expectations may be of those students. Brown and Cartner’s studies
were done using quantitative means through a survey instrument. Though there is benefit to the use of such an instrument to capture a large number of participants views, there is still value in allowing teachers the space to express and clarify their perceptions, which is a focus of this study.

In that regard, Norman’s (2016) qualitative study conducted with 10 middle class elementary teachers’ (8- White middle class females, 1- African American, female, middle-class teacher, and 1- White, male middle class teacher) concerning their attitudes and perceptions of low and high socioeconomic students provided explicit examples and explanations of perceptions by the teachers. Norman concluded from the study that the educational experiences of students who are from low socioeconomic situations stand in opposition to the standards and expectations set by the schools that these students attend. She argued that these mission statements within schools are often watered down and diluted to cover the basis of making all students equal while neglecting to really attend the racial and socioeconomic disparities that exist within society and schools specifically in urban or inner city areas. As Milner and Williams (2008) noted from their article to address questions around implications of educational policies and reforms for African American students, when legislation such as No Child Left Behind were created they were done so as a way to “catch up” the students. However, the basis for catching these students up was related to “a norm that society has set where white, middle to upper class students are the measure…” (p. 34). There is not always a consideration for what individual students need or what they face based on racial and socioeconomic disparities. When these types of considerations are not made and instead focus is placed on catching students up or making them equal to their counterparts then teachers and schools can misinterpret what is really needed.
Along with the influences of school culture and environment, Norman (2016) also concluded from her study that teachers’ perceptions about their students from low socioeconomic statuses are highly influenced by teacher upbringing. Specifically, the teacher perceptions of the low socioeconomic students described student attributes as “light bulbs going off”, where students were unable to grasp concepts as opposed to those light bulbs “turning on” for high socioeconomic students. Where some teachers from the study saw potential and held expectations for their students to “at least graduate” or “…amount to more than their parents” (p. 112), other teachers saw academics as an afterthought for their low socioeconomic students. The teachers also attributed student academic problems and/or achievements to the presence or lack of parental support.

Torres (2004) conducted a two phase (1995 and 2003) longitudinal qualitative study on teacher perceptions of their homeless students that included 115 teachers. One hundred of the participants were from phase one (1995) of the primary study that was conducted with a research survey class at the University of Denver. The remaining 15 teacher participants were from phase two (2003) and as she noted were much younger and had less years of teaching experience in the classroom. All participants were Colorado inner city public school teachers from both elementary and middle school. Torres noted a relationship between a teacher’s knowledge of HEPs and their attitude about their students who were homeless. In the study, she found that teachers did not have a good understanding of the HEPs and were unable to identify the signs of homelessness for their students. Torres concluded, from her second phase in 2003, that teachers with limited years of teaching experience were partially more aware of their students’ homeless situations as well as homeless policies as compared to the teachers in the first phase. These teachers were
unaware of their students living conditions such as being doubled up and living with another individual or the frequency in moves by the student and their family. She expressed that the limited knowledge a teacher has to the experiences and needs of their students who are homeless can be detrimental to that student’s educational well-being. Likewise, a teacher’s lack of awareness to the policies or circumstances that being homeless bring with it can cause a teacher to misjudge a student’s behavior or intent when they walk into the classroom. In her conclusions she acknowledged the need for more teacher professional development in understanding HEPs such as the McKinney-Vento Act. This was a similar recommendation made by Cartner (2007).

Powers-Costello and Swick (2008) discussed in their research about teacher perceptions that some teachers tend to identify homeless students as being more difficult to work with than non-homeless students. Cartner (2007) also noted that in some cases teachers may lower their academic expectations for students who are homeless compared to other students in permanent housing. Powers-Costello and Swick (2008) noted that societal constructs might also play a role in these deficit perceptions that the teachers have and the need to support teachers in reconstructing those perceptions. They also emphasized that in some cases it is the school’s culture or beliefs of a student or family who are homeless that can have an impact on teacher perceptions. They also argued that school structures can be based on the idea of a “one size fits all” approach that promotes a larger agenda set by the school and neglects the need of certain groups of children.

Powers-Costello and Swick’s (2008) findings suggest an influence from generalized school practices that may cause teachers perceptions of their students to be ill-informed. Their discussion also alluded to aspects of deficit thinking that teachers may have concerning homeless students and their families as a result of societal constructs. The reality is that schools become a
microcosm of societal rules, beliefs and standards of importance that neglect the realities of those disadvantaged (Milner and Williams, 2008). As Belcher and DeForge (2012) discussed in their examination of the social stigma of homelessness, they posited, society views homelessness as something acceptable, ignoring and socially excluding people who experience homelessness. They added that “many services provided to the homeless focus on subsistence, which are only adequate enough to sustain their basic needs” and unfortunately “the services do not provide a real ‘lifeline’ to help them ‘escape’ their condition” (p. 930). Similarly, if schools function to address student needs through universal interventions instead of specific and individualized interventions, teachers in the classroom may not fully understand the extent of student needs even if they see them on a day to day basis. If the school’s or society’s level of support only goes so far to address student needs or in some cases, not far enough, then similar prioritization can occur in the classroom with teachers of these students.

Swick (1996) conducted a professional development session with twenty-four teachers from a graduate course in South Carolina. In the course the teachers were asked to reflect on their beliefs about their students who were homeless as well as participate in various activities to gain a better understanding of their students and their families experiences. Swick noted that initially, one teacher participant had not grasped the idea that children could be homeless or exposed to conditions of being without a home. Another teacher admitted to creating reasons why the students had become homeless without fully knowing or understanding what the student and their family had gone through. Even with that understanding, Swick (1996) shared that many of the teachers pointed blame at the parents of these students. Unfortunately, blaming the individual, specifically those who are homeless, instead of the system that the individual is living within is common practice according to Swick and Bassuk (1991). Belcher and DeForge (2012) echoed
this sentiment by positing that “the societal images of the homeless have framed the causes of homeless squarely on the victim’s shoulders, rather than a structural one” (p. 930). This understanding can contribute to the perceptions held by teachers and schools. Swick’s (1996) study acknowledged the influence that the "bureaucracy" of school policies can have on teachers. Based on the teacher responses they concluded that teachers become discouraged and confused about the extent of the issues facing their students who are homeless based on the lack of support given by the school. In turn this can impact the teacher’s approach to classroom and student focus.

In noting perceptions that were not favorable of students who were homeless. Some studies conducted with classroom teachers noted positive and optimistic perceptions. In Norman’s (2016) study some teachers spoke kindly of the behaviors and attributes of their students. These teachers acknowledged other aspects of student abilities and strengths such as being “street smart” or the fact that their students have an advantage because they were able to get along with everyone and were willing to help and accept others. Cartner (2007) also acknowledged from his study with elementary teachers in Texas, that teachers generally possessed positive attitudes about their students who were homeless, but he also noted variation in those positive attitude responses. Sakaris (1999) concluded from a study conducted with 77 public school teachers’ attitudes and expectations of students who were homeless, that there was a connection between the increased number of years teaching with the high level of academic expectation for students who were homeless. She also noted a relationship between a teacher’s self-efficacy and positive attitude towards students who were homeless.
As stated previously, though this study is specifically focused on understanding in-service teacher perceptions of homeless populations, the research into preservice teacher perceptions offered interesting insights that could also provide background for how beginning, preservice teachers who become in-service teachers carry perceptions with them into the classroom. This is especially true for teachers of homeless populations where perceptions can be influenced by factors such as the media, casual conversation with family, other teachers, lack of experience (Powers-Costello & Swick, 2011), or the literature that is written about homelessness and schooling (Kim, 2013a). Heybach and de Bradley (2014) noted that, “sterotypes run rampant and ill-informed assumptions about [homeless] families and youth dominate educator’s consciousness…” (p. 141). In some cases, these factors can foster negative, deficit perceptions in a teacher’s outlook about homeless students’ abilities and family structure. This section of the review will discuss literature about teachers’ perceptions of homeless students.

Kim’s (2013) research concerning preservice teacher perceptions of homeless populations, noted that there has been “little attention …to how teachers perceive and understand homeless children” (p. 162). They cited the few studies (Kwartler, 1993; Quint, 1994; Swick, 1996; Barton, 2000; Powers-Costello & Swick, 2011) that addressed this concern in support of their research. One such study was conducted by Powers-Costello & Swick (2011) who completed three case studies with teachers engaged in professional development to “transform their views of homeless children and families” (p. 207). In their research they discussed factors that influenced teachers’ perceptions of homeless populations and how those perceptions greatly impacted their interaction and experiences with their students. One teacher from the study noted that before her participation, she had not been fully aware of the “hunger realities faced by several of her kindergarten children” (p. 209). The study in this case offered reasons why teachers should reflect on
their perceptions and suggestions on how to support teachers in transforming their perceptions about homeless students. However, this study did not offer explicit examples of initial beliefs about homeless students by the teachers.

However, Kim (2013) discussed research about preservice teacher perceptions of homeless students and offered insight into these teachers’ initial beliefs before engaging in coursework that would make them more aware. All of the participants were “White, middle class females who had little experience working with children from low-income backgrounds” (p. 295). The author concluded that the preservice teacher participants based their initial beliefs or views of homeless students “according to the universal norms of individuality and self-reliance valued in Western societies” (p. 304). They replied with stereotypical views and images of what homelessness was, connecting it initially only to adults living on the street and deficit views of homeless students as being “troubled, behind, misbehaved, dirty, unfocused, or broken” (p. 300). One teacher’s assumptions, prior to working with the homeless students stated that the homeless students would be dysfunctional and abnormal. Another interesting belief that the teachers held about homeless students involved the parents of those students and a belief “that parents in poverty are not interested in their children’s education or do not take good care of their children” (p. 301). Kim (2013) noted previous research that indicated preparation for preservice teachers to work with students who were homeless or living in poverty was lacking and tended to focus on teaching “reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies” rather than “helping prepare preservice teachers learn how they can support children and families living in poverty including those who [experience] homelessness” (p. 292).

The role of teacher perceptions greatly impacts their approach to teaching students who are homeless (Milner & Williams, 2008; Mundy & Leko, 2015). Thus, it is important that
teacher perceptions about students who are homeless be investigated and considered in the research to help inform schools and teachers of ways to authentically engage with their student population. Kim (2012) added, “teachers need to examine critically their perspectives and assumptions toward children in poverty, including homeless children, and work to deepen their knowledge about the challenges and difficulties those children face in order to respond sensitively to their educational needs” (p. 162). However, there is paucity in the research about this specific focus as it relates to in-service teachers who teach African American students who are homeless.

There is also a missing but essential piece in the research that does include the experiences of African American in-service teachers. As indicated, the majority of research on teachers’ perceptions of homeless students focus on the experiences and beliefs of white female teachers. Milner (2012) argued that counter narratives of Black teacher perceptions empower Communities of Color…to tell a story often much different from the one’s that have been portrayed in the past. Likewise, he argued that “the stories of those considered by the dominant culture (and others) to be at the bottom –in many instances, Students of Color, researchers of color, and communities with large populations of People of Color” have been dismissed, disregarded, or completely ignored (p. 290) and must be placed at the center of the educational narrative regarding students who are homeless and Black.

**African American Teachers in the Classroom**

Historically African American teachers have played an influential part in the success of their Black students (Haynes & Comer, 1990; Case, 1997; Stanford, 1997; Wilder, 2000). This success has been due to the deep understanding and connection that African American teachers have to realities that their students face in and out of the classroom (Milner, 2012). The success
of African American teachers, specifically female African American teachers, in the classroom can also be attributed to their willingness and acceptance of being more than just a teacher to their students (Milner, 2012). Several scholars have discussed and regarded African American teachers as dream keepers (Ladson-Billings, 1994a), star teachers (Haberman, 1995), warm demanders (Ware, 2006), surrogate parents (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002) and ‘othermothers’ (Case, 1997; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Milner, 2012) for the work that they do with their Black students.

Stanford’s (1997) discussion of previous research on four, exemplary female African American teachers recognized the historical and present familial roles that Black female teachers assume as mother figures. Through her research, Standford identified four key characteristics that emerged regarding African American teachers in the classroom. She noted “community solidarity, community of learners, focus on the whole child, and personal accountability” as attributes, practices, and beliefs of female African American teachers. Her work also acknowledged the deep-rooted belief of Black teachers, that the Black female teachers required social justice thinking for the world that their Black students would enter. It also demonstrated a sense of urgency to ensure that their students were equipped with the necessary social and academic tools and a mission to serve that went beyond the essentials of the classroom. Likewise, Foster (1993) acknowledged this type of thinking as being “a long-standing practice within Black communities” with regard to Black female teachers (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002, p. 76). Collins (1991) has referred to this idea of “lifting as we climb” where “educated Black women have traditionally viewed their status as educated individuals as a means for uplifting their race” (Standford, 1997, p. 110).
Being regarded as more than a teacher in the classroom, for African American teachers, has historical context within African American culture. Milner’s (2012) case study of one female Black teacher’s perception of her practices in the classroom, acknowledged the many roles that Black teachers assume as a counselor, advisor, and friend. This particular teacher recognized her role as being important to the livelihood of her students. As Milner noted from his observations of the teacher, her approach to student learning went beyond the standardized test and focused on life lessons where she held high expectations and noted that her students “understand what their purpose here is. I am not here to entertain you. I am here to help you and direct learning and guide your learning” (p. 40). Several scholars, as stated previously, have shared in discussion about the many roles assumed by African American teachers. This is not to imply that teachers of other racial backgrounds do not willing take on other roles to ensure student success. However, quite frequent in the literature on African American female teachers, is a role that has a deep historical context, “othermothering” (Case, 1997), which refers to the pedagogical practices of African American teachers in and out of the classroom and encompassed their commitment to being dream keepers (Ladson-Billings, 1994a), star teachers (Haberman, 1995), warm demanders (Ware, 2006).

Assuming the role of “othermother”, for Black female teachers both in the past and present, requires having an understanding of “shared responsibility to commit themselves to the social and emotional development of all children in a community” (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002, p. 77). Case (1997) explained the historical significance of “othermothering” in a study conducted with two African American educators in an urban elementary school. Case (1997) and Mawhinney (2011) both noted the origins of “othermothering” back to the time of slavery. Assuming the
role of “othermother” was a means of survival when children were taken away from their biological families (Mawhinney, 2011). Black enslaved females understood that “slave children depended upon this othermothering tradition as a primary vehicle for education and cultural transmission” (Case, 1997, p. 26). Casey (1990) echoed this point in a study with Black, Jewish and Catholic female teachers. From the study Casey (1990) concluded that the Black teachers saw their maternal role as an important commitment to the well-being and livelihood of Black people. Expanding this on this idea, Stanford (1997) added that Black teachers were thinking about the preparation that their students required “for living in a society in which they [would] encounter formidable barriers based on racism” (p. 114). “Othermothering” is a commitment that African American teachers continue to this day, making not only a commitment to their students, but also to the families of these students (Mawhinney, 2011; Collins, 2000).

African American teachers exhibit care and concern that has a presence all its own and is distinctive to the cultural needs of the community in which they serve, their classrooms and surrounding neighborhoods, both formally and informally (Case, 1997). Mawhinney’s (2011) examination of her “othermothering” role at a Historically Black College and University cited Roseboro and Ross (2009) who explained the level of care in “othermothering” displayed by Black teachers. Roseboro and Ross (2009) explained that “othermothering” by Black teachers is done “…in ways that [complicated] traditional perceptions of teaching and care; for Black women ‘othermoerthing’ and transgressive teaching demand an ethic of care that is both defensive and proactive, embodied and performed, private and public” (Mawhinney’s, 2011, p. 215). In essence, African American female teacher practices in the classroom are more than what the literature would suggest or imply to be standard teacher nurturing or maternal connections to students.
It is beyond being generalized as “good teaching” or a best practice. It should, as others have argued have a specific place in the conversation of nurturing in the classroom that highlights an African American ethic of care and concern from which African American teachers assume their “othermothering” (Mawhinney, 2011; Collins, 2000; Case, 1997). This includes a “collective social conscience manifested through cultural strategies related to concern for reciprocity, commitment to community, and a belief in the morality of responsibility” (p. 36). This suggests that the effort of care from Black teachers to their Black students was and still is based outside of just being academically educated. As, Mawhinney’s (2011) examination of her “othermothering” role as a Black female professor at a Historically Black College/University, she explained that the use of care by Black teachers, has historically served to empower Black people through social justice thought and action. Casey also noted other studies (Case, 1997; Delpit, 1995; Foster, 1993) which discussed cultural links between culturally relevant pedagogy of Black teachers and their maternal customs.

The classroom was the vehicle by which African American teachers could and still can relay important life messages as well as instill hope for students. Casey’s (1990) study of women teachers discussed this distinction between Black, Jewish and Catholic female teachers. In the study Casey acknowledged the maternal lens of each group of teachers but described the variance in how and why that lens was applied by all three groups of teachers. She noted that the experiences of the Black teachers helped them to forge different relationships with their students based on their maternal lens. The Black teachers defined their maternal presence in the classroom as more than just the expected nurturing from a teacher. These teachers embraced an aspect of community which reflected “an exceedingly powerful version of nurture [emerging] from [a] particular social context” (Casey, 1990, p. 317).
Milner (2012) noted that during the times of pre-desegregation, Black teachers “saw their roles and responsibilities as reaching far beyond the hallways of their schools” (p. 30). Black teachers moved with this thinking because they understood the harsh realities that faced their students in the world because they were Black. African American teachers past and present have demonstrated a commitment to protecting and uplifting the next generation of Black students like a mother would for their child (Milner, 2012). This maternal obligation to their students has been essential to Black teachers maintaining a positive relationship with their students. The impact of this thinking was evident from narratives shared by six African American students from a study conducted by Wilder (2000). In this study the students were asked to share their narratives about the impact of having Black teachers in the classroom. These students expressed feeling confident and filled with pride about being Black because of their interactions with their Black teachers and the fact that these teachers were able to open these students’ eyes to perspectives not realized before. This interaction confirmed that African American teacher practices in the classroom have a lasting impact on the academic, social and emotional growth of their students (Mawhinney, 2011; Stanford, 1997).

However, the brilliance and commitment of African American teachers has been lost in the research and literature. Little regard has been given to the importance of the African American teacher voice and position in the classroom. While there have been studies of teacher perceptions and attitudes of their students that have placed importance on knowing the thoughts of White, middle-class teachers (Norman, 2016; Mundy & Leko, 2015; Kim, 2012; Kim, 2013), it was important for this study, to support African American teachers’ voices and position their narratives in a way that addresses the heart of their true value in the classroom and their under-
standing of their students. This study aligns with Milner’s (2012) suggestion for research that includes and sees value in the voices of People of Color, particularly African American teachers, and the need for the use of CRT as a theoretical and methodological tool. In this next section I transition to discuss literature that focuses on and connects the use of CRT to this study.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework is an essential part of the research. It provides “the underlying structure, the scaffolding or frame of [a] study” (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015, p. 85). In the case of this study Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides that needed structure. CRT is centered around the discussion of race, equity and justice (Milner & Laughter, 2014) and serves as a way to “help [theorize], [examine], and [challenge] the manner in which race and racism explicitly and implicitly impact societal structures, practices, and discourses” (de Bradley, 2014, p. 844). As seen in the previous research discussion of teacher perceptions, there is a great influence of the intersection of race and class on teacher perceptions and the larger society as a whole. CRT’s connection to this research is both “an epistemological and methodological tool, to analyze the experiences of historically under-represented populations across the K-20 educational pipeline” (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015, p. 206).

Through a counter narrative approach CRT also helps to critically consider the work and needed narratives of African American teachers who are absent from the research and literature. Within this study CRT also helped to frame the disproportionate number of African American students who were homeless and the lack of research that addressed these disparaging numbers. A CRT framework provides an understanding and a voice to their perspectives as it relates to their interactions with and beliefs about Students of Color who experience housing instability. Reviewing the literature on CRT also discusses the way in which Students of Color have been
discussed in the educational literature and the connection it has to this study about African American students who are homeless.

Historically, CRT has been viewed as a movement (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012) that has transcended and questioned society’s time and effort to address the needs of People of Color. It has been close to forty-five years since CRT’s initial presence was felt by key scholars and writers such as “Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado”, (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012, p. 4). These individuals, among many others, recognized and pushed for ways to combat the “subtler forms of racism that were gaining ground” (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012, p. 4) after the 1960’s civil rights era. Several sources have offered comprehensive reviews and discussions about the early beginnings of CRT and all have agreed that CRT’s beginnings can be attributed to two movements, Critical Legal Studies (CLS) (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Kohli, 2009; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Milner, 2013; Ledesma & Calderón, 2015) and radical feminism (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012). Delgado and Stefanic (2012) noted that the ideas of CLS assisted CRT and its theorist with the idea of “legal indeterminacy—the idea that not every legal case has one correct outcome” (p. 5). Lynn and Parker (2006) discussed a similar notion about CLS that questioned, how the impact of laws benefited those considered privileged, wealthy, and powerful while disregarding the rights of the poor. Essentially, CLS questioned and exposed notions of hegemony that existed in the American legal system that created structures of oppression (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Though most writing about the historical roots of CRT discuss CLS, Delgado and Stefanic (2012) discussed how CRT could also attribute its beginnings to radical feminist ideals. They noted that radical feminist ideals built “on the relationship between power and the construction of social roles, as well as the unseen, largely invisible collection of patterns and habits that make up patriarchy and other types of domination” (p.5).
Though the principles of CLS greatly embodied and supported the initial impetus for CRT’s development, there were some (Derrick Bell, Mari Matsuda, Richard Delgado, Angela Harris, and Kimberle Crenshaw) who argued that CRL did not address the impact of the law on People of Color (Lynn & Parker, 2006). Ladson-Billings (1998) also noted that much of the CLS argument was focused on meritocracy, or the power of the law and government by a dominant group of individuals and lacked the needed criticism for questioning racism. The abovementioned scholars’ efforts to emphasize the lack of focus placed on challenging race and racism within the law argued for intentional claims that emphasized a need for CRT (Lynn and Parker, 2006).

This discussion makes an important connection to the present study. Similarly, policies for homelessness do not specifically address the needs or circumstances of the growing population of children of color (de Bradley, 2015). Instead policies and mandates that teachers and schools are expected to follow tend to address the issues of homelessness generally and not give consideration for the structural inequities that are very present in society. Likewise, research that is conducted about homelessness and education discusses the issues and statistics generally and presents solutions for educational policies for homeless students that are neutral and colorblind (de Bradley, 2014). This was a specific concern raised by CLS and CRT theorists critiqued and challenged the liberalist belief about the law (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012). Within this critique Delgado and Stefanic (2012) explained that liberals “believe in equality, especially equal treatment for all persons, regardless of their different histories or current situations” (p. 26). They added that the implementation of these types of laws or policies are commendable; however, they are lacking in consideration of the differences that exist in society. This is an even more pressing concern according to Delgado and Stefanic (2012) because the procedures and practices
executed in the day to day business of society continue to keep will keep minorities in inferior positions.

**Tenets of CRT.** The beliefs held by CRT theorists, scholars, and writers may not subscribe or be explained in the exact same manner. They vary in how each individual writes about and theorizes the beliefs in the research that is conducted. In their research that discussed policy changes for assisting teachers who work with students who live in poverty, Milner and Laughter (2014) identified the variation of tenets and principles of CRT based on scholar. Table 2 shows a recreation of their outline below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>General Theme</th>
<th>Analysis of the System</th>
<th>Central Principle(s) and tenet(s)</th>
<th>Voice or discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milner (2007)</td>
<td>Race and racism are endemic, pervasive, widespread, and ingrained</td>
<td>Challenge mainstream notions of whiteness as norms</td>
<td>Interest convergence</td>
<td>Centrality of narrative and counter-narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delgado and Stefanic (2001)</td>
<td>Racism is ordinary, not aberrational</td>
<td>Race and racism are products of social thought; differentiated racialization; antiessentialism</td>
<td>Interest convergence or material determinism and “color-blind” conceptions of equality</td>
<td>Unique voice of color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solórzano and Yosso (2001)</td>
<td>The centrality and intersectionality of race and racism</td>
<td>Challenge to dominant ideology</td>
<td>Commitment to social justice</td>
<td>Centrality of experiential knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladson-Billings (1998)</td>
<td>Racism is normal in American Society</td>
<td>Critique of liberalism</td>
<td>Interest Convergence</td>
<td>Employs storytelling to analyze culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tate (1997)</td>
<td>Racism is endemic</td>
<td>Portrays dominant legal claims of neutrality as camouflage</td>
<td>Reinterprets civil rights law in light of its limitations</td>
<td>Naming one’s own reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995)</td>
<td>Racism is endemic and deeply ingrained</td>
<td>Challenging claims of neutrality and meritocracy</td>
<td>Reinterpretation of ineffective civil rights law</td>
<td>Theme of naming one’s reality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Delgado and Stefanic (2012) maintained that every writer or theorist of CRT may have their own idea or interpretation about CRT’s tenets, they argued that the following themes are “hallmarks” to the discussion of CRT, critique of liberalism, interest convergence, revisionist history and structural determinism. These themes are overarching for the specific tenets and beliefs that CRT theorists hold.

Kohli (2009) discussed CRT’s tenets according to Solorzano and Delgado Bernal (2001). This discussion noted that the beliefs held by these CRT theorists emphasized “centrality of race and racism, challenging the dominant perspective, commitment to social justice, valuing experiential knowledge, and being interdisciplinary” (p. 238). Within this research, centrality of race and racism inform the intersection between race and class and “the role that racist and classist systems and structures play in perpetuating the status quo and maintaining white privilege” (Milner & Laughter, 2014, p. 343) as it relates to educating homeless students of color. Challenging the dominant perspective challenges, the majority narratives presented in research by White, middle class preservice women teachers by allowing African American inservice elementary women teachers the opportunity to “name their reality” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p.13) and to be heard in the research. This tenet will also assist in questioning how educational research, and society, speak about and believe in the abilities of students of color who are homeless. Commitment to social justice, which is a goal of CRT research, will draw attention to the need for a more “racially diverse and conscious teaching force” (Kohli, 2009, p. 238).

Following this tenet can ensure that teacher perceptions are equally heard and valued in the research about working with a vulnerable and marginalized group such as Students of Color who are homeless. This can also serve as a starting place for transforming the way in which these students are educated, talked about, and viewed. Valuing experiential knowledge will show the
power and value in allowing African American in-service women teachers to share their narratives of their perceptions. This is also referred to as the counter narrative (Delgado and Stefanic (2012). They noted that “powerfully written stories and narratives may begin a process of correction in our system of beliefs and categories by calling attention to neglected evidence…” (p. 49). This would especially be the case for African American teachers whose perceptions have not been shared in the research

According to CRT theorists an interdisciplinary approach allows the research to reflect multiple perspectives. In this study, capturing the various perceptions from the African American teachers, other empirical research and the theory itself will give rise to counter narratives with rich perspectives that differ from the dominant discourse.

Utilizing this framework in this manner not only makes it a theoretical lens into the perceptions of African American in-service teacher perceptions of Students of Color who are homeless, but is also critical to the structure by which this information is collected, analyzed, and presented. Not all would agree with the claims and ideas expressed within the research on CRT. Crenshaw (2011) noted, since very early in its inception, CRT has been subject to criticism. As early as 1997, mainstream legal scholars, such as Richard Posner, dismissed Critical Race theorists and CRT as the ‘lunatic core’ of ‘radical legal egalitarianism’ (Crenshaw, 2011, p. 1310). Likewise, some have questioned how CRT’s work applies to the research and discussion of educational practices and policies. However, other researchers of Teachers of Color (Milner, 2012) celebrate CRT’s “advancement of the narrative and counter-narrative” (p. 28).

**CRT in Education.** The initial discussion of CRT within the field of education was presented in a collaboration of work by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995). As Ladson-Billings (1998)
noted in her work to explain CRT’s place within the field of education, the initial move to discuss CRT within educational research was done with caution and uncertainty of how this type of inquiry would be received. She noted that some scholars were met with hostility and questions of why race and not other considerations for gender and class were considered. CRT can be viewed as a necessary option for supporting conversations around social justice and democracy that can disrupt or replicate practices in education (Ladson-Billings, 1998). This task in framing and discussing CRT within educational research according to Ledesma and Calderón, (2015) has been complicated. Ladson-Billings (1998) maintained that this connection between the two (CRT and education) can be simple to establish, and she later cautioned about the way CRT is utilized in the educational research, such as narratives and counter storytelling (Ladson-Billings, 2005).

In her work to establish a connection between CRT and education, Ladson-Billings (1998) addressed five areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment, school funding, and desegregation. With respect to curriculum, Ladson-Billings maintained that CRT challenges the absence of meaningful stories and narratives by and about African Americans within the textbooks and literature provided to students. She argues that these stories are “erased” and replaced with “White supremacist master script” if they “challenge dominant culture authority and power” (p. 18). She also indicated that the curriculum can present “race-neutral” and “colorblind” perspectives about People of Color. This notion about the curriculum also echoes Milner and Laughter’s (2014) point that we live in a society where race matters, “but people do not want to acknowledge or talk about why and how it matters [in the context of school and education]” (p. 345).

Ladson-Billings (1998) posited, that the current strategies used within classrooms have a deficit delivery model that result in remediation tactics. Considering CRT, there is a race-neutral
approach to instruction and support provided that applies generic strategies for all students and if those strategies do not work, it is the student’s fault, not the “one size fits all” technique (Ladson-Billings, 1998). This is similar to an argument raised by deBradley (2014) that discussed generalized approaches to policy creation and implementation for homeless Students of Color. Also, Milner and Laughter (2014) noted not all students experience poverty, or homelessness in this case, the exact same, strategies to assist in their support should address that possible difference. Furthermore, Ladson-Billings (1998) did note “counterpedagogical” strategies being used by teachers and recognized within research. With these types of strategies, teachers and research “are rejecting deficit models” and demonstrating a level of understanding that does not ignore race in education and society. This is an important part to the work of this study that aims to counter and disrupt what is commonly shared abut African American students and those who are homeless.

With regard to examining assessment through a CRT lens, Ladson-Billings (1998) argued a point made by several scholars in her work (Gould, 1981; Alienikoff, 1991), that assessment is about the long standing argument regarding intelligence testing because it “legitimize[d] African American student deficiency under the guise of scientific rationalism” (p. 19). She explained this to mean that Black students have been stereotypically viewed as inferior or subordinate under reasons of science’s exactness in numbers and standardized testing. She further asserted that instead of looking at these students and valuing their knowledge, talent and skills away from the test, they are subjected to judgement based on a number. Connecting this idea to African American students who are homeless has many implications for the decisions regarding testing and placement for African American students who are homeless. The constant movement and lack of stability felt by these students could possibly interfere with school records of grades and test
scores being maintained. These students may experience a constant revolving door of testing leading to an ill-informed assumption about placement and ability level.

In discussing school funding, Ladson-Billings argued that through a CRT lens the issues of school funding are a result of institutional and structural racism that are influenced by property taxes and per pupil spending. She noted that this disparity in funding is felt when areas of greater wealth have higher property taxes and thus better schools. It would also bring into consideration the type of student and their family that is able to live in these areas. Even with the law that states that once a child becomes homeless and their family is able to find a stable residence, that child is permitted to attend the school of origin regardless of where the new residence may be. It would be more than likely that the new place of residence would not be in a high property tax neighborhood or that the shelter in which a child and their family were staying would not be in that type of neighborhood. In noting that, Ladson-Billings stated that “no area of schooling underscores inequity and racism better than school funding” (p. 20).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and Ladson-Billings (1998) laid the groundwork for the discussion of CRT in education. Additional scholars followed this work and have added considerations for how Critical Race Theory and the work of critical inquiry apply to the, as Ladson-Billings (1998) emphasized, nice field of education. Ledesma and Calderón (2015) conducted a review of past and present literature regarding CRT in education. In their review they noted the foundational work of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and Solorzano (1998) in establishing a place and connection for CRT within K-12 and higher education. Similar to discussion shared by Ladson-Billings (1998), Ledesma and Calderón (2015) also examined CRT’s place within the key areas of curriculum and instruction, educational policy creation, community engagement and general aspects of schooling.
Within *curriculum and pedagogy*, they noted the development and use of Critical Race Pedagogy (CRP). They noted Lynn’s (2004) definition of CRP “as an analysis of racial, ethnic, and gender subordination in education that relies mostly upon the perceptions, experiences and counterhegemonic practices of educators of color” (Ledesma and Calderón, 2015, p. 208). This discussion echoes Ladson-Billings (1998) concern for the instructional practices implemented to teach the curriculum. This type of consideration for the curriculum “empower Students of Color while dismantling notions of colorblindness, meritocracy, deficit thinking linguicism and other forms of subordination” (p. 208).

Within *teaching and learning* they noted the scope of this discussion which included teacher attitudes, behaviors, and practices. The authors also added that thinking about this area of education within a CRT frame also adds to the conversation of teacher subjectivity and how they see and place themselves within the work that they do. What was also important to this conversation and a consideration for this study was the statement that utilizing “CRT to examine teaching finds that a key aspect of teacher attitudes mimic larger problematic ideologies such as colorblindness, meritocracy, liberal attitudes that see race as an individualized issue” (p. 211). In understanding and analyzing teacher responses to questions about their African American students who are homeless, it would be necessary to know how their responses compare or contract to that of the larger society.

With regard to *schooling in general* Ledesma and Calderón (2015) discussed the impact of race and racism on the entire school culture and the implicit and explicit messages that are present in schools. Within the frame of CRT, they also questioned “how school cultures manifest broader social ideological forms of white supremacy” (p. 212). Lastly, with respect to *policy and*
community engagement the authors discussed the disparaging ways that policy and finance im-
impact People of Color. This was a salient point also made by deBradley (2015) concerning the in-
equitable, colorblind implementation of homeless educational policies (HEP) in Chicago.

My concern with understanding how teachers view and perceive this marginalized group of students is best supported through a lens that questions the current structures of society with education as a focus and also emphasizes that People of Color be able to “name their own real-
ity” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT in this case, as it relates to education, is a lens that centers race and challenges how colorblind policies for homelessness fail to address other struc-
tural causes (i.e. poverty and racial disparities). It also questions how these policies find their way into classrooms and school buildings possibly impacting the way that teachers and schools address these students’ needs or are even aware of their needs. Within the context of this study CRT is used to hear the voices of African American in-service teachers that would not neces-
sarily be heard in educational research about a topic that is otherwise neutralized and generalized in how it speaks about Students of Color who are homeless. CRT, specifically, for this study, of-
fers a different analysis and presentation of their words that may not mirror dominant discourse on African American students who are homeless.

Summary

The literature reviewed for this study returned a vast amount of research in the area of homeless education and students. Studies have reported both qualitative and quantitative findings regarding students who are homeless. Though this review does not capture the totality of educa-
tional research on issues of homelessness and teacher perceptions, there was an attempt to thor-
oughly review all available literature to ensure an accurate representation and argument on the issue. What was recovered from this review was a discussion about the conflicting definitions of
homelessness, the origin and intention of Homeless Education Policies (HEPs), impact of homelessness, the research on teacher perceptions and a specific consideration for teacher perceptions of students who are homeless. However, that research into perceptions has been primarily focused on discussing deficits of students who are homeless. Homeless education research has also focused its attention on the beliefs of white preservice teachers who too hold initial negative and stereotypical perceptions about homeless students. Little attention has been given to African American in-service teacher perceptions about African American students who are homeless. Chapter 3 will address my procedures to fill this gap in the research.
3 METHODOLOGY

This study sought to understand the perceptions of three African American in-service teachers concerning the academic, social and emotional needs of their African American students who were homeless. This study posed the following research questions: 1. How do African American in-service teachers in an urban public elementary school perceive the academic, social and emotional needs of their African American students who are homeless? and 2. What factors influence African American in-service elementary teacher perceptions of African American students who are homeless? The relevant data collected from this study were an open ended questionnaire, two one-on-one semi structured interviews, and four audio reflective journals. Analysis of this data was done using thematic analysis. Details about the data collection and analysis will be shared later in this chapter.

I pursued this understanding using a qualitative case study design undergirded by Critical Race Theory (CRT). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) acknowledged that qualitative research is focused on understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 6). Merriam (2009) also noted that qualitative research is a focused and inductive process that produces a rich thick description of the data and where the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. Likewise, Yin (2013) explained case study as an in-depth empirical examination of a particular person, group, or thing over a set period of time within defined boundaries.

CRT as a methodological and analytical tool acknowledges and requires research that attends to the reality of race for its participants (Kohli, 2009). This validation is:
constructed and deconstructed to complement, nuance, disrupt and counter storylines in teacher education that: 1.) are under-researched, 2.) present People of Color (teachers, students, parents) from a deficit ideology in teacher education; and 3.) provide myopic, one-sided evidence and perspectives (Milner & Howard, 2013, p. 537).

For this study, the use of a qualitative case study design, supported by CRT, examined the perceptions of African American teachers in one public elementary school, concerning their African American students who were homeless. To ensure the quality of this design I employed Yin’s (2003) suggested case study protocol. He noted that the use of a protocol increases the reliability of the case study research and should include an overview of the project, procedures, questions from the case study, and a guide.

**Researcher Role and Reflexivity**

Before discussing the process of collecting and analyzing the data, an important next step is to be transparent concerning my role in the research. Discussion of transparency is an important next step because as the "primary instrument for data collection and analysis" I bring with me personal biases or subjectivities that could influence the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p.16). However, acknowledging these personal opinions and viewpoints aids in addressing concerns of internal validity for this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This section will describe my researcher’s role and reflexivity to this study.

At the beginning of my teaching career which began eleven years ago at Fortune Academy (pseudonym), the site for this study, I experienced moments of frustration, irritation and at

75
times an overwhelming feeling of defeat by the constant flow of students who were homeless entering my classroom. I didn’t understand why they missed so much school and why they wanted to sleep and not just push through the day, but I did recognize the pain and uncertainty on their faces. Likewise, I had colleagues who did not understand how the circumstance of homelessness was impacting their students’ school day. In response to these sentiments shared by myself and other teachers in the school, my principal realized that the faculty needed a better understanding of our student population and organized a tour of the neighborhoods. We drove through areas with elegant million dollar homes and mixed-income apartment communities. Our final stop on the neighborhood tour included a visit to three local shelters. Visiting the shelters was such an eye-opening, gut-wrenching, reality check! The coordinator for one of the shelters walked us through the daily routine of a student and their family. First, families could not enter the shelter until a specific time. So while other students were being dismissed to go home or to an after-school program, our students living in the shelter had to walk the streets, go to the local convenience store, or try to hang around school until they were allowed to enter the shelter. The director described the dinner schedule that started at 6 p.m. This early dinner with no additional evening snack almost always resulted in students going to sleep hungry and waking up in complete starvation in the morning. For this reason, my student LaKeisha would be upset if the breakfast doors closed before she arrived to school and Micheal would walk out of breakfast with three extra muffins to eat later. After our visit to the neighborhood shelter, the teachers and I left with heavy hearts and uncontrollable tears. We knew homelessness existed, but could not bring ourselves to the believe that our babies, children that looked just like us were enduring such harsh realities.
I shared this account of my experiences to explain my truth, my story, and most importantly my reason for this research. Those past experiences and currently the new obstacles that my students face have made me question conditions in the field of education and society. I constantly wonder about the type of support and treatment my students are receiving outside of school and the circumstances that could leave a family with children without a home. In my role as researcher for this study, I engaged in these ongoing periods of reflection about my personal beliefs and opinions. This time was spent setting aside my own opinions, beliefs, and values about African American students who were homeless and African American in-service teacher beliefs. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) described this process as bracketing, where the researcher briefly sets aside personal ideas about the issue or topic being researched to ensure an authentic, uninterrupted view of what is being studied. I was intentional in my reflection and removal of my personal beliefs in order to collect, analyze and report on the data objectively.

In addition to addressing my role as a researcher and bracketing my personal views, I also considered what Merriam and Tisdell (2015) maintained about research that is grounded in critical thought. They stated:

> discussions of critical research tend to highlight three major interrelated issues in considering the relationship the researcher has with participants: insider/outsider issues; positionality issues; and, as a result of both of these intersecting factors, the importance of researcher reflexivity (p. 63).

They also acknowledged a definition of reflexivity shared by Probst and Berenson (2014) that explained reflexivity as the researcher having awareness of their possible influence on what
is being examined and also how going through research process can impact the researcher. Throughout every aspect of this study, I reflected on my position as an educator at the school where the study took place, my professional relationship with the teachers who participate in the study, and my daily interaction with the students who were the focus of the teachers' beliefs.

My positionality concerning this study is that I am an African American, middle-class woman educator who grew up in suburban Stone Mountain, Georgia. It was a family community, where my teachers lived, and my parents were able to provide for my basic needs and wants. This brief description of my background would categorize me as an outsider, unaware of the circumstances of homelessness. However, often times during the holidays my father would require our family to serve food at homeless shelters. There were also countless times I would hear my dad emphasize the practice of giving to those less fortunate. I witnessed him pass out snacks to needy individuals on the highway or under bridges we often traveled. My father would often recount moments of his childhood in Gambia West Africa and the extreme poverty that he endured.

Though I didn’t directly live the experience of being homeless or of extreme poverty, which places me as an outside to the experiences of homelessness, the practice of helping those less fortunate and being empathetic was stressed heavily in my household. Likewise, in my present position as an educator at a school identified to have the highest transitional/homeless population in the district, my eleven years working with the families at my school has placed me as an insider to the issues facing African American students who are homeless. It has also given me several insights and opinions about the issues and circumstances of homelessness. Identifying my outsider and insider position is crucial to the critical research of this study because it further challenges me to grapple with the issues I bring to the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).
I currently work as an Early Intervention teacher on the same grade level with the teachers who shared their beliefs in this study. We engage in daily data discussions focused on academics and other concerns. Some conversations are more favorable than others, and some points of views are encouraging, while others are limiting. Some beliefs I agree with, while others make me question intentions. Regardless of the discussions, I always find myself with daily worries, concerns, and frustrations about the well-being and safety of students. Currently, my school has three major homeless shelters that feed into it and an unknown number of students who are “doubled-up”, or living with another family in the apartments next door to the school. There is a constant influx of transient and homeless students that enter our building daily. Due to this, there is constant frustration and uncertainty felt by the classroom teachers of these new students.

Although, I haven’t personally experienced homelessness, working at Fortune with one-third of a student population that is homeless and the majority African American led to my critical interest in researching African American students who are homeless and the teachers' perceptions of these students. These experiences have also helped to shape my voice as a reflective practitioner who recognizes that the solutions to the problems that are present in the lives of these students will not be a quick fix but will take critical consideration of the research to utilize methods that matter. That consideration is inclusive of who is a part of the discussion and how their words are valued. In the following sections, I describe this process.

**Context**

This study took place at Fortune Academy (pseudonym), a predominately African American K-8 public charter school located in a major urban city in the Southeastern United States. Fortune Academy is a Title I charter school, that receives federal funding to increase the academic achievement of the high number of disadvantaged students attending. Fortune is uniquely
positioned between a major University and well-known business corporation, who both work as partners with the school. In addition, several other notable businesses and attractions are located within close proximity to Fortune’s campus. The placement of the school was by design 20 years ago when builders and investors of the city wanted to make what was then labeled the largest housing project in the nation, full of drugs and violence; to create a solution and haven for the students and families in the community to succeed. The construction of the building was very intentional with large open windows lining the hallways and ceilings to give natural sunlight and brighten the building. The classrooms are a shared learning space with open classroom concept that includes no doors, but retractable walls for privacy for teachers and students to collaborate. Other areas of the building include a media center, band room, music room, technology lab, a separate area for Department of Special Education and English Language Learners.

Outside of the school, you can see the city skyline as a backdrop to the playground and trailers positioned on the field for 6th-8th grades. Majority of the students walk to school so Fortune would be considered a neighborhood school. Adjacent to the school are mixed-income apartment homes were many of the students, and their families live. Many of the parents had deemed Fortune, a family school because over time they have seen families of children walk through Fortune’s halls. Fortune has four school buses that report to the school. Those students are still within the attendance zone to attend Fortune. At least three of the buses pick up students from condominium communities or up and coming neighborhoods in popular parts of the city. Fortune also has a lot of car traffic that comes to the school. There are many out of zone students, and who families attend, meaning the parents chose to go to Fortune through a lottery even though there are schools in their neighborhoods.
Not so far from the school are three homeless shelters, where many of our known cases of students who are homeless live. The majority of those students are bused to school and take shifts with a bus A and bus B route to cut down on behavior and safety concerns. Some of the students who are homeless do not ride the bus to and from school. If they are in the closest shelter which is about seven blocks from the school, their parents opt to walk them to school in the morning and meet them in the afternoon to walk back to the shelter. In some rare cases we have had students who were homeless relocate to another area of town, but because of their rights under McKinney-Vento, they are granted continued enrollment through the end of the year. In those cases, students and their families are given metro bus tokens to travel to and from school.

This particular school was chosen based on the number of enrolled African American students who were homeless and the teacher demographics. During the 2016-2017 school year, when this study was conducted, Fortune’s student population consisted of 770 Kindergarten-Eighth grade students. Table 3 below provides a breakdown of the student demographic at Fortune.

Table 3

2016-2017 Fortune Academy Student Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Racial</td>
<td>5%</td>
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</table>
In addition to the above demographics, the school's online statistics noted that “approximately 25% of the student body lived in transitional housing, with five days being the shortest amount enrolled and 23 days being the longest.” There were a total of 40 homeroom teachers at Fortune Academy during the 2016-2017 school year. Table 4 offers information on teacher demographic by grade level. This information regarding teacher and student demographics is important to note because Fortune’s demographics represent discussion in the literature regarding what students are homeless and where they attend school as well as who is teaching these students.
Due to the support of federal funding and additional private donations, Fortune can provide the needed academic, social and emotional services for students such as three counselors, 1 for each grade band K-2, 3-5 and 6-8 in addition to a psychologist who comes to the school for two days a week. They also have a parent and homeless liaison who provides support to parents and teachers through monthly meetings. There is a person in charge of community engagement and outreach to ensure partners with the school stay active and engaged. There is also a school nurse who is there every day and a structured recess program that shows students productive and
safe games to play with each other. In other areas related to academics, there is a speech pathologist, an Early Intervention Program (EIP) teacher on every grade level, K-5, and a content specific EIP teacher for grades 6-8. Also, there is a Student Support Lead who solely focuses on the tiered interventions and supports for individual students.

Participants

This section will discuss my process of identifying, securing, and engaging participation from three African American teachers for this study. As Kohli (2009) urged, CRT as a methodological tool insists that research participants are not solely viewed as sources of data. Instead, there is recognition of the value of each person’s voice and story. Likewise, Merriam and Tisdell (2015) noted that in conducting research that is critical is important that the research is done with participants and not on them. That was a powerful reminder for me in my pursuit of teachers who would willingly share their perceptions through their experiences in and out of the classroom. I saw these teachers as not just offering participation but actively engaging their voices and stories to disrupt common deficit beliefs about the students they teach. The teacher participants for this study were Michelle Kindle, Erika Anderson, and Debra Nelson 3 African American teachers who all taught second grade. The names listed for the teachers are pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. Table 5 provides background information about each teacher. Further detail about each teacher will be shared in the next chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[African American Teacher Participants]</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Kindle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of years teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of years at Fortune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous experience teaching Students of Color who are homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always taught in predominately African American school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current number of students who are homeless in classroom</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Recruitment Process.** The selected teachers for this research study were identified using purposeful selection (Merriam, 2009). A purposeful selection was used to determine teacher engagement through a set criterion that provided the richest and most relevant information for the purpose of the study, which was to understand African American teacher perceptions about African American students who are homeless. Before the engagement could begin, I obtained permission from both the school and the university. During the Spring of 2017, I submitted and received University IRB approval to conduct research (see Appendix A). Upon University IRB approval I also sent a formal letter to the Head of Schools at Fortune Academy to conduct research (see Appendix D). I previously spoke to the Head of Schools about researching Fortune and was just awaiting formal approval via the letter.

Once both documents were approved, I began the process of identifying teachers. Recruitment of the teachers occurred March 2017. The process to recruit included sending an email to prospective teachers in grades First and Second at Fortune Academy (see Appendix F). These particular grade levels were selected based on the high number of homeless students that enrolled
at Fortune Academy (see Table 3) as well as national and state data that indicated Kindergarten to Second grades have the largest number of enrolled homeless students in public school (Georgia Department of Education, 2016). The email invited the teachers to an informational meeting that was scheduled during their grade level planning times. The email also included a brief description of the study and the informed consent letter for the teachers to review before the meetings. Each meeting was scheduled one week after the email was sent to ensure that teachers had enough time to review the invite and letter.

**Selection Process.** During each meeting, I reviewed the informed consent letter with the teachers and answered any questions they had about the study and their engagement. After much discussion, each teacher was given a form that included four criteria for involvement (see Appendix G). The teachers were asked to check off all criteria that applied to them, and also indicate their interest in taking part in the study. This criterion included: 1.) being African American, 2.) being a first or second-grade homeroom teacher, 3.) teaching at least two Students of Color who were homeless, and 4.) being willing to commit a minimum of 7 hours of time within a 10-week quarter of the 2016-2017 school year. All of these criteria were specific to the purpose of this study to expand the limited research on African American in-service teacher beliefs and perceptions about African American students who are homeless. After each meeting, I collected the slips in a sealed envelope. I reviewed the slips away from the school site and discovered that I needed to create a second set of criteria because I had more than the required number (three) of interested teachers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The number of teachers requested helped to ensure a more in-depth inquiry and analysis of teacher responses. The number of teachers chosen also followed the suggested number for qualitative case study participants as noted by Creswell.
This number also allowed for more time with each teacher to gain further insight about their perceptions.

The second set of criteria included the number of years teaching for each teacher. I only considered teachers who had taught more than three years. This stipulation allowed me to remove novice teachers who fell within the induction period of 1-3 years of teaching experience. By only including teachers with more than three years, I believed their experience in the classroom would allow for richer discussion in the interviews and the journal reflections. Also, including teachers beyond the induction period would provide answers to questions about previous experiences. In using the second set of criteria, I had five interested teachers (4-second grade and 1-first grade). I decided to use three-second grade teachers. By having teachers on the same grade level, within similar years of teaching experience I could make accurate comparisons between the teachers.

**Data Collection**

Data collection for this study began March 2017 and concluded June 2017. The data collection methods used for this study were: 1.) a single open-ended questionnaire, 2.) two semi-structured interviews and 3.) four audio reflective journals. The collection of this data followed Yin's (2013) Principles of Data Collection:

"1. Use [of] multiple sources of evidence (to ensure triangulation and credibility)
2. Create[ing] a case study database
3. Maintain[ing] a chain of evidence (to ensure reliability)
4. Exercise care when using data from electronic sources."
Following those principles of data collection, allowed me "to deal with the problems of establishing the construct validity and reliability of the evidence" (Yin, 2013, p. 118) which were key to ensure trustworthiness of this study.

In addition, considering Yin's (2013) suggested principles I also considered how the collection of data would acknowledge the teachers' voices according to CRT. The emphasis in CRT research as a methodological tool is placed on the narratives and counter-narratives that emerge from the experiential knowledge and words shared by People of Color. Thus, in the data collection process, I considered methods that would allow the teachers' voices to be heard. As Parker and Lynn (2002) maintained, "thick descriptions and interviews, characteristic of case study research, not only serve illuminative purposes" (p. 11), but they can also challenge the preconceived and often deficit views about People of Color.

**Open-ended Questionnaire.** The open-ended questionnaire included seven direct background questions and eight open-ended questions (see Appendix B). It was administered at the beginning of the study. The teachers completed their questionnaires on the computer via a link that was sent by me. Teacher responses were sent to a password protected weblink address only accessible by me. The decision to use a questionnaire was supported by previous studies that utilized open-ended questionnaires as a way to gain an understanding of participants’ perceptions (Lewis, 2012). The use of the questionnaire at the start of the study provided me with initial information and insight into each teacher’s beliefs. I also believed that by providing each teacher time to think and respond to this critical topic, richer data could be used to create informative and relevant interview questions to ask teachers.

**Interviews.** An interview is defined as a "process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study" (deMarris, 2004, p. 55).
Interviews served as a necessary method for me to capture the thoughts, feelings, and interpretations of the teachers that would not be readily observed (Merriam, 2009) and are an important source of case study research (Yin, 2013). Interviewing as a data collection method is also considered the best "technique to use when conducting intensive case studies of a few selected individuals" (Merriam, 2009, p. 88). Merriam (2009) discussed three types of interviews conducted in a qualitative case study: highly structured/formal, semi-structured, and unstructured/informal.

For the purpose of this study, I used semi structured (Merriam, 2009) interviews. The semi structured format “allow[s] the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). Likewise, the structure of the semi-structured interviews, following CRT methodology, allowed the teachers to build on their beliefs through focused questioning related to the tenets of CRT. In some cases, where I needed further clarification, I conducted informal follow-up interviews with the teachers. These moments were done in person and allowed for flexibility in the types of questions that I asked and the manner in which they were given.

Each teacher engaged in two scheduled one on one, audio recorded, semi-structured qualitative interviews, which were no longer than one hour. The initial interview was administered after the participants completed the questionnaire. Some of the questions for the initial interview were generated from teacher responses to the questionnaire, such as inquiring about how long they have taught in their particular grade level and also asking teachers to expound upon their choice to teach in a predominately African American school. Other questions (see Appendix C) were predetermined by me and followed the suggested interview protocol by Creswell (2013). The content for the initial interview questions aided in understanding three key areas of inquiry: 1.) how teachers positioned race and homelessness in a discussion about the academic, social and
emotional needs of their African American students who were homeless, 2.) teachers’ discussion and reflection about their racial background and its influence on their views about their students, and 3.) discussion of factors, prior to teaching and while currently teaching, that have influenced their views about their students.

The second interview (see Appendix D) was given at the conclusion of all audio reflective journaling. Some questions from the second interview were similar to the initial interview to see if shifts occurred in the teachers’ responses from the initial interview. Other questions from the second interview were predetermined and focused on the teacher's’ process of reflecting and their overall perceptions of their students.

The initial interviews were either conducted at the school, with the time and date set by the teacher or at the teacher’s residence. The second interviews were all done at the school in the closed and private area. All interviews were tape recorded on the researcher’s mobile device app. During the recording of each interview, I typed notes of any questions or thoughts generated during the conversation so that I could revisit those at a later time.

**Audio Reflective Journaling.** In addition to the interviews and the questionnaire, audio reflective journals were used as a third method of data collection. Black, Sileo, and Prater (2000) explained in their study about preservice and in-service teacher perceptions that, "reflection enables individuals to reframe, reinterpret, and articulate their understandings and beliefs, on a continual basis, in light of new experiences and information" (p. 71). Likewise, Kim (2013) used handwritten reflective journals as a data source in her research to understand preservice teacher perceptions of homeless students. However, Black et al. (2000) acknowledged that reflecting can be a difficult task. One specific difficulty related to the audio reflective journal of this study was the lack of structured time for educators to reflect. Because of this understanding, I chose to
modify the written aspect of the reflective journal method by having teachers record reflections through a free application on a mobile device. Audio reflective journaling, in this study, served as a convenient and relevant tool to capture the perceptions of teachers not expressed during the interview process.

The teachers recorded reflections over four weeks and each week completed one reflection that summarized their thoughts, feelings, or interactions with their students. Teachers used the “Voice Recorder” app, a free app, on their devices (i.e., cell phone, tablet, etc.) to record their thoughts. At the end of each week, teachers sent their recorded journal to an email address only accessible by me. To ensure teachers knew how to record and upload their recordings correctly, I provided a separate session that reviewed expectations for how to record. During the session, the teachers used nonrelated practice questions as a way to ensure voice clarity and as an example of the depth of reflections that I was expecting. Teachers were encouraged to record in quiet places either away from the school site or where they felt comfortable and would not be interrupted. A reminder email was sent to teachers one day before reflections were due. Also, and an email containing the teacher reflection protocol was sent at the beginning of the week to remind teachers of what should be included in the voice recordings. In addition, some teachers found it helpful to have a hard copy of the journal prompt each week in order to jot down notes and remind themselves of what happened day to day. I provided each teacher with a folder and their journal prompt at the start of week.

The reflection journal protocol included a weekly reflection topic for the teachers. Each of the topics addressed one of the tenets of CRT. Teachers were asked to grapple with and think about their African American students who were homeless and their students’ academic, social and emotional needs (see outline Table 6).
Table 6

*Teacher Audio Reflective Journal Outline*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Tenet Focus</th>
<th><strong>Teacher Reflective Question Focus</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Centrality of race and racism and intersectionality with other forms of subordination</td>
<td>This week please consider your interaction with your African American students who are homeless and their academic, social and emotional needs. Describe what that looked like for you and the student. Speak about which need was more prevalent and how you responded to their needs and if you feel your response had any consideration for them being: 1. African American and/or 2. a homeless student.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Week | Valuing experiential knowledge | This week, please reflect on your interaction with your African American students who are homeless and any academic, social and emotional needs. Identify if there was one need (academic, social or emotional) that you had to attend to more and give reasons why you think that was. Describe what that looked like for you and for the student. Then please reflect on what you did specifically to address the need(s).

Also consider and discuss if you addressed their need(s), based on: 1. You being an African American teacher, 2. Your knowledge about working with homeless students, 3. Your previous or current experience working with African American students 4. Your preparation as an Early Childhood educator, and/or 5. A previous experience or encounter where race played a major part. |
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Challenging the dominant discourse</td>
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<td></td>
<td>This week, continue to reflect on your interaction with your African American students who are homeless and any of their academic, social and emotional needs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Describe any specific examples of those needs and what you did to address them.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Discuss what you think society believes or thinks about your students and their homelessness.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Based on your interaction with these students, how does your language/discussion go against or agrees with what others have said or do say about these students?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you think race or homelessness is a bigger point of discussion?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Discuss what other teachers have stated about these students.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does your language/discussion go against or agrees with what other teachers have said or do say about these students?</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Commitment to social justice</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This week, continue to reflect on your interaction with your African American students who are homeless and their academic, social and emotional needs. Specifically consider the social settings that these students are in daily (i.e. lunch, recess, specials, etc.). What is going on during that time? How are they interacting or participating in the activities? How are other students responding to them?</td>
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Does your language mirror what you have heard? Also, consider and discuss if that conversation centers on the race of the student and/or them being homeless?
Also during this week continue to reflect on your discussion of these students and reflect on if you feel current policies, practices, supports, strategies, etc. that are in place effectively address these students needs and if those things should be modified and why?

What things should be done or are already being done to support these students and your thinking about them?

Asking teachers to reflect in this manner also assisted in the analysis of their reflections in order to determine how closely aligned their words were to the beliefs and tenets of CRT. During week 1, teachers were asked to consider the "Centrality of race and racism and intersectionality with other forms of subordination." With this tenet, CRT scholars argued "that race and racism are endemic to and permanent in US society" (Milner & Howard, 2013, p. 539) and that there is no separation of race from other areas of life such as class. Teachers were asked to reflect on how they responded and spoke about their student needs and if they saw a connection between the students’ status as homeless and being African American. The purpose of this reflection week was to understand if the teachers of these students recognized race and homelessness as two intersecting problems or if they considered them two separate issues as it related to the students’ academic, social and emotional needs.

During week 2, teachers were asked to consider the tenet "Valuing experiential knowledge." Within this tenet there is a focus on hearing the experiences of People of Color
(Milner & Howard, 2013). Teachers were asked to reflect on how they discussed their students’ academic, social and emotional needs, while specifically considering and sharing their backgrounds and experiences in and out of the classroom as African American women, teachers, and mothers. In this week teachers were asked to consider how their experiences being African American women in the classroom or in their personal lives have influenced their discussion and perceptions of their students.

During week 3, teachers were asked to consider the tenet, "Challenging the dominant discourse." Within this tenet, "CRT challenges claims of objectivity, race-neutrality, meritocracy, colorblindness, and equal opportunity" of dominant groups (Milner & Howard, 2013, p. 539). Teachers were asked to reflect on their language about their students and whether their language and discussion mirrored that of what society and their colleagues say about African American homeless students.

During week 4, teachers were asked to consider the tenet, "Commitment to social justice." Within this tenet, CRT acknowledges "that educational institutions operate in contradictory ways, with their potential to oppress and marginalize coexisting with their potential to emancipate and empower" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). This tenet raises the question of whose interest do policies and changes genuinely benefit and how can there be a commitment to transform racial, gender, and class oppression that benefits all. Teachers were asked to reflect on their students’ needs and whether they believed current structures, school supports, and policies helped to address those needs of African American students who were homeless.

The advantages to using audio reflective journaling were the convenience for teachers to use their device when needed to capture their thoughts throughout the day. The choice to record their reflections as opposed to writing or typing them allowed the teachers to freely talk in the
moment of what was going without worry of the right things to say. It was an authentic way to capture their thoughts that largely contributed to understanding their beliefs. All of the methods, but especially the reflective journal was a method that allowed the teachers share their story and narrative uninterrupted. In CRT valuing experiential knowledge is a tenet that recognizes the power of the story told by People of Color about their lived experiences. Through their daily experiences in the classroom and reflection over past experiences, the teachers provided "descriptive information [that] tracked changes and development" (Merriam, 2009, p. 155) of their thinking. In Kim's (2013) study, she noted that the reflective journaling helped the preservice teachers to "critically examine the dominant discourse toward children experiencing homelessness" and encouraged them to "compare and contrast [their own] discourse" while working with the students (p. 296).

**Data Analysis**

Data for this study was analyzed using an inductive thematic analysis of participant responses from open-ended questionnaires, teacher interviews, and teacher audio reflective journals. Thematic analysis is "a technique or method for identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning (or ‘themes’) in qualitative data" (Lyons & Coyle, 2016, p. 84). I also approached analysis of the data using a Critical Race lens which emphasizes the importance of hearing the participants’ voices through counter-narratives of dominant discourse.

Lyons and Coyle (2016) discussed an approach to thematic analysis in their text that discussed various analysis approaches for qualitative research. This approach included six phases to follow when conducting thematic analysis to ensure the process is recursive, "constantly moving back and forward between the entire data set" (p. 88). This study followed five of those six phases as outlined below:
Phase 1: Familiarizing yourself with your data

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

Phase 3: Searching for themes

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

**Familiarizing yourself with your data.** Before the initial phase began, questionnaire responses, individual interviews, and audio reflective journals each transcribed within 72 hours of being received. Transcribing within this time frame provided an accurate description of what was stated by the participants. The information was stored on a password-protected computer. All transcriptions occurred away from the school site. At certain points throughout the process of transcribing, teachers were asked to member-check or review the interview and journal transcripts for any errors or to offer clarity on portions of the transcripts that were not clear to me. This process of review was done both by hard copy and by email which helped to “ensure descriptive and interpretive validity” (Kyei-Blankson, 2014, p. 1054).

Once I received the reviewed and/or corrected transcripts from the teachers I was ready to begin the initial phase of familiarizing myself with the data. During this phase, I immersed myself in the data by repeatedly and actively reading the hard copy transcriptions at least once before coding. I recorded any initial thoughts and ideas in the margins of the hard copy transcripts, and in some instances, recorded analytic memos about the transcriptions in my researcher’s journal. Also during this phase I used Saldana’s (2015) suggestions for coding and memoing. Saldana (2015) noted that, “analytic memos are somewhat comparable to researcher journal entries or blogs – a place to ‘dump your brain’ about the participants, phenomenon, or process under investigation by thinking and thus writing and thus thinking even more…” (p. 44). At this stage,
using Saldana’s explanation of memo writing helped me, to record my thoughts in a way that assisted with future coding and development of themes.

**Generating Initial Codes.** During phase two, I printed hard copies of the completed transcribed questionnaire responses, interviews, and audio reflective journals. Merriam (2009) discussed analysis as an important stage in the research process and how it should occur simultaneously with data collection. In essence, as each data source was collected at different times, my execution of phases one and two occurred simultaneously of each other. For example, as I transcribed and reviewed the questionnaire responses I, shortly after coded the questionnaires. As, I transcribed and reviewed the initial interview, shortly after I coded all of the interviews together. I followed the same pattern for each journal reflection and the final interview. I initially began the process of manually coding, line by line on each document. Though that process of physically manipulating and writing on the hard copies was beneficial it became cluttered with my codes and notes, and I decided to use Dedoose is an online coding source that helped organize my memos, codes, and notes about the data. I found benefits of using Dedoose “… permits the researcher to shift quickly back and forth between multiple analytic tasks such as coding, analytic memo writing, and exploring patterns in progress” (Saldana, 2015, p.36). I decided to use a combination of coding manually and electronically, always ensuring that my manual codes appeared in Dedoose.

Having established a system, using Dedoose, I began line by line initial coding the majority of the time. I coded each set of data individually, first starting with questionnaire responses of each teacher, and then moving to the first set of transcribed interviews for each teacher, and following a similar pattern for their weekly audio reflective journals and the final interview.
As part of my coding process I employed steps outlined by Saldana (2015), which included first and second cycle coding methods. First cycle coding occurs as part of initially coding the data. In first cycle coding Saldana presented a variety of method options that were very applicable to coding my data. However, for the purpose of this study I chose to use Eclectic Coding, a form of open coding that combined two or more codes from first cycle coding. Within the Eclectic Coding method, I utilized these first cycle coding methods: Initial and In Vivo Coding. I used In Vivo coding for the majority of my coding, especially with the reflective journals. In Vivo coding allowed me to capture the voices and words of the participants themselves and closely aligned to the theoretical framing of this study. As Saldana shared in a study he conducted with young people, the use of In Vivo Coding allowed him “to honor children’s voices and to ground the analysis in their perspectives” (p. 71). This mirrored Ladson-Billings and Tate’s (1995) discussion concerning the use of CRT as a methodological tool in “naming one’s own reality” (p. 13) and providing an authentic space for participants to share their narratives. In Vivo Coding uses the direct language and words of the participants which helps to ensure that one has captured the significance of the participants’ words to assist with concentrating meaning (Saldana, 2015). Table 10 gives examples of In Vivo codes that were generated. “support dispersed equally”, “believe in themselves”, “typical kid friendly”, “get along just fine”, “care free”, “class clown”, “very talkative”, “their own unique story”, and it’s not an issue”.

In addition to In Vivo coding, Initial Coding was also used. According to Saldana (2015) Initial Coding is an approach that is open-ended and can also include In Vivo Coding. As a method, Initial Coding allows for all the codes that are generated to be temporary. Initial codes were used as often as the In Vivo codes especially with the interview data. Examples of Initial
codes that were generated: supporting parents/relieving them of burdens, emotional needs, struggle with self-control, student appreciation, race does not matter at school, student gratitude, school as a safe place, students are social, and what students desire.

In total I generated close to 300 codes during the first cycle. As this number increased I made sure to also keep a record of those “emergent codes” in a codebook stored in Excel generated from Dedoose. Due to the large number of codes I found it necessary, before beginning a second cycle of coding, to take Saldana’s (2015) suggestions to organize and assemble the codes generated during first cycle coding. He suggested several steps to accomplish this, but I chose the transition method of “Coding the Codes.” This method essentially helped me to condense several similar codes into one Concept Code by applying a constant comparative technique where I looked for similarities and differences from parts of text in comparison to previous categories. For example, the In Vivo code, “so many things tacked on” and the Initial Code, balancing the daily difficulties of teaching were merged in Dedoose under the Concept Code, “daily added frustrations”. Another example of how I applied this method was merging the In Vivo code “race is not important” and the Initial Code race should not impact support under the Concept Code “race is not an issue.”

Initially this process was completed on hard copies of all the codes generated from Dedoose. After reorganizing and assembling the codes on paper I made the changes in Dedoose. I went through this process until I had reduced the number of codes to a workable amount by merging and recoding. The remaining codes were carried forward into the second cycle coding.

Second cycle coding includes advanced methods of rearranging and sorting data coded data during first cycle coding Saldana (2015). During this second cycle I chose to use Focused Coding as my method. Focused Coding assists with the categorization of data based on similar
themes or concepts and also follows “In Vivo, Process and/or Initial Coding”, which were two of the first cycle coding methods I initially used. Using Focused Coding, I revisited my first cycle codes that were stored in Dedoose. I exported those codes and related data excerpts into an Excel document. In the Excel document I color coded the data excerpts from the three participants to make organizing easier. This also helped me to ensure that the data and later themes that I created were represented across all data sources and participants.

I began grouping the “data similarly coded [that were] clustered together” and reviewed those clusters to generate provisional category names or Focused Codes based on the participants’ words or my own interpretation (Saldana, 2015, p. 240). For example, I named a category "A lot of different experiences" and the codes generated for this category can be found in Table 7 below.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Focused Codes Generated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A lot of different experiences&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no prior understanding about homelessness at previous school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal experiences help with understanding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, I created descriptions for each category that was generated to show my process of considering codes with categories. For example, with “A lot of different experiences”, I noted: teachers have a lot of different things that they experience that cause them to respond the way
they do: 1. personal, 2. in-service, 3. preservice, 4. no experience at all, 5. number of years. After going through this process with all of the codes and reaching a point of saturation I generated thirty-six Focused Codes.

**Searching for themes.** During this phase of searching for themes Lyons and Coyle (2016) noted that it is a time to make sense of the codes that were created. To do this they suggested creating candidate themes. Candidate themes, according to Lyons and Coyle (2016) involves grouping the codes “into a coherent story that makes sense of the data” (p. 110). These “candidate” themes have the ability to change and can be temporary. It was during this time that quite often I referred back to my research questions to ensure that the data addressed what I initially wanted to know. To do that I typed each research question in a separate document and began cutting and pasting the Focused Codes with excerpts under the question I thought it addressed. Next, I was able to review my Focused Codes and generate candidate themes. Those initial themes were recorded in the same Excel document as the Focused Codes under a different tab. Here is an example of the candidate themes that were generated with supporting codes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate Theme 1</th>
<th>Candidate Theme 2</th>
<th>Candidate Theme 3</th>
<th>Candidate Theme 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It takes a village of collective effort to</td>
<td>A teacher wears many hats, plays many roles, has varied lenses to ensure</td>
<td>Students have unique stories and abilities</td>
<td>A lot of experiences can impact perceptions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 8 Initial Candidate Themes*
| Focused Codes | "making school a pleasant place" | intersectionality | academic needs/concerns/strengths | "race plays a part"

| teacher wondering/worries | "I can relate to them..." | social and emotional | "race is not an issue"

| finding solutions | role of being African American | social concerns/needs/strengths | intersectionality

| what impacts students | role of teacher | student behavior/trait | talking about homeless students

| supporting teachers (IS A WAY TO A SOLUTION) | role of gender | emotional concerns/need/strengths | teacher beliefs |
This initial process of creating candidate themes helped me review the data sources that the codes represented. In the next phase I reviewed the candidate themes to ensure data was represented across all data sources.

**Reviewing Themes.** In this next phase I reviewed my candidate themes by matching codes and excerpts from the data (Lyons & Coyle, 2016). I referred back to my Excel document and reviewed the color coded the excerpts and codes under the possible themes. I went through a process of looking for similarities in the segments of data that were extracted and determined whether the data were represented across all sources such as the questionnaire, journals, and interviews. I completed this by going back to my list of color coded excerpts and focused codes and identifying each excerpt as I=interview, Q= questionnaire or J= journal. I also considered my research questions and if the themes selected gave a clear response to the questions asked. Next, I decided to combine Theme 4 (A lot of experiences can impact perceptions) under Theme 2 (A teacher wears many hats, plays many roles, has varied lenses). I felt a richer description could come out of describing the various viewpoints and experiences of teachers. Combining those two themes richly addressed my research question 2 concerning the influence of teacher perceptions.

**Defining and Naming Themes.** During this phase I selected pieces of the data that best connected to each theme and also defined the selected themes. Table 9 shows the theme names and definitions that were developed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>school support (IS A WAY TO A SOLUTION)</th>
<th>daily added frustrations/difficulties of being a teacher</th>
<th>what impacts students</th>
<th>&quot;I can relate to them...&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 9

*Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1</th>
<th>Theme 2</th>
<th>Theme 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It takes a Village: A student’s success is dependent upon the collective effort, responsibility, and support found in and out of school</td>
<td>“Teacher mommy”: An extended but expected responsibility for our students</td>
<td>Speaking about Assets: Students have unique stories and abilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussing the needs of African American students reflected Ujima, a principle</td>
<td>African American teachers accept and hold dear their role as “other moth-</td>
<td>When speaking about their African American students who are homeless, African American</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
highly regarded in the African American celebration of Kwanza. The teachers acknowledged that providing help is not a one sided endeavor, but requires a shared responsibility” on the part of all entities (school, community, teacher, parents, society) that have a hand in making these students future brighter. Likewise, teachers are also in need of their village of professional support in how to help these students as well as parents are “to the African American students that they teach. They hold ownership over the fact that these are not just students, but their “babies” that need to be looked after. These teachers’ experiences in and out of the classroom in various roles as mothers, teachers, and African American women influences how they confront the different realities about their students and themselves through the intersectionality of race, class, and their professional position as an educator. These teachers recognize that the many hats they wear and experiences teachers don’t isolate or solely identify their homeless students as having needs, but enthusiastically and lovingly celebrated their abilities and uniqueness. In talking about these students academically, socially and emotionally, teachers challenged dominant discourse and questioned practices of the school and society.
in need of support in how they can be effective. When everyone (teachers, parents and students) are supported the village that surrounds the students becomes stronger and the idea of school as a safe haven and a pleasant place for students is actualized.

as African American women enhances the support and love they provide for their babies.

Study Quality and Ethics

To ensure the quality of this study I followed Yin’s (2013) tactics for ensuring construct validity and ethical considerations as well as Merriam’s (2009) strategies for ensuring internal validity and reliability.

To achieve construct validity, which is defined as “identifying correct operational measures for the concepts being studied”, using multiple sources of evidence and establishing a chain of evidence were two important methods used (Yin, 2013, p. 45). I used the questionnaire, two semi structured interviews, and four reflective journals as multiple sources of evidence. Yin
(2013) explained that "the most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of converging lines of inquiry," which results in a triangulation of the data (p. 120). In the case of this study, the themes were generated based evidence from all three teachers’ questionnaires, interviews and journal reflections.

Another tactic to achieve construct validity was establishing a chain of evidence. Yin (2013) explained that establishing a chain of evidence allows "an external observer… the reader of the case study— to follow the derivation of any evidence from initial research questions to ultimate case study conclusions" (p. 127). He noted that the reader should be able to trace the steps of the study starting from initial inquiry through concluding thoughts. The data sources used were authentic and contained actual evidence of the teachers' words. Each interview, journal and questionnaire transcript contained the date and time of when it was conducted. Specifically, for interviews, I also described the location of where they were conducted. Likewise, I followed a suggested case study protocol that not only outlined my questions to ask the teachers, but also related back to my research questions and theoretical framework.

Yin (2013) also discussed ethical considerations when conducting a study. For this study, I followed University IRB guidelines, providing the teachers with consent forms, following a case study protocol, using my best and ethical judgment, ensuring the privacy and protection for participants by giving pseudonyms, and collecting data systematically.

In addition to the tactics suggested by Yin, I also employed other strategies to ensure internal validity as described by Merriam (2009). She explained that internal validity attends to how well the findings pair with reality. Member checking or "respondent validation" was one strategy that she discussed to achieve internal validity. This strategy involves receiving feedback from the participants concerning findings that are developing throughout the study.
feedback from the participants in this way ensures that you are capturing the words and sentiments of the participants and also allows the participants an opportunity to clarify your interpretation of their words. For this study member checking occurred after the second journal reflection and at the end of the data collection period.

I asked the teachers to review their transcripts for the first and second journal reflection in order to clarify areas that I had questions about as well as verify that what they stated was accurately captured. I provided each teacher with a hard copy transcript of their first and second journal reflections. I asked them to make any corrections on the hard copy and to also expound on areas that I needed clarity on. I highlighted sections of the transcript that needed further clarification and gave directions on what I wanted the teacher to explain. Another member check occurred at the end of the study. The teachers were given an opportunity to review my analysis about the themes that were generated with corresponding excerpts from the interviews, questionnaire, and journals and could offer feedback if they felt it necessary.

Another strategy suggested by Merriam (2009) to accomplish internal validity was the discussion of reflexivity. Through this process of reflexivity, I shared my assumptions, opinions, and beliefs about the research as well as my connection to the study and the teachers who participated. I also described this process through bracketing which caused me to set aside my personal ideas about the research to ensure an authentic, uninterrupted view of what was being studied.

**Data Management**

The data was stored using a mix of manual and computer management. Transcripts of the interviews, participant questionnaires, and audio recorded reflective journals were stored on my password protected, personal laptop. Hard copies of coded transcripts with memos were stored in individual file folders labeled with pseudonym identifiers for each participant.
Limitations of the Study

The limitations presented in this case study research were concerns for generalization of the case study results and the length of time dedicated to conducting the study. This qualitative case study was conducted with three African American teachers in one public elementary school located in a metropolitan city in the Southeastern United States. Because of these specificities of criteria and limited number of participants, findings cannot be generalized for other specific populations of teachers. Further limitations of this study also included the time period. This was not a lengthy study, and the limited time for data collection can be viewed as too short by some. However, within the 4 months, extensive and various forms of data was collected.

An additional limitation of this study was discussed earlier in my role as researcher and teacher at Fortune. As an Intervention teacher for the second-grade team I often had daily interactions and conversations with the teachers about student needs and concerns as well as general discussion about my passion for education. Given my personal and professional relationships with the teachers who participated in the study, it was possible that the perceptions shared by the teachers could have reflected what they perceived I wanted to hear or not be entirely honest in their conversations. However, I believe that the familiarity between myself and the teachers who participated aided in their comfortability to provide candid responses.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand African American in-service teacher perceptions about the academic, social and emotional needs of their African American students who are homeless. This is an area of research that has been limited to hearing, primarily from white pre-service teachers. Data for the study was collected through an open-ended questionnaire, interviews, and audio reflective journals. Data were analyzed using five phases of thematic analysis.
The themes generated during analysis collectively captured the voices and beliefs of the teachers.

Their words will be shared in the next chapter.
This chapter presents findings based in the words and beliefs of three African American women in-service teachers Michelle Kindle, Erika Anderson, and Debra Nelson. This study sought to understand these African American teachers’ perceptions concerning the academic, social, and emotional needs of their elementary African American students who were homeless. In addition, underlying this purpose was also the need to provide counter-narratives to the existing research about African American students who were homeless by valuing the voices of African American in-service teachers, a group that has rarely been highlighted in the research around this topic. Richard Milner (2012) discussed the use of counter-narrative in CRT research as a key way that "knowledge can and should be generated through narratives and counter-narratives that emerge from and with People of Color" (p. 28). This understanding was pursued by asking the following two questions: How do African American in-service teachers in an urban public elementary school perceive the academic, social and emotional needs of their African American students who are homeless? and What factors influence African American in-service elementary teacher perceptions of African American students who are homeless?

The beginning of this chapter shares each teacher's story through their personal and professional backgrounds. Following each teachers' story will be a discussion of the overarching themes that emerged from the data and their connection to the two focal research questions.

Who are we?

Before I share the narratives of the teachers, I would like to revisit the use of CRT as the theoretical framework of this study. In discussing the “findings” and “participants” of this study, it was imperative that I recognize the value of each teacher’s voice and contribution. In valuing their voices, the teachers were not considered just sole “participants,” but individuals
whose stories contained complex lives, and struggles (Kholi, 2009). In essence, Michelle Kindle, Erika Anderson, and Debra Nelson engaged in aspects of CRT that demonstrated their fight to speak against dominant perspectives about their African American students who were homeless. These teachers also offered examples and reflections of their experiential knowledge as Women and Teachers of Color in and out of the classroom. They demonstrated their commitment to social justice for their African American students and parents who were homeless. They also expressed moments of struggle, but also a deeper awareness in their understanding of the centrality of race and racism and the intersectionality of race and class. Their voices and beliefs contributed significantly to an area in the educational research that rarely gives voice to African American teachers.

Debra Nelson is no stranger to working with African American students. For the majority of her career, she has found herself in predominately African American student populated schools. In reflecting on her time in the classroom and what brought her into teaching, she shared that she has always had the passion and desire to work with little people since she was younger. She was able to remember her fourth-grade teacher, who she credits for being a significant reason why she went into the field of education. Debra also shared her personal struggles of homelessness. as a young child, she and her family were victims of Hurricane Katrina and were faced to start life all over again. During her initial interview she shared, "It is those moments that I mostly remember and that also, every day make me want to be in the classroom and especially understand what my homeless students are going through with transitioning and just trying to get adjusted." She discussed how her placement in schools with students who look just like her was mostly by chance at the beginning of her teaching career. However, being at Fortune was an in-
tentational decision because of the population of students who were homeless and the school culture that embraces both students and teachers. At the conclusion of her final interview, she shared that the decision to "teach African-American children [was] because that's who I am. They are a reflection of me."

Debra's initial responses to the question of homelessness, race, and her African American students who were homeless were very insightful. In her questionnaire, she described homelessness as being "cold, dark and sad." When asked about what homelessness is and its causes she stated, "it's our poor choices, it's not having the tools you need to be successful." During her initial interview, she noted that most of her conversations about homelessness took place at school the majority of the time and when she is engaged in those conversations race would take back seat. I asked her during her initial interview why she thought race was never discussed and she responded by saying, "everyone or the majority of us here are all Black, so it is what we see." In the questionnaire she was asked to respond to the statement, "race does not matter in today's society," she responded "race matters and the fact that that statement was made further proves race is an important part of our society."

When Erika Anderson agreed to be a part of this study, she was also beginning her first year at Fortune. However, she has committed herself to the classroom for six years. She discussed that since childhood she has wanted to become a teacher. She shared that towards the end of high school and upon entering college, people started to discourage her from entering the education field because "there is no money to make as a teacher." Erika said during her initial interview, she allowed others to sway her away from teaching and towards nursing. However, she knew she wanted to help people, little people, in a different way, and decided to stick with her original plan of teaching, where she could "provide a service of some kind."
Unlike Debra, Erika has not always taught in schools with predominately African American student populations. She explained that she never had an intentional goal to just work with African American students, but as fate would have it, she has spent her teaching career working with Hispanic and Black students and says she wouldn't have it any other way.

In the short time that she has been at Fortune, Erika has enjoyed being a part of the staff and has expressed that the students are better supported by efforts of the school. This statement was in comparison to her last school which was coincidently in the same district as Fortune and included a similar population of students. She also noted that this would be her first time "openly" knowing she was teaching homeless students. At her previous school, Erika believed that many students were homeless or experiencing some form of housing instability and often reached out to the Department of Family and Community Services (DFACS). Unlike Fortune, the school itself had not taken the time to ensure that their teachers were knowledgeable of the living situations of the students. In her questionnaire Erika shared her initial thoughts about African American students who were homeless. She focused her attention on not just the students but their parents as well by asking, “is there anything to do to help the kids and their parents?” In discussing her thoughts about those students’ academic, social and emotional needs, she identified “their needs [as being] more sensitive due to their circumstances” (E. Anderson, personal communication, March 20, 2017). During her initial interview, when asked what homelessness is and its causes she stated: “In the past, I always thought homelessness or homeless students were just people or students who did not have a home meaning they lived on the streets or maybe somehow DFACS had to get involved.” Like Debra, the majority of Erika's conversation about homelessness took place at Fortune and in those conversations race was rarely discussed.
Like Erika, Michelle Kindle was also in her first year at Fortune during her participation in this study. She was the most experienced in the classroom, out of all three teachers. During her final interview, she eloquently captured her reason for coming into the field of education by acknowledging the "positive impact that all of [her] past teachers had on [her] life." She stated,

I realized that they were pulling and guiding me down a path that would be filled with opportunities and success. I knew that teaching was where I needed to be. I wanted and still to this day want to be that teacher that a student looks back and says to themselves, 'Ms. Kindle really believed in me and was dedicated to my success.' I know how someone else believing in you can push you to limits you never thought you could reach.

Teaching is not one of those careers that you can just do on a wing and prayer. Your heart has to love the spirit and curiosity of children but also needs to have the willingness to be patient to unlock their full potential. Seven years later I still love teaching as much as I did the first day I stepped into my first classroom.

Before coming to Fortune, Michelle worked in a private all white school. She clarified that placement in the private school was not intentional just “how the cards fell” (M. Kindle, personal communication, April 6, 2017). She explained that choosing to leave her private school was an intentional decision and was happy that Fortune chose her. Similar to Debra, the culture and climate motivated her transferal to Fortune. Michelle indicated that at Fortune she could tell the teachers and administrative staff were “devoted and invested in the potential of the students” (M. Kindle, personal communication, April 6, 2017). Fortune’s commitment to the students also
aligned with Michelle’s own philosophy about teaching which involved her dedication to “unlocking the full potential of young lives” (M. Kindle, personal communication, April 6, 2017). It also addressed her decision to teach African American students. She shared in her final interview her passion and purpose for wanting to serve students who look like her; she stated, "they need good teachers." She elaborated on this statement by sharing that

the black population needs teachers and role models that reflect positivity and hope for a different future. I know that too often history repeats itself but all it takes is one person to break a cycle. I think that I am a good teacher and therefore I want to be a part of instilling an education and some life skills into some children in our community. Their futures can be so bright, but we have to invest in our children so that our people can continue to be a voice, be successful, be somebody out here in this crazy world.

Her initial thoughts from her questionnaire about her African American students who were homeless included thinking about “a child sitting alone and loneliness.” Considering their needs academically, socially and emotionally she saw them in varied ways, as “unique, withdrawn, driven, loving, happy, and grateful.” In her initial interview, she discussed homelessness as “a result of lack of education which leads to financial issues, unemployment and the inability to provide for basic needs.”

During her initial interview, Michelle shared that she knew first-hand what childhood homelessness looked like because her niece and nephew were taken out of their home, placed in foster care and a homeless shelter. As a result of this experience, she also identified “domestic
violence and race and systemic issues” as another contributing factor in the increase of homelessness in women and children. Michelle accurately identified two out of the six major causes of childhood homelessness according to (“America's Youngest Outcasts: A Report Card on Child Homelessness," 2014). From her initial conversations to the conclusion of the study, Michelle appeared to have experienced the most transformation in her thinking and consideration for how much of a role race plays in the lives of her students. During her third journal reflection, she recognized a slight change in her thinking, which is important to the work of CRT in seeking others to be transformative and reflective. Michelle stated, "shortly after submitting last week's journal I realized that this study has really made me look at my homeless students in a deeper light." I can only imagine how transformative and thoughtful Michelle would have become if we had continued the conversation longer.

My conversations with all three teachers were inspiring. The teachers kept an optimistic and empathetic outlook about the students and their work in the classroom. As Michelle stated, "working with Students of Color who are homeless is an opportunity, [an] opportunity because I don’t see anything negative in working with children that need your help" (M. Kindle, personal communication, April 6, 2017). Erika and Debra indicated similar ideas describing their passion for helping their students.

In Their Words

In this next section, I bring together the words of the teachers by addressing each research question and embedding the themes that connect to each question. The data from the questionnaire, interviews, and journal reflections were reviewed to find salient themes across all of the data using a constant comparison technique which requires taking segments of identified text and
examining them to find similarities and differences. Table 10 shows the themes and the research question(s) they addressed.

Table 10

*Themes and Research Questions Matrix*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do African American in-service teachers in a public elementary school perceive the academic, social and emotional needs of their African American students who are homeless?</th>
<th>It takes a Village: A student’s success is dependent upon the collective effort, responsibility, and support found in and out of school</th>
<th>“Teacher mommy” and the roles we serve: An extended but expected responsibility for our students</th>
<th>Speaking about Assets: Our students have unique stories and abilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What factors influence African American in-service teacher perceptions of African American students who are homeless?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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Theme 1: It Takes a Village: A Student’s Success is Dependent Upon the Collective Effort, Responsibility and Support found In and Out of School. This theme addressed the question con-
cerning teachers’ perceptions of their students’ academic, social and emotional needs. Throughout their interviews, journals, and questionnaire, Debra, Michelle, and Erika all discussed the network of support and active engagement needed for their African American students who were homeless. Teachers as well as other entities inside and outside of the school such as the parents, counselors, liaisons, shelters, and surrounding community were needed to support their students. Their sentiments are reflected in the words of the African proverb “it takes a village to raise a child.” This proverb implies that in order for children to experience growth and safety, an entire community of various individuals interacting with and on behalf of children is required. Similarly, these teachers’ words also echoed a belief held in African American culture centered around Ujima, a principle of Kwanza that means collective work and responsibility. As Oliver (1989) argued, where American society places more importance on individualism, the principle of Ujima urges African Americans to “[elevate] the interests of the community above those of the individual” (p. 29). Similarly, the teachers saw a need not just for their work in the classroom to be a solution to address their students, but they also recognized where other support was currently offered and was also needed. This notion was captured in Michelle’s third journal reflection when she shared, “it goes back to the old saying that we will need a village to help us raise the child and this can be accomplished regardless of what society portrays them as.” During her final interview, Erika also acknowledged the help that should come from society and community. She stated,

Let’s help each other… if you were in a situation, you would want help as well. I’m going to take it back old school, traditional biblical, treat others how you [would] want to be treated. And if you are in a position to
help and you see that there's a need, help! Just to ignore the problem or act as though it doesn’t exist is irresponsible.

Payne (2009) argued a similar idea in her research on African American youth resilience. She posited,

concern for a child’s wellbeing and participation in that child’s life are not the sole responsibility of the parent, school, or church. Rather, all institutions, structures, establishments, and community members must take on the responsibility of providing the child with the best possible outcomes for it truly takes a village to raise a child” (p. 2).

In this particular village for students at Fortune, Michelle acknowledged wanting to "make school a pleasant place" (M. Kindle, personal communication, April 21, 2017). Erika also spoke about the school being a safe "place of refuge and place to escape" (E. Anderson, personal communication, April 6, 2017) for their students. They all spoke to some extent of the school being a utopia or safe haven for their students to have no worries at least for the hours they are in their care. However, they acknowledged that making Fortune a safe space was not and should not be a solo effort. They acknowledged that being at Fortune allowed them to see the extent of support from the counselor and liaison that could be given to their students that they had not previously witnessed before. They agreed that in order to keep that stability, active participation by teachers, administrators, parents, the local school community, and other stakeholders would have to be present. Debra was adamant in the notion that work solely in the classroom was not enough. She explained that she understood the school and her classroom could be the only constant in these students lives and with that understanding she took up great concern to ensure that
they had everything they needed. Michelle echoed this belief in her final interview by sharing that "[taking] steps in order to help [students] beyond the classroom" is essential.

Active engagement and consideration for the reality that these students face is important. It is important that the village around these students have a genuine commitment to helping and understanding students and their circumstance. To accomplish this there has to be a "commitment to social justice." This commitment must "[reject] interpreting problems of People of Color and/or from low-income communities mainly as personal failures, and instead, interpreting their problems as effects of unfair policies and systems" (Sleeter, 2015, p.1). deBradley (2015) argued a similar idea in her research about Youth of Color who experienced housing instability. During her final thoughts about next steps to support these students, she discussed a charge of "moving toward social justice", which included discussion around the school being an important entity and extension of the community. She explained that schools are essential to communities in which they reside because schools possess important resources and supports needed for the stability of students educational and emotional needs. However, she also argued that schools are not and should not be the only entity looked to in terms of support for these students. deBradley's (2015) reference to Vaught (2011) supported that argument beautifully, "...the opportunity for building collective tools to challenge and alter structures...could be practiced not singularly or even primarily in schools, but in organizations..." (p. 101). As Erika exclaimed in her final interview, "if you are in a position to help and you see that there's a need, help!"

It was apparent from the teachers’ conversations that this was a commitment they shared. Michelle passionately stated, "people that interact with these students will have to remain positive, hopeful and encouraging as individuals that will empower these students to never give up on themselves instead of because things have gotten hard." It was important for her to use the
word people and not single out teachers. She believed everyone has a duty to ensure that the growth and development of these students is achieved. In her final interview she also stated, "as a community we could work together to alleviate and hopefully one day eliminate what homelessness is and especially homelessness for children, then you know the world would actually be a better place." Michelle discussed an example of this “community” in her reflective journal. In the journal she recalled that one of her students was receiving a counseling support service from a local hospital for him and his mother and that she saw the benefit in the one on one time that particular student had. Erika also spoke about an example of how the support from outside of her classroom helped her students who were homeless. She shared from her final interview that on some occasions the school secretary would take the new students arriving from the shelter on a school tour to help them become acclimated with the school environment. She stated, “this helps me and the student because they are not just thrown into my classroom, they have a little time to collect their thoughts and the idea of being in a new place.” This example, Erika argued, is why everyone should "try and see if [they] can help solve the problem as opposed to knowing that there is a problem and doing absolutely nothing about it." During her final interview, Debra also spoke about being actively engaged in knowing the living situations of her students and wanting to seek out opportunities to see where they lived and what things she could offer weekly to enhance that experience.

These teachers demonstrated a commitment to social justice and recognized the importance of others having the same level of commitment for their students. Though they were not directly asked about their commitment to social justice, their words and passion showed just how committed they were and believed that others should be as well. They demonstrated these ideas
of social justice by indicating how they could and would support their students who were homeless. They knew from the classroom that they would have to fight for the needs of their students by taking an active role to understand what their students were going through and that it was not just business as usual. For instance, Debra spoke about times she would have to constantly follow up with the counselors or liaison about student’s clothes or a sudden change in behavior that was troubling. When their response to her was “it is being taken care of”, she didn’t let that stop her from ensuring that her students were truly being serviced adequately. This was also acknowledged by Erika from a reflective journal. She stated that she knew she would have to take steps beyond the classroom in order to fully help her students in the way they needed to be helped. As Erika stated from her reflective journal, “you have to really be willing to go outside of your job of being a teacher…you really do. I mean we have what we need here, but still even those things fall short.” Debra believed that when students who were homeless were initially enrolled in her class, their living conditions should be disclosed and not discovered later in the semester. During her initial interview she explained, "I would want to know their background so I know if they’re coming from the shelter or if they’re coming from living on the streets." In an effort to ensure she is knowledgeable of her students backgrounds, Debra sought out the homeless liaison in the school. This information helped Debra begin the relationship building process with her students. Debra also noted the students' important role in this relationship building process. "[I] let the student guide me in terms of what they need from me." This allowed her not to assume what the student needs were but instead determine the best ways to support the students.

In her initial interview, Erika expressed willingness to help within the classroom, "what I can legally do, what I can legally support… I’m willing to help at all cost if I’m needed." She also mentioned having the opportunity to do more with her students outside of school by seeking
out opportunities and organizations that would allow her to expose them to additional resources and services. Erika expressed that she was very pleased with the amount of outside support her students were receiving from different programs brought into the school such as reading mentors during lunch or the opportunity to do in school field trips. In her initial interview, Michelle also discussed maintaining additional classroom materials to ensure that her students were equipped with the necessary school supplies. She stated "[you] don’t want them to be left out of doing something that was out of their control." To that point she added that some donations from the businesses and university in the area have helped, however those resources do not always make their way to the younger kids.

In addition, Debra noted that the homeless liaison was a point of contact and provided communication between the shelter and the school to ensure students were receiving sufficient support. During her initial interview, Erika also identified the crucial support of the school liaison. She stated, "support [between] the school and shelter to provide help with fresh or new uniforms, book bags, school supplies, if they need support in homework or just to communicate with the parents about events and things that are happening at school."

Erika especially felt that in addition to supporting students, parents’ needs should be included in that village of help and support. She believed that by helping and educating the parents, the supportive village for the students would be strengthened. In her final reflective journal, Michelle stated, "I know the importance of the active participation of parents in the educational journey [of students] …" Michelle acknowledged that if parents do not feel empowered then they have a difficulty supporting their students and their students ultimately end up having to take on adult roles and responsibilities.
In relation to Michelle’s point, the same could be said about the importance of improving "active participation" from other entities and stakeholders who ultimately play a part in these students’ villages. One example of this active participation was given by Erika in her reflective journal. Erika suggested that better communication between the shelter and the school would help to support her efforts in the classroom. She felt that consistent and open communication between the liaison or counselors and the shelter would help to address some of the everyday needs she sees that her students need. Debra acknowledged that though Fortune has supports in place like the counselor, social worker, or liaison the problem becomes the consistency of the support. She stated from her first interview, “we start real strong at the beginning of the year then towards the end of the year or mid-year we just kind of, we kind of fall off.” Debra also suggested from her second interview that the counselors could really do more work to pull the students out in small groups to address their individual needs because as she explained,

it is just so hard to do it on your own when you have 25 other students in the classroom. I mean you know as soon as they walk in they may need another 15 minutes of you helping them to pull it together, but if there was a system in place with the counselor or somebody that let these students have that time every day, I think that would do wonders for them.

In that regard, it is important that teachers, administrators, school officials, along with society see themselves as essential to the growth and development of these students through the policies, the schools and the world that these students live in.
Theme 2: “Teacher mommy” and the roles we serve: An extended but expected responsibility for our students. This theme addressed the question concerning factors that influence African American teacher perceptions of their African American students who are homeless. Through the teachers’ words it became apparent that the varied roles they play and the lenses they apply to those roles as educators, other-mothers (Collins, 1991; Irvine, 2003), African American women (Milner, 2012), and experiential knowledge (Kohli, 2009) contributed in some way to their perceptions.

To begin these teachers recognized their role, that historically, Black teachers have served, as mother figures for their students. Milner (2012) identified it as "other mothering" (Collins, 1991; Irvine, 2003), which for all three teachers, required them to serve as mommy, counselor, and teacher. Milner (2012) also noted that as other parents for their students, Black teachers also see their students as their own children. There is an internal ownership concerning the livelihood and well-being set by African American teachers as other mothers that demands a standard of excellence that can and will be met through their nurturing. To that point as “other mothers” there is an understanding of “shared responsibility to commit themselves to the social and emotional development of all children in a community” (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002, p. 77). Milner added that this is important because to others looking in, the expectation and actions of Black teachers may appear one way, but in actuality, African American teachers possess a different obligation and consideration for the circumstances that their Black students face because these teachers can relate their experiences of being Black in society to that of their students.

Michelle embraced this idea in her initial journal reflection stating she was a "teacher-mommy for [her students]." Debra made a similar connection with her role as a mother and an African American. Likewise, in her initial interview, Erika identified her role as a woman and
mother being an influential factor in her beliefs and discussion of her students. She noted that being a mother herself allowed for her to be "more nurturing" and to also go above and beyond when needed for her students. During her initial interview conversation about her students, Debra noted her role in making the students feel loved because that helps in making the students feel accepted and apart of the classroom, which was a big push for her. She also noted that that love is met still with high expectations to succeed.

*Race.* The influence or experiences of being African American played a major role in the teachers' beliefs about their students in addition to them seeing themselves as ‘teacher-mommies’. These teachers spoke about their experiential knowledge of being Black women. In Erika's initial interview, she commented, "I think race definitely plays a part in how I respond because I'm an African American and I'm really trying to reach out to my homeless students who are African American to help them be successful." During her final interview, Debra also acknowledged that "as an African American [she] is able to empathize" with her students because of her own experiences.

Erika acknowledged a similar feeling during her final interview stating that being African American "makes [her] understand them a little bit better, what they are able to contribute." She also acknowledged in her final interview that "being a teacher and African American play part" in how she responds to her students' needs and that being an African American woman "gives her better understanding of their needs." Erika noted that being an African American woman teacher helped her in a specific relationship with a student. Erika shared, "because she let me into her life so much, so quickly, so easily. She and I formed a bond" in understanding that role, as an African American woman, Erika was able to address the needs of this and other students who were homeless in her class. Erika mentioned in her initial interview, "I’m a little bit softer with
her, my nurturing with her I take a little bit more time with her, and I understand her a little bit more than I do some of the other students because of that relationship we’ve developed."

In a follow-up conversation to her journal reflections, Michelle maintained, " being a Woman of Color has influenced my beliefs about the homeless Students of Color [that I teach]." She acknowledged that being African American and looking through that lens also helped her to see that the students have two things playing against them, homelessness and being Black. In the literature Black teachers assume their role as “othermothers” because they understand the realities that exist in the world for their Black students. During her final interview, Michelle stated, "I can understand how hard it is to be African American first and then how much pressure is added to it being homeless." Because of this understanding and lens through which experiences are interpreted being African American, Michelle added that she already recognized what her students were coming up against and what they needed to be successful. Michelle captured this sentiment in a conversation where she acknowledged the intersection that exists. “These students already have two labels that they have no control over: African American and homeless.” In her third reflection journal, she also added, that "because as African Americans we want better for our people in a sense. We want these children to grow up and be successful, respectful members of society."

Debra also acknowledged the influence of race in her conversation and beliefs about her students. In her journal reflections, and final interview, she recognized "race [as] an important part of society." Debra reflected on the influence of race as a reason for why her expectations for her students academically did not lower. She stated, "as African Americans; we sort of have to work twice as hard you know to be seen as half as good as our counterparts.” During an informal follow up to her journal, Michelle added, " African Americans have good reason to believe that
they have to work harder anyway to be successful.” Milner (2012) noted this idea of the Black teacher, historically, holding high expectations for their students because as Black teachers and individuals they understand that allowing students "to just get by could leave them in their current (negative situation)" (p. 30).

Similarly, during her initial interview, Debra also shared that she doesn’t put on the hat of a teacher or African American separately, they are dually executed to the best interest of her students, "I definitely think that being an African American female influences my beliefs." She continued,

I think race plays a part because you know I think about the history of African Americans and how everything has been kind of set up for African Americans to not be successful and so that’s when my teacher hat sort of comes into play because I’m like I have this role as a teacher, and now as an African American I have the opportunity to help other African Americans to be successful and sort of navigate the system and institutions that are in place." From that statement, Debra recognized that there are systems, educationally and in society, created that do not benefit the students she teaches every day, and for her to support her students, her roles must be interconnected.

In her statement, Debra understood various systems designed to oppress and marginalize her African American students, and in order to fully educate and support her students, her roles as an African American and teacher must be interconnected. Likewise, Erika acknowledged that "race for African Americans is definitely an issue as it relates to having appropriate resources"
and also added, "because we are African American we have to strive and work ten times harder than any other race or the majority race." She felt that Blacks always received the short end of the stick when it came to allocation of educational funds. “We tend to get the leftover funds or not enough funds and resources.” Her statement was based on her experiences on her previous school and the population that was served there.

The teachers also relied on previous experiences to speak about their perceptions. In reflecting on her preservice teaching experience, Michelle discussed the importance of relationships and having a connection. She acknowledged that "an African American child walking up to me in the classroom being an African American woman, [the student] will be like oh I can relate to her." So in a sense, there is a level of familiarity that students have with teachers that look just like them. This helps to create the first level of relationship building. Michelle also added that in the child's mind they might believe "hey, she's been through what I've been through because she looks like me."

Michelle also discussed how her preservice teaching experiences influenced her beliefs about African American students who were homeless. The school was a predominately African American school located in a rural area of Georgia. In her initial interview, she shared that during her experience prior to Fortune, she "first really realized that homeless meant more than just not having a home. It meant that you were living with your grandmother, it meant that your parents did not have a home." Michelle also shared that her students were very loving and sweet and back then their loving demeanor made her look in amazement at how those students were able to persevere through their situations. It was also during that preservice teaching experience that Michelle said she had to go into defense mode for her students. She recalled the words and reactions of her student teacher supervisor as not very favorable and stereotypical of the students.
Her supervisor was an older white woman and described the supervisor's conversation as “always [being] real slick stuff like 'oh okay I heard this person's parent was on drugs'…” Michelle said on several of those occasions she would have to redirect the supervisor's thinking of those students by emphasizing "that's really not always case, like some of these kids are homeless because their mom passed away or things like that." Michelle indicated that that supervisor's outlook of those students shaped the way Michelle spoke about them to other people who would speak negatively. Michelle challenged the dominant discourse by advocating for those students and continues to keep that same mentality when thinking about her current students.

She also acknowledged during her first journal reflection that part of her beliefs about these students and their needs were based on the intersection that exists for race and class, which is an important tenet in CRT. She stated, "that their homeless status and the fact that they're Students of Color weighed heavily on my response and how I feel about my students." "My response to address their social well-being is definitely based on two reasons me being an African American teacher and my knowledge of working with homeless students."

Debra also reflected on her experience as a young teenager being displaced by a natural disaster and being without a home. She explained that experience as a young Black girl made her stronger and built up resilience. She noted in her final interview, "that my fight back then to do something with myself is the same fight and expectation I have for my students. I had so many people counting me out, I was definitely supposed to be the statistic, but I am not and neither will these babies." Debra also discussed how her daily interactions with her students and their families over time at Fortune contributed greatly to her beliefs. She added that she has also volunteered from time to time at the local adult men's and homeless family shelter. She noted that those experiences "just reaffirmed that you know they're just people that need things in order to
be successful and need people to constantly be helping them until they get on their feet and sort of figure out how to navigate life in a way that is going to be beneficial to themselves and their kids.”

Likewise, during her initial interview and questionnaire, Erika indicated that her current experience at Fortune impacted her beliefs because before coming to Fortune she had not been aware of students who had been homeless. At her previous school, she stated, "if the students were homeless we didn’t, I didn’t know about it. It was not brought to my attention parents didn’t communicate with me, the school personnel didn’t communicate with me. So if they were I just never knew". She noted that through this time at Fortune and interaction with her specific students her awareness has increased. She elaborated by sharing, "I am aware of who they are, where they live, where they are coming from. I have more information on their background…” She ended the conversation by stating, "Here I am aware, and there are people in place to provide support if needed." Her experiences in the classroom are what seem to influence her beliefs about these students and their abilities.

**Theme 3: Speaking about Assets: Students Have Unique Stories and Abilities.** This theme addressed the question concerning teachers’ perceptions of their students’ academic, social and emotional needs. Although I sought to understand how the teachers perceived the needs of their students the teachers’ responses redirected my research focus from merely highlighting the teachers’ ideas of students’ perceived needs to the teachers’ celebration of the academic, social and emotional abilities of their African American students who were homeless. None of the teachers’ initial thoughts about the students reflected negative behavior, instead they captured the unfortunate circumstances that the students were subjected to and completely out of their control.
One teacher, Erika stated, "their needs are more sensitive due to their circumstances." Her response is in direct contrast to other studies where preservice teacher participants' initial thoughts saw homeless students as being “troubled, behind, misbehaved, dirty, unfocused, or broken” (Kim, 2013, p. 300) or that the students would be dysfunctional or abnormal. Below I share the teachers’ perceptions about their students’ academic, social and emotional abilities.

**Academics.** At early stages of the study the teachers indicated that their expectation for the academic success of their students compared to other non-homeless students was "the same" (Debra), "average" (Michelle) and "sensitive with similar expectations for success" (Erika). During her initial interview Erika added, "their needs are the same as any other student who is not homeless they still need support in the content areas… their needs are more, how can I say personal." Erika's sentiments align with research that concluded that children in homes and those in urban family shelters “succeeded at the same rates and [required] the same structure, consistency, nurturing, limit setting and activities…” (Douglass, 1996, p. 750). Erika believed that the students being homeless did not fully impact their educational success. In her final interview, Debra also expressed similar beliefs and acknowledged that her students, "have a possibility of success just like all of [her] other students." Likewise, in her initial interview, Michelle added that her students "need a lot of motivation, like just encouragement to keep pressing forward. Academically I think that they have the ability just like any other child but they just need the motivation." During a journal reflection Michelle added that "academically, [they] are able to remain on level with their peers." Erika discussed how certain students she interacted with were able to come to school and still do what was expected despite their circumstance of being homeless. Erika stated in her initial interview, "their work ethic, really amazes me." She also shared, "they make use of what they have and that's always a good thing… they tend to improvise." She
acknowledged the students’ resourcefulness and ingenuity. Michelle added in her last interview that the personalities of the students and excitement for learning kept her amazed. She used terms such as, "driven, loving, happy and grateful" to describe her students. Erika, Michelle, and Debra whether they aware of it or not, were speaking to those students' resilience despite their circumstance. Some researchers (de Bradley, 2015; Mohan & Shields, 2014; Hinton & Cassel, 2013) have highlighted this idea of resilience that some students have to succeed. Milner (2014) celebrated this resilience by noting that there are some students who “beat the odds’, persevere and succeed in spite of the conditions” and barriers they may face (p. 6).

Erika embraced a similar feeling about a female student who she described as quite “average today” in her reflection journal. When I asked her to elaborate on the meaning of “average” she explained that the particular student was behaving like a “normal” second grade student as compared to her peers who were non-homeless. She also shared from her initial interview, "we have some great students who are African American that are homeless they are typical regular students." Erika's statement that "they are on task most of the time, they are positive students to be around" tells a different narrative about her students. Also during this journal, she described how a female student expressed concern about a project and not having or submitting a project. She reassured the student that she would provide her with the needed materials, so that she would not be "ostracized by her peers for not having or turning a project in." This example shows the concern and engagement on the part of the student. Erika shared that the student could have easily not done the project and used her housing situation as an excuse. Instead the student wanted to participate and do whatever she could, with help from Erika to get it done! Erika acknowledged that quite often she is called upon by her students who are homeless to help with outside materials or support. She offered this example during her journal reflection, "for example
if we’re going on a field trip and let’s say the field trip costs $10 they may not be able to afford the field trip or if we’re having them bring in supplies or materials for a project or a celebration in the classroom they tend to not bring those items, however they’re still allowed to participate.” Just as Debra shared, Erika ensures that her students are included in all educational experiences. She does not make them feel any different about not being able to contribute. All three teachers expressed having similar expectations for their students academically. They believed their students are capable of academic success. The standard is not lowered, but adjustments are made when necessary to help those students succeed.

The teachers spoke with hope and the possibility of the student abilities for academic achievement and success. The teachers believed barriers related to attendance impacted student academic success, and despite attendance issues, students were still capable of achieving academically. Research also noted that attendance served as a significant barrier to student academic success (Masten, Fiat, Labella, & Strack, 2015). In her initial interview Debra noted that because her students tended to miss a lot of school, there were evident academic gaps. Michelle also acknowledged that gaps existed, and the students were behind. Michelle also pointed to attendance being one of the reasons for the gaps the students were experiencing, "arriving at school on time or being present is a struggle in itself." However, none of the teachers held student attendance against the students, instead they recognized that their inability to be in school consistently did not always allow for them to fully demonstrate and build upon all that the students learned and could demonstrate. Debra acknowledged the reality of the impact of attendance by stating "… the [attendance] gaps put them further behind whereas if they had attended school on a steady basis like their peers then they would probably be a little bit more on target, on average,
on grade level." Debra spoke with hope regarding the ability of the students to accomplish academic success if the attendance barrier was removed. In relation to the area of academics, Debra identified two students, male and female, who were homeless in her class. The male student she identified as "on level" and the female student she identified as "below grade level." During her first journal reflection Debra discussed how pairing the female student who was below with another on level student worked best to support her thinking and also encouraged social interaction. Whereas her male student who was on level did not need as much as support and could be successful working independently. This approach of pairing is a recommended research based instructional strategy for students. Arranging students in “group learning activities or pairing each with a buddy provides an opportunity to interact with peers, build social skills, develop friendships, and enhance feelings of belonging” (Yamaguchi, Strawser, and Higgins, 1997, p. 95).

**Social and Emotional.** The teachers discussed social and emotional needs of the students who were homeless as interdependent. Erika noted, the "emotional [areas] have to be there in order for [the students] to be able to socially enjoy and participate amongst their peers." Michelle echoed this sentiment by stating, "their social need is directly related to their emotional needs in my opinion." This discussion of social and emotional needs is intertwined; one supports the other. With respect to the discussion of their students social and emotional needs compared to other non-homeless students, the teachers identified their needs as "deeper" (Debra), "just as important if not more" (Erika), and "harder to decipher" (Michelle). The teachers agreed that students, emotionally, required a lot of love and desire to be included and not feel isolated. They all indicated providing physical support for the students’ emotions through hugs. They shared how that physical interaction reassured the students of safety and security. Erika described it as being "overly affectionate" due to "emotional hang ups" that her students experienced. Debra discussed
in her initial interview how her students wanted to feel a part of a group and "[didn't] want to be outcaste." She added, "they just want to be loved and they want to know that somebody’s here for the particular reason of taking care of them." Michelle also discussed that the students need a lot of support emotionally through “confidence boosters and encouragement" and having "someone to really look in on them to give them hugs and encourage them." She also emphasized supporting her students socially and emotionally required her to be welcoming, keeping a smile on her face in order “to promote comfort and reassurance.”

During Erika's initial interview she shared that her students "need a little bit more tender loving care.” Debra elaborated on how she took steps to make sure the students felt included. She gave an example of how she utilized the daily practice of morning messages, which allowed the students to share their writing out loud with the class. She believed this practice helped build language, communication and socialization skills as well as making the students feel apart of the classroom community. Her on level student was always willing to engage and share while her academically below student had difficulty speaking with the group. Debra noted, "I [involved] them in carrying out daily routines like being the line leader or being the teacher’s helper so that they can understand that they do have a place in the classroom." Debra realized she needed to provide opportunities in class for her students to build confidence in their social and emotional areas. In regards to her below level student who would pass up the opportunity to speak in class, Debra said she was working to help the student become confident. As an adult Debra believes, "that being a successful adult is being able to use communication" skills confidently. Michelle also stated in her initial interview, "the social well-being of these students is important because in this world as African Americans we need to be able to emit a light that radiates respect, power,
and intelligence." All 3 of the teachers recognized the whole child and knew that their needs were far reaching than just academics.

Socially, Michelle acknowledged that the students who were homeless recognized that they were not like the other students who came from stable housing. Michelle noted that her students tended to be "a little bit more reserved, they're a little bit more quiet…." As Michelle stated, "I think they don't have a problem being social but they won't initiate the social interaction." Debra acknowledged in her final interview that the students "start out a little bit slow in terms of finding their everyday friends, but eventually they get there." However, despite those moments of not actively seeking out others, Erika emphasized, in her last journal reflection that, "they just fit in with everyone else, they socialize with everyone else, they are just regular kids" who are in an unfortunate circumstance. Michelle highlighted this socialization in her last journal reflection by describing the personalities of her two students as "bubbling over…with flare and happiness." Erika often referred to her students' behaviors as "typical childlike behaviors" of other second grade students who were not homeless. Michelle noted in her initial interview that her students were also very social and that they are able to interact with their peers very well. During her third reflective journal Michelle also stated, "each day I see the interactions of the homeless students and the other students and it warms my heart because to them it just doesn’t matter homeless or not, they are all friends." In her fourth reflective journal she also shared, "I believe all kids see are friends and other little people with similar lives, good laughs, someone to talk to in class, someone to sit next to at lunch and play with outside." Michelle agreed with Erika's notion that they are just "your average kids" wanting to be accepted and allowed to do normal, everyday kid things. Their insight was in contrast to other research that suggests students who are homeless
suffer socially and have a hard time with interacting with their peers and teachers (Samuels, Shinn, & Buckner, 2010; Anooshian, 2003)

Another aspect of the teachers’ beliefs regarding the social and emotional needs of students who are homeless centered around relationships between the teachers and their students and the students and their parents. Holgersson-Shorter (2010) noted that, "effective teachers establish relationships and trust with homeless students…” (p. 33). Erika stressed the importance of establishing safe relationships between the student and the teacher as a way to aid in the social and emotional areas of need. She emphasized that the students don’t want to be picked on because of their homeless status and having that relationship with the student promotes safety and trust, which are essential.

All three teachers were also aware that issues or needs that impact the parent have a trickle-down effect on the student emotionally. As Holgersson-Shorter (2010), discussed individuals who are faced with traumatizing situations, such as parents whose families are homeless, may be only thinking of survival and making it day to day. Michelle acknowledged this impact on her students. She shared "I realized that these children feel tired both physically and emotionally as they yearn for a better situation and the uncomfortable sleeping arrangements that they face." She elaborated on this realization by offering an example from a conversation she had with a male student who was homeless in her class. She shared that the student said "sleeping in a place where there is so many people is not like sleeping at all." Debra also discussed a female student who often times was very tired from staying up all night because her aunt would work late. Debra started to notice the toll it was taking on the physical and emotional well-being of the student. The student was constantly worried about what was going to happen night to night in terms of her sleep. Erika also spoke about a male student who became very concerned about a toy he
left at the shelter. He planned to bring it to school for safe keeping, but could not focus during the school day for fear that when he returned to the shelter his toy would be gone. Each teachers’ reflection recognized that the emotional concerns for their students were far reaching than just a hug, though those were given as frequent as necessary. Their students’ emotional needs included stability, safety and having their basic needs met.

Within the discussion of basic needs, the teachers also addressed some student behavioral struggles that often times were easy to turnaround by building a relationship of trust between themselves and their students. Michelle shared that supporting the emotional needs of the students could be challenging at times and their needs "change so much from week to week." The teachers often understood that some behaviors as Erika noted, "were unexplainable" due to things that were out the students control or understanding. Michelle attributed some of those "unexplainable" behaviors to the students having to take on adult responsibilities and ultimately having to be the parent for themselves. This was a belief held by all three teachers. In her final interview Michelle passionately stated, "I want for these students to be able to enjoy their childhood as much as possible regardless of their situation." She shared concerns that her students who were homeless shared with her having a "fear of not knowing where they will sleep tomorrow or something so simple as the idea that someone will pick them up from school." Those concerns can be overwhelming for a seven or eight-year-old. During her final interview she stated, "it is impossible for a child to have it together when the adults in their lives do not have it together."

Erika acknowledged in her second reflection journal that parents trust teachers and believe that the parents of her students did want them to excel and perform to the best of their ability. However, as Erika stated that is not always possible because the parents do have so many other things to consider and think about. Erika identified certain barriers such as “financial issues, finding a
job, finding somewhere to stay, you know being able to support the family” as reasons why the parents may not be as involved or able to assist their student the way they would want to. Hinton and Cassel (2013) maintained that "homelessness by itself is considered a powerful source of stress [for] parents with young children” (p. 457).

**Summary**

All three teachers recognized their role in the classroom as crucial to the success of their students. They owned the fact that they would have to be there to provide tangible resources and also provide emotional support. These teachers also relied on their current experience at Fortune as contributing to their beliefs about the students. Michelle reflected more on previous experiences in the classroom and how that shaped her fight for students who looked just like her. She emphasized the fact that the students are in high transition makes her want to doubly hard for their benefit and well-being. All three teachers held a spirit about their role and responsibility in the classroom that has been seen, historically by Black teachers. Milner (2012) maintained that the history of the Black teacher’s role and responsibility in the classroom was outside of their focus within the school building. Black teachers held a commitment to their purpose to educate their students because of the reality of consequences and opposition that faced these students because they were Black.

The teachers acknowledged how being African American had a profound influence on their perceptions and aided in their understanding and connection to their students. The teachers reaffirmed that race matters and influenced their perceptions and the way they responded to their students’ needs. The teachers held expectations for their students that were both challenging and empathetic, they were “warm demanders” of their students (Milner, 2012; Ware, 2006). These teachers held high expectations of their students by encouraging them to excel in all aspects of
their lives because they believed in their students’ potential academically and as future citizens in society.
5 DISCUSSION

Conclusions

I began my research with deep concerns about my own experiences as an African American teacher and the African American students who were that I educate on a daily basis. My passion for African American students who are homeless broadened as I began listening to various opinions about educating this group of students. Upon reviewing the literature, I found that there was limited research that examined teacher perceptions of African American students who were homeless and participants within the studies were often white, middle-class women. As Kim (2013b) noted, there has been “little attention …to how teachers perceive and understand homeless children” (p. 162). This study adds to the limited research that is narrow in focus and exhibits a lack of diversity of participants’ perspectives on this topic.

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions that African American in-service elementary teachers have concerning the academic, social and emotional needs of African American students who were homeless. This study also sought to understand factors that influenced how these teachers spoke about their students. Critical Race Theory served as both a theoretical framework and methodological tool to honor the voices and experiences of African American teachers through their counter narratives. These counter narratives challenged deficit models that are often present in the dominant discourse and research on homelessness, and highlighted the uniqueness and strengths of African American students who are homeless.

As new teachers enter the profession, it is hard to ignore the impact that race and class has on their perceptions of African American students who are homeless. The information gained from these teachers contributed to a knowledge base of those often pushed to the margins in education (Milner, 2012). Each teachers’ discussion of their perceptions further functioned to “create
research and teaching strategies that acknowledge racial minority teachers as insiders… and as valuable assets in the fight for educational justice” (Kohli, 2009, p. 250). Knowledge gained from the teachers’ perspectives had a multitude of outcomes and implications for in-service teacher support, teacher and student relationships, educational research, and changes in society.

Brazilian education activist, Paulo Freire (1970), argued that to generate genuine social change, people must have critical consciousness, a state developed through critical dialogue of the experiences of oppressed peoples. Through individual interviews, audio reflective journals, and a questionnaire this study created a space for 3 African American teachers to critically reflect and dialogue about inequities within the educational system that reflect the larger society, and ultimately the African American students who were homeless. Closer examination of the literature on this topic would suggest that there is an intentional absence on the discussion of race as it relates to students who are homeless. However, the African American teachers’ counter narratives empowered and gave agency to their often-marginalized communities. By choosing their own words and telling their own stories, each African American teacher provided alternative points of view, helping to create complex narratives that presented their realities.

My research began with the goal of addressing the following overarching questions:

1. How do African American in-service teachers in an urban public elementary school perceive the academic, social and emotional needs of their African American students who are homeless?

2. What factors influence African American in-service elementary teacher perceptions of African American students who are homeless?
As I reexamined the narratives, the following three significant findings emerged from my analysis:

1. **It takes a Village: A student’s success is dependent upon the collective effort, responsibility, and support found in and out of school**

2. **“Teacher mommy” and the roles we serve: An extended but expected responsibility for our students**

3. **Speaking about Assets: Our students have unique stories and abilities**

**Theme 1: It takes a Village: A student’s success is dependent upon the collective effort, responsibility, and support found in and out of school.** Questions about appropriate support systems for African American students who are homeless should be an area of discussion in the literature pertaining to the support offered through policy, and by various stakeholders. Miller (2011) indicated that school personnel and “front liners such as bus drivers and transportation department directors” as well as “general health providers, and housing services” should be involved in the process of support for students (p. 325). This model emphasized that collaboration should occur between home, school, and community. This thinking is also echoed in the words of the teachers from this study as well as reflective of African American thought around community and supporting the whole child. As mentioned previously the African proverb “it takes a village to raise a child” emphasizes a need for a communal response on behalf of children and others in order for them to experience growth and safety. Though it was apparent, through the school background information, that Fortune does have structures and supports in place, the teachers still took up concern with the consistency and overall approach to how all supports and resources were being used to help the teachers and students in the classroom. The teachers
acknowledged support offered by the counselors and liaison, however they also noted disconnects in the services provided to students as well as ways to keep the teachers better informed of the support needed to help parents. Mohan and Shields (2014) discussed in their findings “a lack of a social safety net for families who unexpectedly encounter difficult economic circumstances” (p. 199). This statement would imply that circumstances that impact students who are homeless require greater levels of support not solely found in the school. Instead of the “siloed structures” of accountability that Miller (2011) discussed, there should be wider networks of practice that include various entities and knowledge to support students. Similarly, the teachers all spoke about securing and strengthening the village that exists within the school and also include others outside the school in this effort.

There is an expectation that schools and teachers can do it all. Hinton and Cassel (2013) emphasized the work of the teacher and addressed how the teacher needed to improve their levels of awareness of the causes of homelessness. America's Youngest Outcasts: A Report Card on Child Homelessness (2014) highlighted the six major causes of homelessness; all of which are structural and systemic:

1. The nation's high poverty rate
2. A lack of affordable housing across the nation
3. The continuing impacts of the Great Recession;
4. Racial disparities;
5. The challenges of single parenting; and
6. The ways in which traumatic experiences, especially domestic violence, precede and prolong homelessness for families
This study provided a context from which to view the issue of homelessness. It further situated this issue as a systemic one in which solutions from a school alone would not eradicate the greater issue within society. An issue hinged on systematic racism and discriminatory policies that have led to higher numbers of homeless People of Color, specifically African American people. Mohan and Shields (2014) argued that homelessness and “poverty [are] a social problem and [requires] widespread social solutions” (p. 199). If it is understood that the causes for homelessness do not begin with a choice, but instead result from chronic poverty and racial disparities, among other reasons, then a restructuring of those causes should take top priority with policymakers, especially for African Americans where this problem is prevalent and ongoing. In this regard, how does a school provide adequate solutions to the issue of homelessness when the issue is so complex and systematic?

In identifying these areas of support, the overall goal of schools should be to provide a safe haven and place of stability for homeless students. I believe more could be stated and emphasized in the research about student homelessness concerning the collective effort to create a safe haven for students that is needed by schools, teachers, parents, and various stakeholders. Swick (1995) also emphasized the importance of collaboration by all entities. The teachers’ narratives implied that isolated efforts are not sufficient to support their students. Their narratives also revealed that collective efforts and more knowledge was needed regarding how to support their students. Miller (2011) emphasized that students who are homeless experience homelessness in varied ways; they are dependent upon “intersecting panoplies of family, school and community supports” (p. 326). Swick (1999) echoed this sentiment in his discussion of an ecological framework to support homeless students and families. Within the framework he referenced Maslov’s Hierarchy of Needs and suggested early childhood educators and schools “use existing
case management systems, [become] liaisons and advocates, develop parent partnerships, and empower the community” (pp. 197-198). The teachers recognized a personal need for professional guidance on how to support their students. Likewise, the teachers stated that parental collaboration was a necessity because parents play a critical role in their students’ ‘village.’ Support programs for parents were also recommended. Programs needed to provide parents with resources parents could use to support themselves emotionally, financially, and physically. Important in this ‘village’ were partnerships with outside agencies and figures (healthcare centers, wrap around agencies, shelters, policy makers, concerned citizens, city officials, etc.) to increase awareness surrounding homelessness and provide a hands-on approach to the students and their families. Miller (2011) further supported this study’s 3 African American teachers’ perspectives by stating, “…students in wide-ranging conditions are all dependent on these intersecting panoplies of family, school and community supports…” (p. 326). This “network perspective” included all entities that could have a hand in supporting students and families who are homeless.

**Theme 2: “Teacher mommy” and the roles we serve: An extended but expected responsibility for our students.** Throughout the study, the teachers were forced to confront different realities about their students and their understanding of the intersectionality of race, class, and their professional position as an educator. This intersectionality provided the framework from which the teachers constructed their experiences and ultimately their perceptions of their African American students who were homeless. Evident from the discussions with the teachers was their awareness of the historical significance that race and discrimination within U.S. played in constructing their lived experiences. Their narratives provided perspectives that centered on support and love for their students as ‘othermothers’.
All three teachers recognized their role in the classroom as important to the success of their students. They further recognized that their role encompassed more than just educating their students though they acknowledged the need to provide tangible resources to their students. These teachers took on “othermothering”, a role that is historically taken by African American teachers (Milner, 2012; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Case, 1997). In the role as “teacher mommy” or “othermother”, the teachers offered a level of care and compassion that often require them to provide levels of support, empathy, and expectation that was sourced from the racial realities of their students. All three teachers felt personal responsibility for their students. This is often a reality for most African American teachers. Milner (2012) noted that the history of the Black teacher and their role and responsibility in the classroom was far reaching beyond the hallways of their schools and the teachers had a mission to teach their students because they realized the possible consequences in store for their students if they did not teach them and if the students did not learn. (p. 30)

African American teachers were charged with upholding high expectations for their students, while understanding the reality of those expectations within the context of a country and education system that was ripe with systematic racism and discrimination. As Milner (2012) noted “…Black teachers maintain high expectations for their students… and they empathized with rather than pitied the students…” (p. 30). The teachers in this study realized the advocacy behind their role as African American women and educators and were characterized as a “warm-
“demander” and “othermothering” that expected the best of their students (Milner, 2012). Essentially, the teachers’ lived experiences provided the context from which they used to prepare their students for the “real world” while also providing “other mothering” for their students.

These teachers also relied on their current experience at Fortune as a contributing factor to their beliefs about the students. Both Debra and Michelle expressed frustration with the process of providing timely assistance to their students who were homeless. Michelle reflected more on previous experiences in the classroom and how those experiences shaped her fight for students who she said, “…looked just like her.”

**Theme 3: Speaking about Assets: Our students have unique stories and abilities.** The teachers provided detailed narratives about their students’ academic, social and emotional needs and abilities. When speaking about their students, the teachers did not focus solely on their needs and deficits, but celebrated their abilities and uniqueness. The development of this theme, extracted, from the teachers’ words, acknowledged a counter-narrative to dominant and negative narratives of teachers’ perceptions. Teacher perceptions in previous research on homeless students suggested dismissal and negative behaviors and outlooks about Black students who were homeless. The teachers collectively acknowledged their students’ abilities and not their areas of weakness.

The teachers believed that society’s view of their students were based on the “negative concepts of African Americans” and hopelessness for those living with homelessness. However, they were able to speak with hope and expectations for their students despite the students’ social, emotional and economic needs. Erika stated, “Their needs are the same as any other student who is not homeless they still need support in the content areas… their needs are more, how can I say personal.” The teachers did not ignore the fact that their students required a lot of attention and
needed to be included rather than isolated. Debra emphasized this idea by stating, “They don’t want to be outcaste.” Mohan and Shields (2014) further elaborated on the social and emotional needs of students and noted that “they want to be heard, accepted, reassured and encouraged and “need adults in schools to believe in them” (p. 200). As a whole, each teacher in the study agreed that providing emotional support for the students’ through acts such as hugs helped them to feel reassured and provided the students with a higher level of security.

Based on the initial interviews, Michelle and Erika both agreed that homelessness had a greater contributing impact on the students’ academic achievement than their racial identity. However, Debra saw race and homelessness as interconnected entities that could not be viewed as separate. The final interview of the teachers revealed a change in one teacher’s perspective. Erika acknowledged, “to be homeless and African American you know that's like a double whammy.”

The realization that each African American child that was homeless is diverse in their needs and abilities grew as the study progressed. Debra noted, that “everyone one of them is different and although they’re coming from sort of the same pool of homelessness, they still within that have different needs.” This supports Miller’s (2011) research that posits that students experience homelessness in diverse ways based on their housing availability and the help that is provided in their city.

The teachers’ conversations reveal that each one of them recognizes characteristics of resilience within their students. In spite of social and economic barriers, all of the teachers acknowledged that the students all wanted to do their best and succeed in the classroom. Similar conclusions were made regarding elementary school aged African American students who were
homeless. Results highlighted a high level of resilience of African American students in a summer camp who achieved success while learning to cope with the stressors associated with being homeless (Nabors, Rofey, Sumajin, Lehmkuhl, and Zins, 2005). As Michelle passionately stated, “this is not their final title or label.” The teachers of this study all believed that there is promise in these students and their abilities. As such, the narrative concerning these students can be and should be altered to represent this hope and promise as well as their unique stories and abilities.

**Implications**

This section of the chapter focuses on the implications of this study. I drew conceptual guidance from Critical Race Theory as both a theoretical framework and methodological tool to honor the voices and experiences of African American teachers through counter narratives on their experiences with African American students who were homeless. The implications of this study may be of interest to educators, K-12 schools, universities, and various stakeholders in education. Equipped with the insights provided by the teachers in this study, perhaps teacher preparation programs and in-service programs can be improved to better respond to African American students who are homeless. The teachers’ narratives suggested implications for further consideration in the areas of: 1. in-service teacher support, 2. parental support, 3. teacher-student relationships, and 3. changes in society and policy.

**In-service teacher support.** The teachers from this study indicated moments of frustration about consistent school support systems address the needs of homeless students. Though it was evident from their conversations, that they were making all attempts to attend to their students’ needs, the teachers realized that they needed a network of support. The teachers relied heavily on the school community for support and the efforts of the homeless liaison to collaborate closely
with the shelters. The homeless liaison assisted the teachers with attendance concerns and getting important information to the parents at the shelter. However, the teachers expressed frustration with the process of providing support to their students in a timely manner and the inconsistency of how the support was given. Debra addressed this concern in her final journal, “On both the school's part and the shelter's part, we start off the beginning of the year hitting the ground running and then we kind of trail off.” Debra further explained that this inconsistency only added to the multiple demands of the teaching profession. She recounted a time when she had inquired about help for a student she received in the middle of the school year. Her frustration mounted when she sought additional support and resources, and was given a general response of “Don’t worry, it will be handled.” However, her concerns were never addressed and the school year ended without the support that she knew her students needed. The teachers’ points of frustration shed light on the importance of ongoing support and development for in-service teachers who educate homeless students. The teachers acknowledged that help should not just be found in the classroom. They went on to note that parents and other external agencies in the surrounding community are just as crucial in addressing the holistic needs of their students.

The teachers acknowledged that prior to coming to Fortune they engaged in minimal conversations and preparation with working with their current population of homeless students. Ladson-Billings (2000) addressed the lack of preparation by stating, “most teachers report that their preservice preparation did little or nothing to prepare them for today's diverse classrooms” (p. 208). Similar conclusions resulted from research conducted by Chow, Mistry, & Melchor (2015) as well. The researchers suggested that there was a “potential need for professional development opportunities focused on working with homeless students and their families…” (p. 658)
for teachers who are currently in the classroom. In addition, they also suggested that it was important for teachers to receive support and strategies related to working with families experiencing homelessness, including training in how to regulate their emotions and better understand the perspectives of homeless students. Further support for building teachers’ knowledge should focus on the intersectionality of race and homelessness as a systematic issue. This will help in-service teachers understand how multiple forces combine to perpetuate deficit models of thinking surrounding African American students who are homeless.

The teachers’ words also suggested the benefit of the school providing some level of support through support systems such as the liaisons and counselors. The teachers all acknowledged that they felt more aware of their students’ situations of being homeless at Fortune compared to their previous schools or experiences. Providing in-service teacher support could also clear up misconceptions and uncertainty that teachers have about working with students who are homeless. Michelle and Erika both questioned the level of support that was needed for their students. Michelle asked, “I wonder sometimes like is it, is there a line that you should draw? Like is it a good thing to talk to them even if they're willing to talk to you about their situation? Is there a point where it might be too much?” Hinton and Cassel (2013) emphasized the importance of building teachers’ awareness and being “informed on the dynamics of life that lead homeless families into their current predicament” (p. 463). Likewise, Powers-Costello and Swick (2008) posited that teachers need to be given opportunities to learn about their students’ families, specifically those who are homeless, and should be given time to reflect on their practices.

In addition to examining and modifying various support systems and programs for students who are homeless, an additional factor of race must be considered when discussing the issue of homelessness. Milner and Laughter (2014) argued that we live in a society where race
matters, “but people do not want to acknowledge or talk about why and how it matters [in the context of school and education]” (p. 345). The role of race was salient throughout the teachers’ conversations about their students. They acknowledged the importance of race in connecting with and understanding their students’ needs, not just as students who were homeless, but also African American students. Thus, I think that professional development for in-service teachers should also include discussions about the reality of current forms of racism and discrimination that still impact our society, and ultimately our schools. In depth conversations can serve as a powerful tool to bring self-awareness to in-service teachers that will greatly impact how they support homeless Students of Color.

**Parental Support.** Another level of support suggested from the teachers’ words was parental support. In the teachers’ discussion of the village that surrounded their students they recognized the importance of parents feeling empowered and also knowledgeable of ways to help their students. Erika acknowledged several times that she felt the parents needed just as much support as the students and were appreciative of any support they could be given. She felt that by strengthening the parental support you also strengthened the care for the students. Several other studies have acknowledged the importance of supporting parents (Powers-Costello & Swick, 2008; Swick & Williams, 2006; Swick, 1999). As Swick and Williams (2006) suggested, schools and educators must reshape their view of parents who are homeless, especially minority single mothers. These parents want to be seen as part of a solution to help their students and not a part of the problem that needs fixing. The teachers in this study acknowledged the value that came with including the parents in the “village” with their students and addressing the steps needed to support them in that effort. Ways to support parents include counseling offered through the school or monthly or quarterly parent workshops that allow parents to stay abreast of ways to
support their students academically, socially or emotionally. Other ways to support parents that also support the village around their students is to provide classes on securing employment and ways to keep them encouraged to provide for their students’ needs in any way they can.

**Teacher-Student Relationships.** The perceptions shared by the teachers in this study demonstrate the importance of teachers building relationships with their students, especially those who experience homelessness. Powers-Costello and Swick (2008) also noted the important role that teacher perceptions and beliefs play in the teacher-student relationship at school, especially when considering students who are homeless. Sealy-Ruiz, Lewis, Toldson and Allen (2014) described the teacher-student relationship for Black teachers and students as an essential piece to the puzzle of these students’ everyday lives. Being a Black teacher in a room full of other black and brown faces allows for a different level of bonding and relationship to be forged. The teachers acknowledged that their relationships with their students were built from a connection that the students noted of the teachers being African American. The teachers from this study embraced and recognized their roles as teacher mommies to their students. Being in these roles allowed for them to connect and understand the needs of their students outside of just being good educators.

These teachers also reaffirmed what many scholars have shared about African American teachers in classroom. The source, Black women, from which they base their practices makes them credible sources on the needs and realities that their students face in and out of the classroom. Because these teachers lived and understood the realities of being Black they were able to build strong and trusting relationships with their students. Building these type of relationships helps to create a safe atmosphere in the classroom where students feel comfortable because they will be loved and protected. This is especially important for vulnerable groups such as students
who are homeless. The instability experienced by students who are homeless requires supportive and understanding interactions with the teachers they see daily. Forging these types of relationships can add a source of stability and normalcy to an already hectic and uncertain situation. The importance of teacher-student relationships also allows for the teacher to gain a deeper understanding of their students’ interests and abilities outside of the label of being homeless.

**Changes in Society and Policy.** Michelle strongly believed that deficit structures and beliefs about homelessness in society disproportionately impacted minorities. She felt that as a society we should “worry [about] how and when the cycle [of homelessness] ends,” as well as how much of the issue of homelessness is “society versus school.” More than anything else, children who are homeless need homes. The other teachers also acknowledged that playing the blame game with students and families who are homeless is not fair and instead society should take a harder look at what they are doing to support these families. deBradley (2015) made a similar argument in noting that society’s way of addressing the issue of homelessness is by usually blaming the individual and not the inequities or root causes that the individuals have to live within. These teachers were not blind to the public perception of their students and the detriment it could cause them later in life or while currently under their care. As long as there is an inadequate supply of affordable permanent housing in the United States and inequities in financial capital between the rich and poor, children who are homeless will suffer the consequences. Advocates have been successful in securing emergency legislation designed to minimize educational disruption when families lose their homes. But, legislation cannot be a generalized, one size fits all solution to the issue of homelessness.

deBradley (2014) argued that HEPs such as the McKinney-Vento should “include language that addresses the racial inequities inherent not just in schools, but in all aspects of life”
and “that unless racial equity is explicit in the language of a particular policy, policies tend to work against minority groups” (deBradley, 2014, p. 862). Findings from this study suggest that as teachers build their knowledge and awareness of their students who experience homelessness, they should advocate for laws that are explicit in addressing the intersectionality of race and class for the students they teach daily. As expressed by the teachers in this study, teachers are the experts about the needs of their students because they see them consistently. As the experts, these teachers can provide insight to the blind spots of laws and policies that do not consider the realities of their students, especially those who African American and homeless.

The findings from this study also imply that lawmakers should not place sole responsibility on schools and educators to address the complex issue of homelessness. Instead, policymakers should take into account the societal factors that contribute to the disproportionate number of People of Color who are homeless. They should also further examine how the McKinney-Vento Act, the HEARTH Act, and other homeless-specific policies intersect. Mohan and Shields (2014) posited that students want to be heard, accepted, reassured and encouraged by the teachers and adults they see every day. However, more so than that, they need a concerted effort to address and remove legislative barriers that exist for them and their families.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

Masten, Fiat, Labella, and Strack (2015) stated that “over the past three decades, we have made great strides in understanding the needs and strengths of homeless students” (p. 327); however, I argue that there is far more work to be done to ensure that the silenced voices of African American teachers are privileged and add a new perspective to mainstream literature on their African American students who are homeless. The teachers’ counter narratives resulted in additional areas of focus for future research. First, the findings from this research should only be the
beginning. I believe as other researchers have emphasized, that more has to be done in the area of student homelessness and its impact on African American students.

As a tenet of CRT, experiential knowledge urges for a placement and consideration of the experiences and understandings that People of Color encounter in their everyday lives. I believe that further examination of perspectives from a larger number of African American teachers from multiple schools within the same district would be beneficial to the already scant research on African American students who are homeless. Likewise, the words from the teachers in this study suggested similar understandings and responsibilities over their role in the classroom with their students. Kholi (2009) explained that in thinking about and valuing experiential knowledge within CRT research, the narratives and experiences of People of Color should be regarded as essential and “brings with it a presumed competence to speak about race and racism” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p.10). In sharing their perceptions about their African American students who were homeless, the teachers spoke from a place of racial experience and connection to their students.

It is important based on this study, that the knowledge possessed by Teachers of Color be viewed as an asset that allows other minority teachers the opportunity to speak about their experiences. When stories and outlooks are shared like Michelle’s admiration for her students’ enthusiasm for learning, Debra’s acknowledgment that her students are unique, or Erika’s amazement at her students’ work ethic, expectations and beliefs about entering a classroom with this group of students is better informed and provides a space for teachers to utilize equitable practices for their students.

Future research should consider the perceptions from this study as a valuable tool in for teacher education that helps to inform other teachers of their work with groups of students who
are homeless while also taking an intentional look at the subgroups of students who are majority Students of Color. This work can begin a needed a conversation that Ladson-Billings (2000) argued does not always occur with prospective teachers. She maintained that these teachers need support in

[recognizing] the ways that race and racism structure the everyday experiences of all Americans. More specifically, teachers must understand how race and racism negatively impact African American students and their ability to successfully negotiate schools and classrooms (p. 211).

If teachers are not encouraged to think critically or consider critical aspects of their perceptions as it relates to certain groups of students, then a continued disconnect will occur and the racial realities of education and society will continue to be perpetuated in the classroom. Ladson-Billings (2000) argued that “spending limited time in urban classrooms often serves to reinforce students' stereotypes and racist attitudes toward African American students because they are not accompanied with requisite understanding…” (p. 209). Similarly, I believe studies such as this one can help eliminate the fear and deficit perception that is often placed on African American students who are homeless in teacher education

As Debra noted, “I know how society is going to perceive these students.” Michelle echoed by stating that she understood what the world would expect of her students because they were Black and homeless, but she wanted to erase that negative outlook and encourage her students to become more. They demonstrated what Milner (2012) and Stanford (1997) noted as a
distinct and special connection and understanding between African American teachers and their students.

Another imperative next step in research would be to hear from the students who experience homelessness in order to better understand their experiences and self-perceptions. An examination of student voices would enrich the current literature on homelessness among students and allow students a space to share their lived experiences without misinterpretation. Masten et al. (2015) noted a gap in the research that tends to mainly speak to “the educational risks associated with homelessness than on the educational successes…and their resilience” (p. 325). In essence, research that centers on the students’ narratives can shift the focus from calamity to resilience.

Another suggestion for future research is based on the teachers’ discussion of their personal and professional knowledge about homelessness and students who are homeless. Based on the findings of this study, more needs to be presented on the state of homelessness in schools. Erika explained, “I hear very little about [homeless] students.” Her statement is not surprising as research indicates that many teachers lack awareness about the current state of homelessness. This is especially important considering the increasing number of African American students who are homeless around the country.

When we fail to recognize the part that race plays in the issue of homelessness, we run the risk of reinforcing the miseducation of teachers, schools, and policymakers. This was evident in Erika’s response as she stated “…if I looked at this issue nationally or globally then I would probably see race as something to look into as it relates to homelessness.” Race and homelessness should be equally discussed and analyzed in order for teachers of these students to truly understand the extent of their students’ living conditions.
Final Thoughts

In this study, I honored the voices of three African American in-service teachers by relying on their experiential knowledge of working with African American students who were homeless. In an effort to counter the dominant discourse around their students who were homeless, I used their narratives to present a unique perspective that highlighted the resilience and promise of their students. Their narratives challenged me as an educator and educational researcher to reexamine my work with my students and colleagues. This process has rightfully pushed me to deconstruct my perceptions of my students and their parents who experience homelessness on a daily basis. It is apparent from the research on this issue that the field of education pushes for neutral thinking about students who experience homelessness; thus ignoring the intersection that exists between race and class. As a result of this stance, I will continue to examine my own perceptions and the intersectionality of issues surrounding homelessness, poverty and race. This research should send a message of concern, care, and commitment about the work that must be done in educational research, policy, and schools to communicate a narrative and belief that speaks against dominant, deficit perspectives about African American students who are homeless.

Before taking part in this study, I do not believe that Debra, Erika or Michelle were challenged or granted an opportunity to consider their beliefs about their students. This was evident in Michelle's closing statements in her reflection journal where she acknowledged that the act of reflecting was “beneficial to [her] overall approach and reaction to homeless Students of Color.” As such, I would like to share some closing thoughts that the teachers shared with me. These thoughts were situated on a foundation of hope for their students. It is the hope of the teachers in this study that should encourage current and future educators to examine their own perceptions.
and shared beliefs about their students. These sentiments will help to challenge the negative dominant discourse of what is usually stated about African American students who are homeless. I close with selections from the teacher narratives to create new knowledge through the use of narratives and story-telling about African American students who are homeless.

_Erika:_

I would want them to know that just because they’re Black or homeless doesn’t mean they don’t have potential it just means that they may need more support, may need your help to get them to the point of self-sufficiency where they are able to you know go and reach goals, go and have those things that the general public have or you know people like them have. They just need more support so don’t shun them away, don’t think less of them. See what you can do to help them as opposed to just you know ‘oh you're black and you're homeless.’ You know try and see if you can help solve the problem as opposed to knowing that there is a problem and doing absolutely nothing about it.

_Debra:_

I think to the public I would say, yes, they are homeless, yes they are African American but that doesn't mean that they don’t have the same chance of success if they are provided with the support and love that they need.
Michelle:

So I think my message would be as an African American homeless child
I want people to understand this is not their final title or label and that
this situation is not their final situation and with the proper support and
guidance and love they can change their title as a homeless African
American person, probably or possibly into valedictorian, or president,
or an actor or dancer or anything that they want to be out here in this
world. And if society could change their perception of what homeless is
and how as a community we could work together to alleviate and hope-
fully one day eliminate what homelessness is and especially homeles-
ness for children then you know the world would actually be a better
place.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Mail: P.O. Box 3999
Atlanta, Georgia 30302-3999
Phone: 404-413-3580
Fax: 404-413-3594

Dahlgren Hall
30 Courtland St, Suite 217

February 24, 2017
Principal Investigator: Chantee Earl
Key Personnel: Davies, Sharhonda T; Earl, Chantee; Tinker Sachs, Gertrude, PhD
Study Department: GSU - Georgia State University, GSU - Middle & Secondary Education
Study Title: African American Teacher Perceptions of Homeless Students of Color
Review Type: Expedited, 6, 7
IRB Number: H17345
Reference Number: 342541

Approval Date: 02/24/2017
Expiration Date: 02/23/2018

The Georgia State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved the above referenced study in accordance with 45 CFR 46.111. The IRB has reviewed and approved the study and any informed consent forms, recruitment materials, and other research materials that are marked as approved in the application. The approval period is listed above. Research that has been approved by the IRB may be subject to further appropriate review and approval or disapproval by officials of the institution.

Federal regulations require researchers to follow specific procedures in a timely manner. For the protection of all concerned, the IRB calls your attention to the following obligations that you have as Principal Investigator of this study.

1. For any changes to the study (except to protect the safety of participants), an Amendment Application must be submitted to the IRB. The Amendment Application must be reviewed and approved before any changes can take place.

2. Any unanticipated/adverse events or problems occurring as a result of participation in this study must be reported immediately to the IRB using the Unanticipated/Adverse Event Form.

3. Principal Investigators are responsible for ensuring that informed consent is properly documented in accordance with 45 CFR 46.116.
   • The Informed Consent Form (ICF) used must be the one reviewed and approved by the IRB with the approval dates stamped on each page.

4. For any research that is conducted beyond the approval period, a Renewal Application must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the expiration date. The Renewal Application must be approved by the IRB before the expiration date else automatic termination of this study will
occur. If the study expires, all research activities associated with the study must cease and a new application must be approved before any work can continue.

5. When the study is completed, a Study Closure Report must be submitted to the IRB.

All of the above referenced forms are available online at http://protocol.gsu.edu. Please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Research Integrity (404-413-3500) if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Cynthia A. Hoffner, IRB Vice-Chair

Federal Wide Assurance Number: 00000129
Appendix B

Open Ended Questionnaire

Background Information

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. How long have you been teaching at your current school?
3. What grade do you currently teach?
4. Please indicate the race you identify with?
   __ Black, ___ White, ___ Hispanic, ___ Latina/o, ___ Asian, ___ Islander/Pacific, ___ Other ________

5. To your knowledge, how many homeless students of color do you teach daily?
6. Have you always taught in schools with a student population predominately African American, like Fortune Academy?
7. Have you had previous experience teaching homeless students? Homeless students of color?

Questions

8. When the statement is made that “race does not matter in today’s society”, how would you respond considering the population of students that you teach? (Tenet 1/ Tenet 2)
9. When you hear the term homeless what words or images come to mind? (RQ 1)
10. When you hear the phrase, homeless student of color what words or images come to mind? (RQ 1)
11. Think about your specific students of color who are homeless, what words would you use to describe their needs, academically, socially and emotionally? Please list individual words, as many that come to mind. (RQ 1)
12. To what extent do you feel your beliefs or views about your students of color who are homeless are influenced by your background or previous experiences? (RQ 2)
13. Where (i.e. news, school, newspaper, casual conversation, etc.) do you most often hear or engage in conversations about homelessness? (RQ 2)
   a. What things are usually stated?
   b. Is race ever discussed? (Tenet 1/ Tenet 3)

14. Finish this statement:
    My expectation for academic success of my homeless students of color is ________________________________ compared to other students in my class. (RQ 1)

15. Finish this statement:
    The social and emotional needs of my homeless students of color are
compared to other students in my class. (RQ 1)

RQ1- Research Question 1
RQ2- Research Question 2
Tenet 1- Centrality of Race
Tenet 2- Challenging the Dominant Discourse
Tenet 3- Intersectionality with other forms of subordination
Tenet 4- Commitment to Social Justice
Appendix C

(Initial) One on One Semi Structured Interviews Protocol (Creswell, 2013)

Date: Fall 2016

Location: Fortune Academy

Interviewer: S. Davies

Interviewee:

Method of note taking: Audio recording

Data Analysis: transcription of interviews

Introduction: Hello and thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. I would like for you to know that the information we discuss today will be strictly used for my research into understanding teacher perceptions of homeless students of color in your classroom and at your school. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

1. Follow up questions related to questionnaire possibly about teacher previous teaching experience.
2. Does being an African American female influence or shape your beliefs about homeless students of color? Explain.
3. Please explain what you believe to be the academic needs of your students of color who are homeless. (RQ 1)
4. Please explain what you believe to be the social/emotional needs of your students of color who are homeless. (RQ 1)
5. In your opinion do you feel that race (being students of color) and/or being homeless contributes to a lot of the needs your students have? Does one out weight the other? Please explain. (RQ 2)
6. Do you feel that current policies or practices that are in place at your school address those needs you discussed?
7. What steps have you taken or are willing to take to ensure that your homeless students of color needs are met? (Tenet 4)
8. Explain what you see as your role in addressing these student’s needs. (Tenet 4)
9. How do other African American female teachers in your building speak about their homeless students of color? Do you share their same thoughts and feelings? Why or why not? (Tenet 2)
10. How have other teachers who are not African American spoken about these students? Do you share their same thoughts and feelings? Why or why not? (Tenet 2)
11. What previous experiences (in the classroom, teacher preparation program, community volunteering, etc.) have influenced your beliefs and views about your homeless students of color? (RQ 2)

12. What would you say has contributed mostly to your beliefs and views about your homeless students of color? (RQ 2)

Conclusion: Thank you so much for your insight today, it was very informative. The information discussed today will remain confidential and if I have any further questions I hope that you will be available to speak with me.
Appendix D

(Second) One on One Semi Structured Interviews Protocol (Creswell, 2013)

Date
Location: Fortune Academy
Interviewer: S. Davies
Interviewee:
Method of note taking: Audio recording
Data Analysis: transcription of interviews

Introduction: Hello. I really appreciate your participation in this study. Your reflections over the past weeks have been very insightful and helpful in allowing me to gain a better understanding of teacher perceptions over this topic. Today I would like to ask you some concluding questions about your reflections. I would like for you to know that the information we discuss today will be strictly used for my research into understanding teacher perceptions of homeless students of color in your classroom and at your school. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Interviewer: First can you tell me about your reflection experience over the past four weeks? What has going through this reflection experience done for you as an educator? An African American?

Interviewer: After going through the process of reflecting are there things/practices you would adjust/change in working with students of color who are homeless? (addressing needs)

Interviewer: What are your overall beliefs and feelings about the homeless students of color that you teach?

Interviewer: Going back to our first interview and thinking about your reflection journals, how do you believe being African American has influenced or shaped your beliefs about students of color who are homeless? Please explain. (influence)

Interviewer: In addition, how do you think your number of years teaching has influenced how you speak about your students of color who are homeless? Do you think at the beginning of your teaching career you would have similar beliefs or feelings about the students? (influence)

Interviewer: How much of what you see and hear in the media influences your beliefs and how you talk about these students? (influence)
Interviewer: Are there other factors or experiences you have gone through, that you might not have stated, that you think have influenced your beliefs about these students? (influence)

Interviewer: In your opinion, is race or being homeless a bigger factor in talking about the needs your students have? Please explain. (RQ 2)

Interviewer: In your opinion, where does race fall in the conversation of homeless students of color?

Interviewer: How much of what you believe about these students is based on them being Black? Based on them being homeless?

Interviewer: In thinking about the academic needs that you discussed throughout this study, do you think the structure of the classes, meaning like the math and reading class, have had any bearing on the academic success of the students? (academic)

Interviewer: Can you provide me with any specific examples of academic needs you think these students have? Anything that stands out to you specifically? (academic)

Interviewer: What are your expectations for these students academically? (academic)

Interviewer: Tell me about just your perceptions about their social and emotional needs overall or any examples you give, just what are your…? (social/emotional)

Interviewer: So do you think these students find it easier or harder to make friends or be a part of the class community?

Interviewer: In your overall reflection, which need appears more prevalent to you when working with these students? So we talked about academic, social and emotional um just overall do you think there's one need that stands out more or needs more support than the others?

Interviewer: Do you think the school has enough things in place to support that need?

Interviewer: How would you categorize the needs of these students? So meaning do you think they're on an extreme end of needing support or are they at a typical, this is what all students are needing?

Interviewer: How do you feel you address these needs? And when you address their needs do you feel that you are coming from a place meaning I am a teacher and this is my responsibility or I'm coming from a place of I'm an African American?
Interviewer: Are you willing to take steps that go beyond the classroom to address these students needs or do you feel your work in the classroom is enough? (tenet commitment to social justice)

Interviewer: In some of the reflections, maybe not yours, just in reviewing them, the word frustration came out a lot in conversation about the students. So do you think that you experience frustration working with the students or are there other sources of frustration in talking about the students?

Interviewer: Based on your reflections about your everyday interaction with these students, what would be your message to the public about these students and their needs? (RQ 2/ tenet challenge the dominant discourse)

Conclusion: Thank you so much for your insight today, it was very informative. The information discussed today will remain confidential and if I have any further questions I hope that you will be available to speak with me.
Appendix E

Dear [Name],

My name is Sharhonda Davies and I am a doctoral student at Georgia State University in the Department of Middle and Secondary Education. I am also grateful to be a part of the [Name] staff! I am contacting you in regards to utilizing [Name] for my dissertation research. The title of my study is “Understanding African American Teachers’ Perceptions of African American Students Who are Homeless”

I believe this topic is important because current statistics show a great number of students and families of color are experiencing homelessness on a daily basis. In fact, this group, children in families that are homeless, are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population. This topic is also important to me because of the student population that we serve here at [Name] Day in and day out I have the opportunity to interact with these students and sometimes their parents. I see the frustration and anger that some of them bring with them to school and I also see the excitement to be back at [Name] for a new day of learning. Research recognizes the importance of the teacher-student relationship in helping students, especially those who may be at a disadvantaged because of housing instability or extreme poverty. I too understand and recognize this importance as I am sure all of teachers at [Name] do as well.

As an established charter school, your participation in this study will provide valuable insight for future teachers and schools. I would like to include Centennial in my study because of our demographics for teachers and students.
To complete this study, three teacher participants will be recruited. There will be no interaction or contact with students. There are no risks associated with this study. To maintain confidentiality, the name of the school will be changed and all records will be kept private and in a locked file. Upon any publication of the results, no information will be included to make it possible to identify participants. A tape recorder may be used to accurately record information during teacher interviews, but will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Participation is voluntary and participants may drop out of the study at any time if they choose to no longer participate. At the conclusion of this study, I will gladly share the results and findings with you.

If you have any questions about the research you may contact me at 678-296-9550. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Chantee Earl at xxx-xxx-xxxx. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sharhonda Davies
Doctoral Candidate
Georgia State University
Appendix F

Fortune Academy
Atlanta, Ga.

Dear [Name]

This letter is to confirm our recent conversation about my interest in conducting my dissertation research study, “Understanding African American Teachers’ Perceptions of African American Students Who are Homeless”, at [Institution Name]. If permission is granted, first and second grade teachers will be recruited to participate in the study once Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval has been obtained through my university.

Please indicate your approval of this permission by signing the letter where indicated below and returning it to me as soon as possible. My phone number is (678) 296-9550 and email is sdavies5@gsu.edu. By signing this letter, you are confirming that you agree to the above request.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Sharhonda Davies

[ ] I do consent for you to conduct dissertation research at [Institution Name]

[ ] I do not consent for you to conduct dissertation research at [Institution Name]

_________________________    __________________________      _____________
Print Name          Signature          Date
Appendix G

Recruitment Email to Teachers

Hello _______ grade Heroes!

My name is Sharhonda Davies, a second grade teacher at Centennial Academy and a doctoral candidate at Georgia State University in the Department of Middle and Secondary Education. I am currently working on a dissertation study that is focused on understanding female African American in-service teacher perceptions of homeless students of color.

I would like to invite you to a brief informed consent session that I will be holding during a scheduled grade level meeting. During this time, I will review an informed consent letter that I have also attached for you to look over prior to the session. This document will provide more insight into the study and possible participation. At the conclusion of the session you will have an opportunity to indicate your interest in participating. I am recruiting 3 participants to assist in the study.

If you have any questions before the session please feel free contact me at sdavies5@student.gsu.edu or speak with me throughout the day.

I appreciate your time and look forward to meeting with you!

Sharhonda Davies, Ed. S.

678-296-9550
Appendix H

Informational Meeting Interest Form

This form will be used to determine your interest in participating in this study. Completing the form will not guarantee your participation in the study. It will only be used to determine your interest and eligibility.

Please indicate your interest to participate in the study:

_____ I am NOT interested in participating in the dissertation study, “Understanding African American Teachers’ Perceptions of Homeless Students of Color”

_____ I am interested in participating in the dissertation study, “Understanding African American Teachers’ Perceptions of Homeless Students of Color”

If you indicated that you are interested in participating, please check all that apply below and provide your information.

I am:
_____ an African American woman
_____ a first or second grade homeroom teacher
_____ currently teaching at least two students of color who are homeless
_____ willing to commit a minimum of 7 hours of time within a 10-week quarter for the 2016-2017 school year

Name: _______________________________________________________________________
Grade level: ________________
Email: _______________________________________________________________________

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