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# Poverty and homelessness : A content analysis of children's nonfiction literature

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# Poverty and homelessness : A content analysis of children's nonfiction literature

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## **Abstract**

Units taught in social studies and language arts that address family issues, neighborhoods, communities, economic diversity, and social issues need to address the struggles, challenges, and fears of children living in poverty or who are homeless. Depictions of poverty and homelessness should be handled with accuracy and sensitivity. Connections made through the use of literature can help all students develop an understanding about the world around them and help them begin to realize the struggles of those who live in poverty.

This study of K-6 nonfiction books about poverty and homelessness investigated how these social problems were depicted in the literature as well as whether the depictions of poverty and homelessness were accurate and sensitive. The 15-book sample was analyzed to determine the number of characteristics of poverty that were discussed in text and portrayed in the illustrations. It was found that current demographics of poverty were depicted throughout a majority of the books analyzed. Characteristics of poverty have been well researched, and the authors of the nonfiction books analyzed were careful to address the issues accurately. Furthermore, poverty and homelessness were depicted in a manner consistent with the characteristics put forth by organizations like The World Bank (2009) and UNESCO (n.d.).

One major outcome of the study is a list of current, high quality nonfiction books about poverty and homelessness for K6 students. However, only five of the fifteen books could be found in local elementary school libraries. The others were either housed in middle schools or universities thereby making them inaccessible to an elementary audience. Having a current list of these works will assist elementary school librarians in building their collections.

POVERTY AND HOMELESSNESS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN'S  
NONFICTION LITERATURE

A Graduate Research Paper  
Submitted to the  
Division of School Library Studies  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by  
Christine Newell  
May 8, 2015

This Research Paper by: Christine Newell

Titled: POVERTY AND HOMELESSNESS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF  
CHILDREN'S NONFICTION LITERATURE

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the  
Degree of Master of Arts.

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Head, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

## ABSTRACT

Units taught in social studies and language arts that address family issues, neighborhoods, communities, economic diversity, and social issues need to address the struggles, challenges, and fears of children living in poverty or who are homeless. Depictions of poverty and homelessness should be handled with accuracy and sensitivity. Connections made through the use of literature can help all students develop an understanding about the world around them and help them begin to realize the struggles of those who live in poverty.

This study of K-6 nonfiction books about poverty and homelessness investigated how these social problems were depicted in the literature as well as whether the depictions of poverty and homelessness were accurate and sensitive. The 15-book sample was analyzed to determine the number of characteristics of poverty that were discussed in text and portrayed in the illustrations. It was found that current demographics of poverty were depicted throughout a majority of the books analyzed. Characteristics of poverty have been well researched, and the authors of the nonfiction books analyzed were careful to address the issues accurately. Furthermore, poverty and homelessness were depicted in a manner consistent with the characteristics put forth by organizations like The World Bank (2009) and UNESCO (n.d.).

One major outcome of the study is a list of current, high quality nonfiction books about poverty and homelessness for K-6 students. However, only five of the fifteen books could be found in local elementary school libraries. The others were either housed in

middle schools or universities thereby making them inaccessible to an elementary audience. Having a current list of these works will assist elementary school librarians in building their collections.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

“Another hard time is when there is not that much food left. We could starve to death. It would be too bad for it to happen to anyone in the world” (p. 286). These words are a third grader’s response to a “hard times” writing prompt (Dutro, 2010), and the words express real fears experienced by school-aged children across the country. Poverty and homelessness are factors that can affect a child’s academic success in school, and educators are responsible for providing all learners, including those living in poverty, with the highest quality learning experiences possible. Dutro (2010) explains that children’s lives are impacted by the economic struggles of their families, and students need to “be able to make connections that are aesthetic, thematic, and emotional” (p. 275). Teachers should offer diverse opportunities for learning through read alouds, class discussion, service learning, and exploration of a variety of media. In addition, educating all students about social justice issues like poverty and homelessness helps raise awareness and increased collaboration among students, teachers, parents, and the community (Walker-Dalhousie & Risko, 2008). Allowing students to make realistic and meaningful connections to their own lives through literature should be an educational goal for all students, regardless of economic circumstances. Connections made through the use of literature can help all students develop an understanding about the world around them and help them begin to realize the struggles of those who live in poverty.

## **Problem Statement**

Educators need to provide accurate information and representations of families living in poverty. Units taught in social studies and language arts that address family issues, neighborhoods, communities, economic diversity, and social issues need to address the struggles, challenges, and fears of children living in poverty or who are homeless. Materials available through elementary school libraries for K-6 grade students need to depict these scenarios with accuracy and sensitivity. A study by Kelley and Darragh (2011) explored the depictions of poverty that were found in 58 realistic fiction children's picture books addressing families living in poverty. Their results showed that for the sample of books analyzed, there were some areas where poverty was not depicted accurately. The researchers from that study did not include nonfiction books in their analysis which is a gap this researcher will address.

According to the United States Census Bureau (2012), 14.9% of Americans live in poverty. Although, the poverty level in Iowa is below the national average at 12.2%, a total of 17.6% of people in Johnson County, Iowa, are living in poverty. As an example, the Iowa City Community School District (ICCSA) serves children and families living within the Johnson County limits. Further data shows that the average number of students in the ICCSA receiving free and reduced lunches at the elementary school level is 36.7% (2013), or one in three students district-wide. Because the poverty rate in Johnson County and in a number of other Iowa counties is higher than the national average, school library

resources that accurately portray economically diverse populations should be made available in all Iowa schools.

Children should begin learning at an early age about the diversity among families, levels of affluence, and how people live under a variety of circumstances. In addition, the Iowa Core is making a push for the use of nonfiction in instruction across the curriculum. Moller (2013) states, “It is essential that students be afforded opportunities to engage with diversity and social issues in discussions of nonfiction literature as well” (p. 60). She also discusses exemplar nonfiction recommendation lists that are provided by developers of the Common Core State Standards. In summary, Moller’s (2013) examination of grade-level nonfiction exemplar texts showed the texts lacked equal representation of culturally diverse populations for grades K-5.

An analysis of the Iowa Core shows that these content areas should be taught. In addition, there are lists of best quality resources for children, such as the *Wilson’s Children’s Core Collection*, that includes many award winning books. The problem is that current lists of nonfiction resources for elementary K-6 students have not been analyzed and categorized in a way that takes into account accurate and sensitive depictions of poverty and homelessness. Teacher Librarians, classroom teachers, and students would all benefit from the availability of grade-level resources dealing with the issues discussed.

### **Summary of Problem Statement**

All elementary school children in grades K-6 should have access to current, nonfiction reading materials that accurately and sensitively depict poverty and

homelessness. An updated list of children's nonfiction literature that addresses these issues is not available at this time.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research study is to use professional bibliographic tools, such as *Wilson's Children's Core Collection*, to select a sample of K-6 nonfiction books, conduct an analysis of their content, and identify the most current, high quality books that accurately and sensitively depict poverty and homelessness.

### **Research questions**

1. How is poverty depicted in current, nonfiction books for K-6 students?
2. Are the depictions of poverty in the selected sample accurate and sensitive?
3. What are the most current, high quality K-6 nonfiction books available that depict poverty and homelessness?

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

The scope of this research will include nonfiction books for elementary students, grades K-6. The sample will include works published between the years 2005-2015. It is assumed that poverty is depicted in books for young children but that current depictions may not be accurate representations, especially as found in nonfiction texts.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this research study is to use professional bibliographic tools, such as *Wilson's Children's Core Collection*, to select a sample of K-6 nonfiction books, conduct an analysis of their content, and identify the most current, high quality books that accurately and sensitively depict poverty and homelessness. Because it is important for students to learn about poverty and its effects on children and families, high quality, nonfiction literature should be available to all students in grades K-6. Poverty and its effects on children can be found in the school setting across the United States, and teachers can help students develop conceptual understandings about poverty that can help them make connections to themselves and the world around them. There has been a tremendous amount of research conducted on poverty and its effects on children. Four common themes recur in the literature reviewed for this paper: attributes and stereotypes of poverty, effects of poverty on children, poverty taught in schools, and depiction of poverty in children's literature. The review of studies for each sub-theme will help define the importance of using literature that accurately depicts poverty and homelessness to help children understand the effects and ramifications of living in poverty.

#### **Attributes and Stereotypes of Poverty**

In order to begin to understand the impact of poverty on children in the United States, it is important to review the literature that discusses the definition of poverty as well as the attributes and stereotypes that describe this phenomenon. In a study by Cozzarelli, Tagler, and Wilkinson (2001), attitudes toward poor people were examined as

were the attributions for poverty. The purpose of the research was to explore attitudes toward those considered to be poor. Because there was little research available in this area, Cozzarelli et al. (2001) questioned the relationships between opinions about poverty, stereotypes of poor individuals, the attributes that define poverty, and ideologies that impact social policy regarding those living in poverty. They wanted to determine if there was a relationship between peoples' feelings, or attitudes, about poverty and the actual causes of poverty.

Cozzarelli et al. (2001) worked with 209 undergraduate students from a large Midwestern university and had them complete a packet of questionnaires. In one questionnaire, students rated thirty-eight characteristics describing poor people to determine their attitudes regarding the poor. Some of the characteristics rated were positive (capable, proud, family-oriented), and some were negative (weak, drug-abusing, criminal, lazy). In another questionnaire, students rated twenty-two potential causes of poverty which fit into three categories: individualistic (i.e. lack of effort, lazy), societal (i.e. prejudice, discrimination), and fatalistic (i.e. just bad luck). On both of these measures, students also rated the middle class for comparison. Finally, students completed questionnaires that evaluated values related to work, individual achievement, and discipline as well as viewpoints on the adage "people deserve what they get".

One finding of this study showed that stereotypes of the poor are more negative than stereotypes about the middle class. In general, attitudes about people living in poverty were negative. The middle class was consistently rated higher for characteristics such as hardworking, healthy, proud, and intelligent. Poor people were rated higher for

characteristics such as criminal, depressed, violent, and weak (p. 215). Cozzarelli et al. (2001) determined that the stereotypes most associated with people living in poverty included the following: (1) uneducated; (2) unmotivated; (3) lazy; and (4) socially irresponsible (alcoholic, abuse drugs). In the current study, these terms provide an awareness of the negative stereotypes and portrayals of poverty that should be avoided in the analysis and selection of nonfiction materials depicting people who are homeless or living in poverty.

Attitudes and stereotypes about the poor can have a negative impact on students learning about social issues and the ramifications of living in poverty. Helping students early on in their school careers will require teachers to have a clear understanding of the definition of poverty as well as how it is measured in the United States. Southwell (2009) conducted research on this topic. The purpose of the study was to look specifically at children and determine a definition of poverty that accurately depicted their plight. He explored whether the current measure of childhood poverty truly described the full scope of need of these children and their families. Southwell (2009) questioned if the current poverty line was accurate and if the measure was appropriate given today's standards of living. He predicted that the outlook for children living in poverty was worse than estimated.

Southwell (2009) offered a definition of poverty from two different perspectives. First, he described absolute poverty where income thresholds were based on poverty lines that took into account cost of food, housing, and basic needs. People need resources that allow them to acquire the items necessary to live comfortably, given specific standards of

living. Second, relative poverty determined how well-off people lived compared to others in their cultural circle. Southwell (2009) evaluated the current measure of poverty, which was based on the absolute poverty line. Poverty thresholds were determined by forms of income and needs of the household. Measures were adjusted for gender of the head of the household, single parent families, number of children under eighteen, and family size. Non-cash benefits (i.e. Food Stamps) and capital gains were not included in the income levels; however, earnings from a variety of other sources were included as income (i.e. Social Security, unemployment, survivor benefits).

One significant finding of this study was that the income-poverty measure did not take geographical context into consideration. Economic challenges and cost of living varies across the United States and must be taken into consideration when determining poverty levels. The income-poverty measure also did not consider costs of health care, child care, or transportation. As a result, Southwell (2009) concluded that the current income-poverty measure may not be providing a clear, accurate picture of the number of children living in poverty. He stated, “When the poverty line is set too low, families, and hence children who need help, are not eligible for assistance” (p. 326). Because the poverty line is used to determine eligibility for social programs like Food Stamps and the free-reduced school lunch program, families may not be eligible for services that could benefit needy children. Teachers who are aware of these inaccuracies may be able to help identify students in need of assistance and direct families to community resources for support. These teachers will also possess the background knowledge required to design and implement instructional units about poverty and its effects on families.

## **Effects of Poverty on Children**

Literature has shown that poverty can have a negative impact on children. Hill and Sandfort (1995) designed their research around developing a conceptual model to depict the effects of poverty on the lives of children. Because current research did not demonstrate the causes or consequences of poverty, Hill and Sandfort (1995) wanted to determine how poverty threatened childhood experiences and how it may affect those same children's abilities to become productive adults. Lastly, they wanted to learn how current knowledge about the ramifications of poverty could be used to transform public policy. A research review of three theoretical paradigms (psychologists, sociologists, and economists) was conducted to explore findings related to the causes of poverty and its effects on children's family functioning, health, physical growth, cognitive development, and socio-emotional development. Results of the review affirmed that low family income put children at risk in the areas of physical growth, cognitive development, and socio-emotional functioning. Effects of poverty were also shown to decrease children's academic achievement, increase their dropout risks in high school, and diminish their productivity as adults. Hill and Sandfort (1995) concluded that there is a gap in the area of education about the effects of poverty and how socio-economic background may mold physical, mental, and social characteristics of young adults.

In a similar study, Duncan, Magnuson, Kalil, and Ziol-Guest (2005) examined the role of low income in childhood and its impact on adult success, measured by earnings, and overall health. They posed that the timing of public policy interventions designed to reduce childhood poverty was significant. The timing of economic hardship was

questioned - would poverty early on in a child's life pose more harmful effects in adulthood? Duncan et al. (2005) wanted to determine if the child allowance policy administered early in children's lives would have a greater influence on their adult achievements. They wanted to see if changing family income alone, not other parent characteristics or family environments, was enough to alter the negative effects of poverty on children. They found that much of the prior research had only addressed the impact of additional income on the adult's work efforts versus how the added income affected the well-being of the child.

To determine the importance of the timing of interventions, Duncan et al. (2005) reviewed research studies in the following areas: poverty in the United States and elsewhere, why poverty may hinder development, why early poverty may matter the most, methods for assessing the causal impacts of poverty, and linking early poverty to adult outcomes. Their review gleaned the following implications. Brain structures and functions in children raised in low income families differed extensively compared to those raised in high income households. Social science research showed a causal link between low income and child achievement. Finally, the key finding showed that supplemental income provided to families with young children had a greater impact on children's employment outcomes in adulthood than when income was provided later in childhood. Duncan et al. (2005) concluded that child poverty rates should be tracked and used to inform decision-making regarding public welfare policies and programs, such as income transfer, that would benefit children living in poverty.

Shifting the focus from adult subjects, Chafel and Neitzel (2005) examined young children's views of the causes, justification, and alleviation of poverty. Although there has been copious research about the culture of poverty from the adult perspective, these researchers wanted to investigate how children under ten years of age perceived poverty. Their goal was to explore if children think differently than adults when it comes to perspectives on poverty and low income families. Adults tend to be less understanding and tolerant of those living in poverty. Chafel and Neitzel (2005) hypothesized that young children would exhibit differences in their viewpoints of poverty based on their gender, race, setting, and socioeconomic status. They also believed that children's concepts of poverty would differ from those of adults.

Sixty-four, eight year old children were included in this study. The participants were of mixed gender, race, setting (rural or urban), and socioeconomic status. After children listened to a story, Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan, data collection was conducted in a one to one setting with participants. Children's responses to questions about the nature, causes, justification, and alleviation of poverty were recorded and audio-taped. Chafel and Neitzel (2005) found that participants had a solid understanding of poverty; however, unlike adults, children were sympathetic to the plight of those living under these conditions. Key findings of this research had direct implications for teachers. Researchers suggested using the results of this study to develop a curriculum for children under ten years of age regarding poverty and its effects on children and families. A curriculum and support materials that focus on poverty would allow students from all socioeconomic backgrounds the opportunity to ask questions,

engage in discussion, share ideas, and come to a deeper understanding of poverty and its effect on society. This study provides a natural progression into a review of the literature about how the concepts of poverty are taught in the school setting.

### **Poverty Taught in Schools**

Poverty and its effects on children can be found in schools across the country. Addressing these issues in the school setting must begin with honest and explicit instruction regarding what it means to live in poverty. Dutro (2010) conducted a study to explore how academically disadvantaged children described “hard times”. She set out to show that there was a disconnect between curriculum materials used in the classroom and actual experiences of children living in poverty. Dutro (2010) believed that commercial curriculum materials were developed based on assumptions of the conditions of children living in poverty and that the mandated materials used in the classroom did not allow for teacher flexibility to address real-life issues that arose during classroom discussions.

Two main questions were addressed in this study: (1) Given a writing prompt about “hard times” related to discussion about the Great Depression, how would children respond? (2) How do views of poverty differ between teacher guides and authentic children’s stories of poverty? Dutro (2010) conducted a qualitative analysis of experiences of seventeen 3<sup>rd</sup> graders with district-mandated curriculum. Her analysis focused on three contexts which included literature selection, children’s written responses, and the teacher’s edition from the curriculum materials. For an entire school year, she spent two days per week for three hours each in a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classroom in order to observe, interact, interview, and audio tape students’ responses to a unit taught about

the Great Depression. Children's writing samples and assessment data were collected and analyzed.

The findings of this research study first showed that the literature used in the unit portrayed poverty as a condition that would resolve itself with time and hard work. This was not a realistic depiction of poverty experiences shared by students. Second, children shared aesthetic and personal responses to the literature that rose above curriculum expectations. Finally, the script provided in the teacher's edition did not prepare teachers for the authentic and emotional responses shared by children as they described personal experiences with poverty. Dutro (2010) concluded that commercial curriculum materials and accompanying learning activities should allow for honest discussion of poverty while providing opportunities for children to share authentic knowledge of living conditions and personal experiences with poverty.

Sharing a similar viewpoint, Fox (2010) wanted to help students not only understand poverty, but learn how to initiate activities in the community, through service learning, that could assist in making societal changes. The purpose of her study was to help elementary school children understand poverty, hunger, and homelessness through engagement in a year-long service project. Fox (2010) contended that poverty is only addressed in elementary classrooms on a superficial level and that students are not encouraged to develop deep understandings of the issues that affect families living in poverty. She examined the impact of explicit instruction regarding poverty and community service on students' abilities to understand social justice and make changes in their perceptions of poverty. Fox (2010) developed a three-week unit of instruction that

was taught at the elementary school level. Through daily lessons that incorporated the use of songs, stories, photographs, and fiction and nonfiction texts, students were given information depicting poverty in local communities and around the world. The thematic unit addressed the cycle of poverty, human needs of those living in poverty, effects of poverty in the United States and globally, and steps that could be taken to make a positive impact on the lives of those living in poverty. Students completed a summative assessment project where they created visuals and writing samples demonstrating their level of understanding regarding poverty and meeting basic human needs. They also completed self-check rubrics for service learning projects in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the projects and the potential for long-term impact on the local community.

Results of this study showed that students who were given opportunities to learn about poverty through authentic materials, role models, honest discussion, journaling, and self-reflection developed a deeper understanding of the issues and were able to use critical thinking and problem-solving skills to make a positive impact on their communities. Fox (2010) states, “Although young children’s attitudes are influenced strongly by parents and family, they can act as positive role models for adults, opening gateways for adults to cross over perceived social and cultural barriers” (p. 7). Young children benefit from early education about the effects of poverty. Providing them with opportunities to explore these issues in school will help them develop deeper understandings that can follow them into adulthood.

Social awareness of cultural differences was also studied by Robinson (2013). She believed that teachers should be required to “create learning environments where all children can share their experiences, be validated, and supported” (p. 43). The purpose of her study was to show that children develop a deeper understanding of cultural differences when given the opportunity to engage with multicultural texts in the school setting. Robinson (2013) developed her research around two essential questions: (1) What do children learn about themselves and others while exploring and discussing multicultural literature for children? (2) What background knowledge is used by children to help them make critical and emotional connections to literature?

Robinson (2013) conducted a five-month long ethnographic study to help her understand behaviors, classroom responses, and social interactions between students with varying cultural backgrounds. She utilized a constructivist approach to analyze how students’ behaviors helped them develop new understandings within their natural environment. Twenty third graders were involved in the study, and they were from diverse backgrounds and heritage. Responses to instructional readings using multicultural texts were tape recorded, and anecdotal notes were taken regarding student and classroom behaviors as well as recess interactions. Robinson (2013) triangulated the data to determine repeated themes. She found that students use prior knowledge to help them develop deeper understandings about concepts introduced through multicultural literature. Most importantly, she was able to show that students had preconceived notions about social power and culture. Their beliefs were that power was most often associated with white people or those who were wealthy or famous. Students tended to equate

poverty with disrespect. Finally, Robinson (2013) showed that students who are given the opportunity to engage in multicultural texts in the classroom are more likely to think critically about social issues, reflect on their own experiences, and come to new understandings about diversity. With this in mind, literature accurately depicting poverty should be utilized in the elementary school curriculum. A review of the literature supporting this concept follows.

### **Depiction of Poverty in Children's Literature**

In order to investigate how poverty was depicted in children's books, Chaffel, Fitzgibbons, Cutter, and Burke-Weiner (1997) conducted an analysis of the messages portrayed in eighteen books for young children. The primary concern of the researchers was that inaccurate messages about poverty may have a negative impact on the belief systems of children. Literature is one avenue that helps mold children's values, and misguided messages may cause children to develop misconceptions about people living in poverty. The methods used in the Chaffel et al. (1997) study consisted of a content analysis where various selection sources were used to identify books published by 1993 that addressed poverty. Selection sources used were those that school and public librarians consulted to build their own collections. Subject searches were conducted using the terms *poverty*, *poor*, and *homeless*, with poverty being the primary focus of the search. Twenty-three books published between 1944 and 1993 were chosen for the study. Because five of the books were chosen for piloting purposes, eighteen were used for the actual content analysis. Coding and data analysis covered the text and illustrations found in each book. The coding schema for the study arose from prior sources. Chaffel et al.

(1997) reviewed prior research on children's conceptions of poverty and reviewed demographic variables used in government reports. Subsequent reviews of the research helped to develop nine categories, or themes, to create a coding schema. Finally, for their study, poverty was defined in terms of income.

The nine categories used for the content analysis included: "(1) occupation, (2) income, (3) employment, (4) unemployment, (5) race, (6) ethnicity, (7) geographic locale, (8) education, and (9) family structure" (p. 17). Books were read by the coders, or researchers, and each of the nine schema categories was correlated to characters living in poverty. Chaffel et al. (1997) reviewed trends found in the 1994 United States Census Bureau to identify statistics about populations of people living in poverty. They compared their findings from the content analysis to actual statistics on poverty. Results were mixed. While some depictions were very accurate, there were findings that deviated from trends shown through the Census Bureau statistics. For example, Whites were portrayed accurately while Hispanic and mixed races were underrepresented in the literature. For ethnic groups, Census Bureau statistics showed a wide variety of cultures affected by poverty. However, the children's literature analyzed only portrayed three specific cultures: African American, Puerto Rican, and Venezuelan.

Chaffel et al. (1997) concluded that, in general, the books analyzed in the study did not misrepresent people living in poverty. They warned, however, that results of this study should be interpreted cautiously due to the fact that only eighteen books were analyzed and that they were designed for younger audiences. The nine categories

identified for content analysis in Chaffel's study were used in the current study for initial coding and analysis of selected nonfiction texts.

In a similar study, Darragh and Kelly (2011) focused on realistic fiction picture books to conduct an analysis of how poverty was portrayed. Because picture books are typically used in classrooms to help teach concepts about social issues, the two researchers wanted to identify resources that accurately portrayed homelessness and people living in poverty. They worked from the premise that there was very little research available regarding how poverty was depicted in children's literature. They found disparity in research results and found that poor families, no matter the race, were not represented accurately in the literature reviewed. Their study sought to answer questions about the depictions of poverty as well as the accuracy of the messages found in realistic fiction picture books.

Darragh and Kelly (2011) conducted a critical multicultural analysis of 58 realistic fiction picture books for children. To identify the books for analysis, they searched in library catalogs, on the Internet, and at Amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com for books published from 1990 – 2011. They also interviewed librarians and children's literature professors to solicit recommendations. Search terms used included *poverty*, *socioeconomic status*, *homelessness*, *poor*, and *children's literature picture books*. The following qualities were used by Darragh and Kelly (2011) to quantify the number and types of depictions in the picture books and to develop a matrix of the results: "(1) author and title, (2) identifies if main character is poor, (3) time era and geographical locale, (4) social identities of the character who is poor (i.e., gender, age, and race), and

(5) identifies the person who demonstrates action and the type of action performed” (p. 267). Finally, analysis of the picture books determined common themes and patterns of depictions of poverty.

Darragh and Kelly (2011) used the following guiding questions to assist with determining common themes: “(a) Who is the main character of the book? (b) What is the time era and geographic locale of the story? (c) What are the gender, age, and race of the focal poor character? (d) Who demonstrates action, and what type of action is demonstrated?” (p. 267). Using United States Census Bureau statistics from 2006-2008, comparisons were made between what was depicted in the picture books and what was actually happening in the United States at the time. Two of their findings were of particular interest. Geographically, rural poverty was not represented at all in the literature. Race and ethnicity were not portrayed accurately in comparison with Census Bureau statistics. Although Whites were over-represented, African Americans and Hispanics were both underrepresented in the children’s picture books analyzed.

Darragh and Kelly (2011) concluded that children living in poverty should be able to read from books that depict similar life experiences in order to make connections to their own lives through literature. Children who are not poor should also be introduced to literature that helps them learn about social issues and concepts. Books about poverty should depict gender differences as well as a variety of races, cultures, and geographic locations that are affected by poverty. Although these researchers did not examine nonfiction books for children, they recognized the value of pairing fiction with nonfiction to help students gain understandings about the ramifications of living in poverty. The

guiding questions used by Darragh and Kelly (2011) to determine common themes and provide a focus for analysis were used to inform and guide the current study.

### **Summary**

Based on a review of the literature relating to poverty and its depictions in children's books, it is clear that all students benefit from instruction regarding the social issues surrounding children living in poverty. The negative impacts of poverty and homelessness can be seen on all levels from birth to adult. Children receiving support and services early in life are more likely to lead productive lives as adults. Studies show that early intervention and education about poverty helps all students not only learn about poverty, but learn from those actually living in poverty. As a result, accurate depictions of poverty and homelessness in children's literature are necessary to aid in the development of belief systems that are based on facts versus stereotypes and misinformation. School librarians should build collections with resources, both fiction and nonfiction, that support and guide authentic learning experiences for students. Classroom collections should also follow these same guidelines and represent the diverse composition of the classroom. Given the fact that gaps exist in recent studies and that available lists of resources are dated, this researcher analyzed nonfiction K-6 children's books for accurate depictions of poverty and homelessness in order to identify the most current, high quality nonfiction children's books available.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

School libraries, classroom teachers, and elementary school children need to provide and have access to nonfiction books that depict poverty and homelessness. These materials are necessary to assist educators with meeting the academic, social, financial, and emotional challenges facing children living in poverty. Given the fact that gaps exist in recent studies and that available resources are dated, this researcher analyzed nonfiction K-6 children's books for accurate depictions of poverty and homelessness in order to identify the most current, high quality nonfiction children's books available. The questions addressed in this study included:

1. How is poverty depicted in current, nonfiction books for K-6 students?
2. Are the depictions of poverty in the selected sample accurate and sensitive?
3. What are the most current, high quality K-6 nonfiction books available that depict poverty and homelessness?

#### **Research Design**

This study utilized a qualitative content analysis approach to evaluate children's nonfiction books for depictions of poverty and homelessness. Wildemuth (2009) stated that this method "uncovers patterns, themes, and categories important to a social reality" (p. 312). In other words, qualitative content analysis allows the researcher to dig deeper for meaning in text and/or illustrative messages. It allows the researcher to use a systematic approach to scrutinize texts in order to establish themes and categories found within the materials being analyzed. Wildemuth (2009) wrote, "Through careful data

preparation, coding, and interpretation, the results of qualitative content analysis can support the development of new theories and models as well as validating existing theories and providing thick descriptions of particular settings or phenomena” (p. 318). The research method used for this study followed a sequence of procedural steps which helped to guide the process.

Given that this researcher sought to identify nonfiction books that accurately depicted poverty and homelessness, the method of qualitative content analysis allowed for the subjective, yet scientific, interpretation of selected books to address the posed research questions. Information gleaned from the literature review about the attributes of poverty and its effects on children, as well as information about depictions of poverty and its stereotypes, aided in developing a coding scheme that was used for the analysis of existing nonfiction texts.

Limitations to using this method included researcher bias during the selection and coding processes, the size of the sample analyzed, and the generally subjective nature of this research method. The final sample included fifteen K-6 nonfiction texts published between the years 2005 - 2015. Books for students in grades 7 - 12 were not analyzed.

### **Data Sources**

A previous study conducted by Chaffel et al. (1997) addressed the issue of the portrayal of poverty in children’s literature. They found that poverty issues were not misrepresented; however, their study was from 1997 and did not categorize findings into a list of high quality nonfiction books for children in grades K-6. Darragh and Kelly (2011) conducted a similar study using realistic fiction and stated there was a need for

current research analyzing nonfiction texts. This researcher utilized similar methods from those two studies to analyze, code, and categorize selected children's nonfiction books with a primary theme of poverty.

The sample of nonfiction books for this study was chosen using professional bibliographic tools. A complete list of search tools can be found in Appendix A. Identified search tools were chosen because they are most often used by school and public librarians to build collections. This researcher's goal was to be able to quickly and easily locate materials in close proximity in order to conduct a first-hand review and analysis of the selected materials. Existing nonfiction books that included the topic of poverty and/or homelessness and that received at least one positive review were purposefully selected to inform the research questions.

Prior to selection, book abstracts, bibliographic annotations, and illustrations were reviewed for real-life portrayals and images of poverty represented across a variety of cultures. An initial list of 28 books was identified for potential use in the study. However, many of the books were eliminated due to lack of subject-specific content, out-of-range publication dates, unavailability, or lack of positive reviews. Finally, a sample of fifteen K-6 nonfiction books judged by the researcher to be appropriate were identified for analysis. Selected books were located within the geographic area to ensure a first-hand review by the researcher. Refer to Appendix B for a complete list of the sample of books analyzed for this study.

### **Procedure**

Wildemuth (2009) defined the steps that should be followed when conducting a qualitative content analysis of written texts. This researcher utilized the defined framework guidelines to gather and prepare data, develop a coding scheme, and analyze children's nonfiction texts for accurate depictions of poverty. Wildemuth's (2009) eight procedural steps include: "(1) prepare the data, (2) define the unit of analysis, (3) develop categories and a coding scheme, (4) test your coding scheme on a sample of text, (5) code all the text, (6) assess your coding consistency, (7) draw conclusions from the coded data, and (8) report your methods and findings" (pp. 311-312). These procedural steps were used for the current study and will be outlined in the pages that follow.

Wildemuth (2009) contends that the selection of existing texts for data analysis must be based on what the researcher needs to know. To begin to prepare the data, an analysis of the K-6 Iowa Core Standards for social studies was conducted to determine the standards that address family issues, neighborhoods, communities, economic diversity, and social issues that are related to poverty and homelessness. This analysis aided in the identification of keywords to be used to search within professional bibliographic tools for nonfiction books on this topic.

It was determined that the terms *poverty*, *poor*, *homeless\**, *nonfiction*, *families*, *economic diversity*, *socioeconomic status*, and *children's literature* would be used. Next, keyword and subject searches were conducted through the University of Northern Iowa's Rod Library using *Wilson's Children's Core Collection*, *Children's Literature Comprehensive Database*, and the online *Horn Book Guide*. Additionally, a Destiny catalog search through the Iowa City Community School District's library database was

conducted to determine a final list of potential books for the sample. It was found that the only search terms that resulted in useable titles were *poverty* and *homeless*\* when the searches were conducted independently. Additional search terms gleaned titles that were either not appropriate for the study or were not books identified for students in grades K-6.

Using an initial list of 28 titles, book reviews, annotations, and abstracts were examined to assist in identifying books relevant to the study. A sample of 15 books that fit the following criteria and were judged by the researcher to be appropriate were identified for analysis: (1) nonfiction, (2) illustrated picture book, (3) appropriate for children grades K-6, (4) poverty and homelessness as central themes, and (5) published from 2005 - 2015. An attempt to limit selected books to those taking place in the United States put too many limitations on the researcher as the majority of available books discussed world-wide views of poverty and homelessness.

Once the nonfiction text sample was selected, this researcher proceeded with defining the unit of analysis for each text in the sample by reading and reviewing each book first-hand. Wildemuth (2009) contended that “messages have to be unitized before they can be coded” (p. 310) and further explained that the theme being studied can be communicated in the text through words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs written within the existing texts. It is not uncommon for an entire document to express an identified theme. The theme, or unit of analysis, for this study was poverty and homelessness; and poverty was defined economically in terms of income. It was decided that both written text and illustrations would be analyzed for this study.

In order to develop categories and a coding scheme, an earlier related study was modeled. According to Wildemuth (2009), “The adoption of coding schemes developed in previous studies has the advantage of supporting the accumulation and comparison of research findings across multiple studies” (p. 311). Building on the work of Chaffel et al. (1997), the initial categories used for coding each book included the following: (1) occupation, (2) income, (3) employment, (4) unemployment, (5) race, (6) ethnicity, (7) geographic locale, (8) education, and (9) family structure (p. 17). High quality books should depict poverty as it affects people of different genders, races, cultures, and those who may live in a variety of geographic areas. This researcher used the above coding scheme to determine how the chosen nonfiction texts correlate to those who are shown to be living in poverty. See Appendix C for a matrix of characteristics of poverty used for coding.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher developed an additional coding scheme to address stereotypes of those living in poverty. High quality nonfiction texts should avoid stereotyping to accurately and sensitively depict poverty and homelessness. Studies by Cozzarelli et al. (2001) and Robinson (2013) determined character traits associated with stereotypes of those living in poverty. Results of their work were used to develop a coding scheme for reviewing content for the presence of stereotyping. The nonfiction text sample and illustrations were initially coded by using the following stereotype categories as they relate to the people discussed in the texts: (a) criminality, (b) depression, (c) tendency toward violence, (d) uneducated, (e) unmotivated, (f) lazy, and (g) socially irresponsible (alcoholic, abuse drugs). See Appendix D for a matrix of

stereotypes of poverty used for coding. In order for texts to be identified as depicting poverty and homelessness in a sensitive manner, they must avoid the use of these stereotypical characteristics.

### **Data Analysis**

Wildemuth (2009) recommended testing the coding schemes on a small sample of the selected texts. This process would allow the researcher to make sure the coding scheme was accurate and to determine if rules or categories needed to be revised. From the sample of fifteen books chosen for this study, books 1 - 3 were used for initial coding. Upon analysis of their content, this researcher chose to modify the original coding scheme to add the following seven categories to the characteristics of poverty in order to make a total of sixteen: (10) natural disasters, (11) food insecurity, (12) age, (13) gender, (14) shelter, (15) basic needs, and (16) medical concerns/access to health care. Revisions were required to make sure there was consistency within the coding scheme. Once the test sample had been adequately coded and analyzed and revisions were made to the schema, official coding of the text sample began.

Each text in the sample was read, reviewed, and coded first-hand. Given that the sample came from books for K-6 students, illustrations were also used for coding. Matrices of data were collected for each coding scheme and can be found in Appendices C and D. For each book analyzed, a checkmark and/or anecdotal notes were made for the themes exhibited. Additional notes and comments were made at the end of the matrices to summarize the content of each book reviewed. Numbers for the annotations correlate to

each book's assigned number in the matrices. Characteristics of poverty and stereotypes of poverty were both analyzed separately.

Wildemuth (2009) explained that the researcher "will make inferences and present your reconstructions of meanings derived from the data" (p. 312). This researcher's initial goal was to use results from data collected and compare the percentages found for each category to current United States Census Bureau statistics in order to identify texts that accurately portrayed poverty and homelessness. The goal was then to cross-reference books accurately depicting poverty with those that avoided stereotypes in order to develop a list of high quality nonfiction texts. However, the text sample severely limited this researcher's ability to use United States Census Bureau statistics for comparison. The nonfiction sample was comprised of books that predominantly discussed world-wide views of poverty and homelessness. Only four of the fifteen books from the sample dealt solely with issues within the United States. Although this comparison of statistics was not utilized for the current study, it was assumed that the collected data would still help the researcher identify high quality nonfiction texts that accurately and sensitively depicted poverty.

For comparison, this researcher decided to identify resources that discussed the characteristics of poverty which correlated with those used for coding in the current study. It was important to examine authoritative sources in order to determine if the chosen nonfiction sample addressed the identified characteristics of poverty accurately and with sensitivity. According to The World Bank's *Handbook on Poverty and Inequality* (Haughton & Shahidur, 2009), the main demographics of poverty include, but

are not limited to, geographic region, environmental conditions, weather, government control, access to goods and services (food, water, shelter, education, utilities, healthcare and clinics), household characteristics (family size, gender head, employment, income, health and education of parents), and individual characteristics (age, employment, health, ethnicity). These same characteristics of poverty were used by this researcher during the coding process and are listed on the matrices found in Appendix C.

In addition, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, n.d.) presents poverty in absolute and relative terms. The organization states that absolute poverty is measured in terms of what people can afford to purchase to meet the basic needs of food, clothing, and housing. Relative poverty helps describe poverty in terms of standards of living. UNESCO (n.d.) helped broaden the definition of poverty by recognizing the need to include the roles of culture, power, and social structure. They also felt it was important to include gender and structure of the household when assessing poverty. Keeping the cited characteristics of poverty put forth by The World Bank and UNESCO in mind, this researcher's nonfiction text sample was re-coded for consistency, and the collected data was examined for inclusion of the identified characteristics of poverty. Relationships and patterns found within the data were culminated and are reported in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

All elementary school children in grades K-6 should have access to current, nonfiction reading materials that accurately and sensitively depict poverty and homelessness. An updated list of children's nonfiction literature that addresses these issues is not available at this time. The purpose of this research study was to use professional bibliographic tools, such as *Wilson's Children's Core Collection*, to select a sample of K-6 nonfiction books, conduct an analysis of their content, and identify the most current, high quality books that accurately and sensitively depict poverty and homelessness.

A qualitative content analysis of nonfiction books for students in grades K-6 was conducted. This researcher found the process of identifying titles to be cumbersome and discouraging since minimal titles could actually be identified for use in this study. Initial keyword and subject searches using the terms *poverty* and *homeless*\* identified a list of 28 potential titles. However, upon review of abstracts and book reviews, thirteen of the titles had to be eliminated due to subject matter, poor reviews, inappropriate grade level, wrong genre, or publication dates prior to 2005. Finally, a useable sample of fifteen books was identified employing the following professional bibliographic tools: *Wilson's Children's Core Collection* - 7 titles, *Children's Literature Comprehensive Database* - 1 title, *Online Horn Book Guide* - 1 title, and the Iowa City Community School District's online library catalog, *Destiny* - 6 titles. The researcher also attempted to identify additional titles through *Teachingbooks.net* utilizing the keyword and subject searches mentioned above. However, there were minimal nonfiction book results about poverty

and homelessness; and many of the works represented historical perspectives, biographies, or books written for students in grades 7-12.

The titles selected for the study needed to be collected by the researcher for first-hand analysis. Of the books identified for the study, none of them were available in the researcher's elementary school library. Searches were also conducted through the four public library online catalogs as well as the Grant Wood AEA online media catalog. All agencies were located within the researcher's local vicinity. Only one book title was found at a local public library, and the book was not appropriate for use in the study. The Iowa City Community School District's interlibrary loan program was consulted to gain access to thirteen book titles. The researcher worked with the school library media secretary to locate and request delivery of the books. Five of them were found in a variety of elementary school settings, and eight of them were located in area middle schools. All were sent to the researcher's building for pick-up. Finally, the University of Northern Iowa's Rod Library and its interlibrary loan program was used to request that five titles be delivered through the U.S. postal service to the researcher's home. After review of the books from Rod Library, only two of them were appropriate for the study. Knowing how difficult it was for this researcher to search for and locate books on this topic, it would be equally difficult for students in grades K-6 to find books about poverty.

Once the final sample was identified and gathered, the researcher analyzed and coded each book first-hand using the characteristics of poverty and stereotypes of poverty matrices found in Appendix C and Appendix D respectively. Analysis of the text features

and illustrations in the sample guided the study and helped to answer the following research questions:

1. How is poverty depicted in current, nonfiction books for K-6 students?
2. Are the depictions of poverty in the selected sample accurate and sensitive?
3. What are the most current, high quality K-6 nonfiction books available that depict poverty and homelessness?

Because the characteristics and stereotypes employed in the coding schemas correlated directly with the definitions of poverty presented by The World Bank (2009) and UNESCO (n.d.), this researcher adopted their terms as a means of comparison within the study. Analysis of data and answers to the research questions follow.

### **Depictions of Poverty in K-6 Nonfiction Books**

After analyzing the sample for depictions of poverty, it was found that the majority of books addressed characteristics of poverty as defined by The World Bank (2009) and UNESCO (n.d.). A wide range of characteristics were depicted in each of the books analyzed. Of the sixteen characteristics coded, only race was underrepresented. This could be explained by the fact that poverty and homelessness can affect people of all races. By limiting discussions of race, readers are less likely to associate poverty and homelessness with one race over another. Table 1 demonstrates the percentages of each characteristic found within the text features and illustrations of the sample. Income, employment, education, and shelter were topics that were discussed most often. This researcher would like to see how people living in poverty would rate these characteristics

on a priority continuum to determine if income, employment, education, and shelter would be among top priorities for addressing their poverty.

Because the majority of books analyzed discussed poverty and homelessness around the world, especially in developing countries, it was difficult to compare findings to U.S. Census Bureau statistics on poverty. Seventy-three percent of the books addressed worldviews of poverty, while only 27% discussed issues only found in the United States. For K-6 students in the U.S. attempting to learn more about poverty in their own state or country, they may get a skewed view of the problem for U.S. citizens. More books on the topic of poverty and homelessness, as it pertains specifically to the U.S., are necessary to help fill in the gaps.

Table 1. Nonfiction Sample - Depictions of Poverty

Characteristics of Poverty	# of books depicting the characteristic in text features	% of sample depicting the characteristic in text features	# of books depicting the characteristic in illustrations	% of sample depicting the characteristic in illustrations
occupation	10	67%	11	73%
income	15	100%	9	60%
employment	14	93%	5	33%
unemployment	12	80%	5	33%
race	6	40%	8	53%
ethnicity	11	73%	9	60%
geographic locale	12	80%	12	80%
education	13	87%	8	53%

family structure	11	73%	11	73%
natural disasters	10	67%	5	33%
food insecurity	12	80%	6	40%
age	10	67%	14	93%
gender	9	60%	9	60%
shelter	13	87%	14	93%
basic needs	10	67%	8	53%
medical concerns/ access to health care	12	80%	7	47%

When assessing the data found within individual books, this researcher discovered that the majority of books depicted at least 9 of the 16 characteristics of poverty used for coding the text features. Ten of the books had illustrations that depicted at least 50% of the characteristics of poverty. Many of the books had a limited number of illustrations and were written for students in upper elementary grade levels 5-6. Fewer illustrations per book meant that a fewer number of characteristics were depicted. Generally, illustrations found throughout the sample depicted a variety of ages, races, ethnicities, and genders. Given that the majority of the sample represented developing countries from around the world, there were not many illustrations of people in the United States living in poverty. However, those that were depicted, represented a variety of races, genders,

and ages. This researcher did not find that certain cultures were over or underrepresented in the illustrations.

Table 2 shows a breakdown of how each book in the sample depicted poverty. Looking back, one book, *Home*, by Rotner & Goldbas, was mostly a pictorial representation of different types of homes around the country. It briefly mentioned homelessness, but the main premise of the book was types of homes. This researcher would choose not to include it on a list of books about poverty and homelessness. Overall, it was concluded that the sample of nonfiction K-6 books chosen depicted a majority of the characteristics of poverty, either through text features or illustrations, found within The World Bank (2009) and UNESCO (n.d.) statistics. Examples of accurate and sensitive depictions of poverty and homelessness were found in many of the books analyzed.

Text features and illustration captions communicated to the reader both definitions and causes of poverty. For example, Mason (2006) wrote in his book, *Planet Under Pressure: Poverty*:

The poverty cycle is a term to describe how people become trapped in poverty. Because they are poor, it is more difficult for them to become educated and improve their standard of living than it would be otherwise. It also makes it more likely that their children will grow up poor, continuing the cycle of poverty into the next generation. They get trapped by their poverty. (p. 24)

Basic needs of children living in poverty were discussed throughout the study sample, and illustrations portrayed their plight in a variety of ways. In the book, *Ending Poverty and Hunger*, Anderson (2010) described childhood poverty by stating, “Poverty affects children in many ways. It affects the food they eat, the homes they live in, and limits their

access to good healthcare, sports, and a proper education” (p. 26). One illustration from Lusted’s (2010) book, *Poverty*, showed a young boy sitting outside by a campfire waiting for his mother to prepare a meal. The caption read, “Thurman Yazzie lives in a trailer with no power or running water in Arizona. He waits for his mother to finish cooking dinner outside” (p. 63).

Homelessness was also depicted with candor and sensitivity. Fields’ (2010) book, *Kids Growing Up Without a Home*, portrayed conditions for the homeless by sharing true stories from people living on the streets. “Meanwhile, on the other side of the country in Newark, New Jersey, Maryann Stebbins and her two little boys are living in their Dodge van. She and the boys wash in public restrooms” (p. 9). Another book, *Taking Action Against Homelessness*, by Stearman (2010), discussed some of the causes of homelessness.

Sometimes it is poor health that pushes people into homelessness. Severe illness or serious injury can mean that people are off of work for weeks or months. Without a regular paycheck from a job, a worker may get behind with their rent or mortgage payments. As a result, the family must seek cheaper housing. In the worst cases, they may end up on the streets. (p. 24)

One of Stearman’s (2010) illustrations showed a homeless girl digging around in a garbage dump in another country. The caption read, “A homeless girl in Brazil drinks from a container of milk she found while searching through the rubbish” (p. 25).

Another common theme found in the text sample revolved around the lack of education available for those experiencing poverty and homelessness. Lusted’s (2010) book about poverty provided in-depth discussions about the ramifications of living in poverty. She wrote:

But people living in poverty have fewer resources when it comes to education. They also have fewer support systems to make them want to become well educated. Finally, they often attend inferior schools in poor areas. If they grow up in a culture that is not educated and does not value education, poor children and teenagers often face extreme difficulty breaking out of the cycle. (p. 51)

Illustrations from Hughes' (2011) book, *Off to Class*, depicted a variety of schools from around the world and demonstrated how difficult it was for children in developing countries to access a quality education and pursue gainful employment. One photograph showed girls in a beauty salon, and the caption read, "When the girls learn a trade, they have a better chance of getting a job, earning an income, and giving back to their families and community" (p. 25).

Careful analysis of the text features and illustrations of the study sample revealed to this researcher that the issues of poverty and homelessness are profound and not always understood by society. The books and illustrations in the sample provided clear, concise descriptions of the characteristics and causes of these two critical social problems. Depictions were representative of the characteristics identified for this study and provided the reader with a variety of facts and visual representations of poverty and homelessness.

Table 2. Depictions of Poverty by Book

Book Title	# and % of characteristics of poverty depicted in text	# and % of characteristics of poverty depicted in illustrations
(1) <i>Ending Poverty and Hunger</i> , Anderson	14 88%	14 88%
(2) <i>Homelessness</i> , Buckley	15	10

	94%	67%
(3) <i>Kids Growing Up Without a Home</i> , Fields	15 94%	7 44%
(4) <i>Poverty</i> , Gifford	12 75%	15 94%
(5) <i>Home</i> , Harrison	12 75%	10 67%
(6) <i>Off to Class</i> , Hughes	13 81%	11 69%
(7) <i>Avoiding Hunger and Finding Water</i> , Langley	10 67%	6 38%
(8) <i>Poverty</i> , Lusted	16 100%	12 75%
(9) <i>What to Do When Your Family Loses Its Home</i> , Lynette	9 56%	6 38%
(10) <i>Planet Under Pressure: Poverty</i> , Mason	14 88%	9 56%
(11) <i>Social justice activist</i> , Rodger & Field	9 56%	6 38%
(12) <i>Home</i> , Rotner & Goldbas	7 44%	6 38%
(13) <i>What If We Do Nothing? Poverty</i> , Senker	13 81%	10 67%
(14) <i>Taking Action Against Homelessness</i> , Stearman	15 94%	13 81%
(15) <i>Born and Bred in the Great Depression</i> , Winter	9 56%	7 44%

**Avoiding Stereotypes - Accuracy and Sensitivity of Depictions**

To begin to answer the second research question regarding the accuracy and sensitivity of depictions of poverty, the reader should refer back to Tables 1 and 2 above. Each book in the sample accurately depicted many of the characteristics of poverty that were identified by The World Bank (2009) and UNESCO (n.d.). This researcher chose to use a second coding scheme to analyze the use of stereotypes of poverty found within each book. Those books that did not discuss stereotypes in a negative manner were viewed as portraying sensitive depictions of poverty. Table 3 shows results for the sample as a whole. An asterisk (\*) was used to denote books and illustrations that discussed the identified stereotypes but did so in a manner that either explained why people living in poverty experienced the situations or provided actual statistics of individuals affected by the issue. Some of the books and illustration captions went on to explain why there were myths about people living in poverty. The books explained the importance of learning more about poverty and homelessness in order to avoid passing judgment on people affected by these situations.

These same findings would hold true when looking at the data from each individual book in the sample. Table 4 shows results of analysis of each book. Again, an asterisk (\*) was used to denote books and illustrations that provided reasons or stated facts as to why people living in poverty experienced the social problems listed as stereotypes. For illustrations, asterisks denoted those that provided captions which recounted explanations for the stereotypical depiction. A double asterisk (\*\*) was used for those books that dispelled the myths or stereotypes. Data showed that the books depicting the highest percentage of stereotypes also appeared with two sets of asterisks.

In other words, not only did they provide explanations and statistics about the social problems discussed, but they also made sure to help readers dispel any myths about living in poverty or being homeless.

Results of the data analysis showed that although many of the books discussed stereotypes, all of them were displayed with an asterisk. In other words, the books and illustrations in the sample addressed stereotypes in a sensitive manner and provided explanations and statistics to back up their claims. For example, lack of education, mental illness, and socially irresponsible behaviors were the most frequently discussed and depicted aspects in the books analyzed for this study. Mason's (2006) book, *Poverty*, talked about the reasons why people living in poverty are uneducated. "Lack of education is linked to poverty - people who cannot read and write properly are likely to find it impossible to get a high-paying job. This has a continuing effect within a family" (p. 18). Rodger and Field (2010) talked about another stereotype in their book, *Social Justice Activist*. They wrote:

Homeless people suffer from discrimination. People do not like to see them on the streets or begging. Some people think that the homeless are lazy, but many of them do have jobs. Their jobs just do not pay enough for them to afford to rent or own a home, as well as pay for the cost of food, clothing, and transportation. (p. 20)

Lusted (2010) wrote in her book, *Poverty*, "Substance abuse and dependence is a common mental health issue directly related to poverty. Poor people - especially teens - may look to drugs and alcohol as one way to escape from the stresses of poverty" (pp. 70-71).

Additionally, only five books in the sample had illustrations that depicted one of the stereotypes, socially irresponsible behavior (drugs, alcohol abuse). The captions for

each of the illustrations provided clear explanations of the situations depicted. In Buckley's (2012) book, *Homelessness*, an illustration showed homeless teens and adults sitting around a campsite with bottles of alcohol. The caption read, "For some homeless people, alcohol abuse is a problem" (p. 66). Stearman's (2010) book, *Taking Action Against Homelessness*, depicted drug and alcohol abuse a number of times. One of the pictures showed homeless people sleeping in the concourse of a subway, and the caption stated, "Even in rich countries such as Japan, some people live on the streets. They are most likely to be men without jobs or family support, and some are addicted to alcohol or drugs and have mental health problems" (p. 11). Another picture in her book showed a used syringe, and the caption read, "Homeless drug addicts often share needles, putting themselves at risk of infection. Used needles can infect others, including children who find them thrown away in parks" (p. 22). Finally, true stories were shared in Fields' (2010) book, *Kids Growing Up Without a Home*. One of the illustrations was of a man struggling with poverty and homelessness. The caption under his picture said, "Angel Pereira coped with the loss of his wife and children by drinking alcohol. After nearly dying, he went to rehab and now devotes his time to helping others who have found themselves on the street" (p. 47).

From analysis of the data presented, it was evident that all of the books mentioning stereotypes provided statistics and explanations that helped the reader dispel myths about their conditions. Therefore, this researcher concluded that all texts and illustrations in the sample communicated depictions of poverty both accurately and sensitively by avoiding the use of stereotypes to describe people living in poverty.

## 3. Nonfiction Sample - Depictions of Stereotypes

Stereotypes of Poverty	# of books depicting stereotypes* in text features	% of sample depicting stereotypes in text features	# of books depicting stereotypes* in illustrations	% of sample depicting stereotypes in illustrations
criminality	4*	27%	0	0%
depression	5*	33%	0	0%
tendency toward violence	2*	13%	0	0%
uneducated	7*	47%	0	0%
unmotivated	1*	7%	0	0%
lazy	3*	20%	0	0%
socially irresponsible (alcoholic; drug abuse; etc.)	6*	40%	5*	33%

\* Denotes number of books that discussed the stereotypes in terms of myths and provided information to become educated about people living in poverty to help understand their situations and how they became susceptible to social problems. For illustrations, the asterisk means a detailed, informative caption was provided.

Table 4. Depictions of Stereotypes by Book

Book Title	# and % of stereotypes of poverty depicted	# and % of stereotypes of poverty depicted
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	in text features	in illustrations
(1) <i>Ending Poverty and Hunger</i> , Anderson	1* 14%	0 0%
(2) <i>Homelessness</i> , Buckley	4** 57%	1* 14%
(3) <i>Kids Growing Up Without a Home</i> , Fields	3* 43%	1* 14%
(4) <i>Poverty</i> , Gifford	2** 29%	1* 14%
(5) <i>Home</i> , Harrison	3* 43%	1* 14%
(6) <i>Off to Class</i> , Hughes	0 0%	0 0%
(7) <i>Avoiding Hunger and Finding Water</i> , Langley	0 0%	0 0%
(8) <i>Poverty</i> , Lusted	6* ** 86%	0 0%
(9) <i>What to Do When Your Family Loses Its Home</i> , Lynette	0 0%	0 0%
(10) <i>Planet Under Pressure: Poverty</i> , Mason	3** 43%	0 0%
(11) <i>Social justice activist</i> , Rodger & Field	0 0%	0 0%
(12) <i>Home</i> , Rotner & Goldbas	0 0%	0 0%
(13) <i>What If We Do Nothing? Poverty</i> , Senker	1* 14%	0 0%
(14) <i>Taking Action Against Homelessness</i> , Stearman	5* ** 71%	1* 14%
(15) <i>Born and Bred in the Great Depression</i> , Winter	0 0%	0 0%

\* provided reasons or stated facts why this happens; captions for illustrations provided reasons

\*\* dispelled the myth/stereotype

### **Current, High Quality K-6 Nonfiction Books**

The text sample identified for this study consisted of fifteen nonfiction books with poverty and homelessness as their main focus. Publication dates chosen were from 2005 - 2015 since recent research on the topic produced lists of books that were dated. Books for the sample were also chosen based on positive reviews. For example, books identified through the *Online Horn Book Guide* that had reviews rated 4-6 were eliminated. Books from that guide that had reviews ranked 1-3 were chosen for the study. Positive reviews would help ensure that the list of books was of high quality. The final list of books used for the study is found in Appendix B and addresses the final research question for the study. The qualitative content analysis performed by this researcher showed that all but one of the books identified would be recommended to make up a list of current, high quality K-6 nonfiction books about poverty and homelessness.

In addition, an analysis of interest levels of books showed some alarming results. From the data it was concluded that there were not many books available on this topic for children in grades K-4. The majority of the books found were geared toward upper elementary school and middle school students. For example, a book that was categorized at an interest level of grades 5 - 8 was denoted for grade level 5 and grade level 6 in the

researcher's notes. Similarly, if a book was categorized at a level of K-3, it was denoted for grades K, 1, 2, and 3 respectively. Results of the interest level analysis are found in Table 5. Only 13% of the sample was appropriate for grades K-1, 27% was appropriate for grades K-3, and 33% of the sample was identified to be appropriate for grade 4.

Young children should have equal access to books about poverty and homelessness in their school libraries. This researcher would conclude that additional books on this topic need to be made available for younger children, especially in grades K-4.

Table 5. Interest Level by Grade

Grade Level	# of books for specified grade level	% of books for specified grade level
K	2	13%
1	2	13%
2	4	27%
3	4	27%
4	5	33%
5	11	73%
6	9	60%

### Summary

This research study sought to analyze a sample of nonfiction K-6 books about poverty and homelessness in order to determine how poverty was depicted in the current literature. The researcher also analyzed the depictions of poverty for accuracy and

sensitivity. Finally, the researcher wanted to identify a list of current, high quality books for children in grades K-6 that discussed the issues of poverty and homelessness in an honest, yet sensitive, manner. After the qualitative content analysis was completed, it was concluded that a majority of the characteristics of poverty were highlighted in the text features and illustrations of each book, and all of the books in the sample avoided the discussion of stereotypes in a negative manner. The topics of poverty and homelessness were handled both accurately and sensitively.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Purpose Statement

All elementary school children in grades K-6 should have access to current, nonfiction reading materials that accurately and sensitively depict poverty and homelessness. An updated list of children's nonfiction literature that addresses these issues is not available at this time. The purpose of this research study was to use professional bibliographic tools, such as *Wilson's Children's Core Collection*, to select a sample of K-6 nonfiction books, conduct an analysis of their content, and identify the most current, high quality books that accurately and sensitively depict poverty and homelessness. The researcher conducted a qualitative content analysis of a 15-book sample of K-6 nonfiction texts to seek answers to the following questions:

1. How is poverty depicted in current, nonfiction books for K-6 students?
2. Are the depictions of poverty in the selected sample accurate and sensitive?
3. What are the most current, high quality K-6 nonfiction books available that depict poverty and homelessness?

Findings of this study showed that poverty and homelessness were depicted within the sample accurately and sensitively when compared to The World Bank (2009) and UNESCO (n.d.) characteristics of poverty. Furthermore, the books in the sample either avoided mentioning stereotypes of poverty or handled them in ways that supported discussion with statistics or helped to dispel myths. Finally, results of the content analysis

produced a list of current, high quality K-6 nonfiction books about poverty and homelessness.

### **Conclusions**

This study of K-6 nonfiction books about poverty and homelessness investigated how these social problems were depicted in the literature as well as whether the depictions of poverty and homelessness were accurate and sensitive. Similar to the study conducted by Chaffel et al. (1997), this researcher utilized a coding schema consisting of characteristics of poverty that were identified using demographics found in government reports. The 15-book sample was analyzed to determine the number of characteristics of poverty that were discussed in the literature and portrayed in the illustrations. It was found that current demographics of poverty were depicted throughout a majority of the books analyzed. Characteristics of poverty have been well researched, and the authors of the nonfiction books analyzed were careful to address the issues accurately. Furthermore, poverty and homelessness were depicted in a manner consistent with the characteristics put forth by organizations like The World Bank (2009) and UNESCO (n.d.).

According to Dutro (2010) and Fox (2010), children should learn to understand poverty by engaging in activities that deepen their knowledge and understanding of important social issues. Engaging in nonfiction texts that accurately depict poverty and homelessness should help encourage young children to discuss difficult issues and ask questions to deepen their understanding about these social issues. Findings of this analysis showed that children reading books from this sample should be able to learn

factual information about many aspects of people living in poverty and who may be homeless. Even though a majority of the sample discussed world-wide views of poverty, students should learn about the welfare of children and families in other countries. One drawback to the sample may be that children could mistakenly come to the conclusion that people in the United States are not affected as much as other countries by poverty and homelessness. A larger sample of books depicting social issues specific to the U.S. would be useful.

The sensitivity of depictions of poverty and homelessness in books for children was also measured in this study. Cozarelli et al. (2001), as stated in the literature review, identified stereotypes of poverty and demonstrated that attitudes about people living in poverty are generally negative. As a result, it was determined by this researcher that sensitive depictions of poverty would include those that avoided discussions of negative stereotypes like depression, being uneducated, or being socially irresponsible (alcoholism, drug abuse). It was found that the books included in the sample frequently discussed many of these stereotypes. However, 100% of the books analyzed either provided statistics about the social problems discussed, or the authors provided facts that dispelled the myths and helped the reader understand why people living in poverty experience these things. As Robinson (2013) stated, children need to be able to engage in books that will help them think critically about social issues affecting our society. Negative attitudes and stereotypes about the poor can have an adverse affect on students who are learning about the ramifications of poverty and homelessness. Therefore, books

that accurately and sensitively depict poverty and homelessness need to be made available to students.

The list of current, high quality books provided in this study would offer some K-6 students with accurate and sensitive depictions of poverty and homelessness. Although the books were found to provide accurate depictions and covered the topics in a sensitive manner, a large portion of the sample was geared toward students in grades 5 - 6 and above. Only five of the fifteen books could be found in local elementary school libraries. The others were either housed in middle schools or had to be mailed to the researcher via the University of Northern Iowa's interlibrary loan program. If books were this difficult for the researcher to access, young students in grades K-6 may have a hard time locating the books on their own. Now that a list of current, high quality nonfiction books about poverty and homelessness for K-6 students has been identified, school librarians need to be encouraged to get them on the shelves in their elementary school buildings. Furthermore, additional nonfiction books on the topic for K-4 students need to be identified and analyzed.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Although the results of this research study were positive and identified accurate and sensitive depictions in the chosen sample, it would be compelling to see if there are other selection tools or resources available that could help identify nonfiction books about poverty and homelessness written for younger students in grades K-4. The sample for this study was limited by the low numbers of books found when using the bibliographic tools listed in Appendix A. If books could be found using other selection

tools, would they have positive reviews? Could they be readily found in local elementary school libraries?

An additional recommendation for future research is to see if the results of this study could be replicated for a sample of books written for students in grades 7 - 12. Would the sample be larger? Would the books be easier to access in middle school and high school libraries? Would more books covering the United States be available? Would there be biases found in the depictions of poverty and homelessness?

Finally, there is a gap in this study in regard to making comparisons to poverty statistics found at the United States Census Bureau. Because the sample for this study predominantly discussed world-wide views of poverty, it was not applicable to use U.S. statistics for comparison. Future studies focusing exclusively on poverty and homelessness within the United States would be justified.

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## APPENDIX A

## RESOURCES USED TO SELECT BOOK TITLES

- (1) *Children's Core Collection* - database retrieved February 28, 2015, from the University of Northern Iowa's Rod Library at <https://www.library.uni.edu/>
- (2) *Children's Literature Comprehensive Database* - database retrieved March 19, 2015, from the University of Northern Iowa's Rod Library at <https://www.library.uni.edu/>
- (4) *Destiny* - online library catalog retrieved March 22, 2015, from the Iowa City Community School District's library website at <http://destiny-srv.iccsd.k12.ia.us/cataloging/servlet/presentadvancedsearchredirectorform.do;jsessionid=14873BDD6E5344E5005D2203E733D770?l2m=Library%20Search&tm=TopLevelCatalog&l2m=Library+Search>
- (3) *Online Horn Book Guide* - database retrieved March 1, 2015, from the University of Northern Iowa's Rod Library at <https://www.library.uni.edu/>

APPENDIX B  
BOOK TITLES USED IN STUDY

- (1) Anderson, J. (2010). *Ending poverty and hunger*. London: Sea-to-Sea.
- (2) Buckley, A.M. (2012). *Homelessness*. Edina, MN: ABDO.
- (3) Fields, J. (2010). *Kids growing up without a home*. Broomall, PA: Mason Crest Publishers, Inc.
- (4) Gifford, C. (2010). *Poverty*. Mankato, MN: Smart Apple Media.
- (5) Harrison, J. (2005). *Home*. London: Evans Brothers Limited.
- (6) Hughes, S. (2011). *Off to class*. Ontario: Owlkids Books Inc.
- (7) Langley, A. (2011). *Avoiding hunger and finding water*. Chicago: Raintree.
- (8) Lusted, M.A. (2010). *Poverty*. Edina, MN: ABDO.
- (9) Lynette, R. (2010). *What to do when your family loses its home*. New York: PowerKids Press.
- (10) Mason, P. (2006). *Planet under pressure: Poverty*. Chicago: Heinemann Library.
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- (12) Rotner, S., & Goldbas, A. (2011). *Home*. Minneapolis: Millbrook Press.
- (13) Senker, C. (2007). *What if we do nothing? Poverty*. Pleasantville, NY: World Almanac Library.
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- (15) Winter, J. (2011). *Born and bred in the great depression*. New York: Schwartz & Wade Books.

## APPENDIX C

## MATRIX OF DATA: CHARACTERISTICS OF POVERTY

Place a checkmark in the categories that are discussed and/or portrayed in each textual or illustrative sample. If a category is addressed, make note of how it is depicted.

Book Number from Appendix B	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Textual indicator (✓) OR Illustrative indicator (X)	✓	✓	✓ mostly text	✓	✓
	X	X	X	X	X
occupation	✓ low wages X	X	✓	✓ X	✓ menial jobs; kids work X
income	✓ lack skills for higher paying jobs X	✓ X	✓	✓ X	✓ not enough for rent; homeless X
employment	✓ kids have to work X	✓ no address; no jobs	✓	✓ X	✓ child labor X
unemployment	✓ reason for poverty X	✓ lack of address; high levels	✓	✓ X	
race	X	✓ 60% color X	✓ black, cauc. X	variety X	

ethnicity	✓ pics X	✓ mix		✓ X	✓ world views X
geographic locale	✓ world views X	✓ world views X	✓ U.S. X	✓ world views X	✓ developing countries X
education	✓ X	✓	✓ limited; women drop-out	✓ X	✓ none when homeless X
family structure	✓ X	✓ X	✓ atypical; single mom X	✓ single moms X	✓ separated, war torn X
natural disasters	✓ reason for poverty X	✓ causes homeless	✓	X	✓
food insecurity	✓ pics of countries X	✓	✓	✓ X	
age	✓ children X	✓ X	✓ variety X	✓ X	✓ kids X
gender	X	✓ mostly single mothers X	✓ women X	X	
shelter	✓	✓ higher costs of housing are	✓	✓	✓

	X	unaffordabl e X	X	X	X
basic needs	✓	✓  X	✓		✓ war torn areas X
medical concerns/ access to health care	✓ can't afford health insurance	✓  X	✓ prone to stress and illness	✓  X	✓ hard to stay healthy

- (1) Pictures from developing countries; only poverty from U.S. was depicted as ethnic family; caucasians shown as those providing aid and supplies
- (2) Poverty affects personal hygiene and health; finding food is always difficult; diverse illustrative depictions (race, age, ethnicity); people experience lack of privacy, no personal space for belongings, lose dignity, experience ridicule and judgment; homeless means no address/can't apply for jobs
- (3) Real stories and textual facts about homeless; limited illustrations; most pictures of women - however, graph shows mostly single men
- (4) Most poor from other countries; photos/graphs show variety in developing countries; multicultural photos, but not many from U.S.; captions provide good explanations and detailed descriptions
- (5) Pics all ethnic places around world; war-torn countries, refugee camps; street children and child labor

Book Number from Appendix B	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Textual indicator (✓) OR Illustrative indicator (X)	✓  X	✓  X	✓  X	✓  X	✓  X
occupation	✓ migrant workers  X		✓ meager to make ends meet  X		✓ lack of educ. means low paying jobs X
income	✓ not enough to pay for school  X	✓ not enough money for food	✓ not enough to meet US standard of living X	✓ not enough to keep home  X	✓ kids must work to help out
employment	✓ kids word vs. going to school X	✓ unable when hungry	✓ lack of impacts poverty X	✓	✓
unemployment	✓		✓ no jobs	✓  X	✓ financial changes
race		✓ photos cultural; no caucasian	✓ migrant workers; hispanic; people of color	✓ variety shown in pictures  X	

ethnicity	✓ not much U.S. ✗	✓ mostly Africa ✗	✓ ethnic cleansing	✓	✓  ✗
geographic locale	✓ world view  ✗	✓ world view  ✗	✓ world view; rural U.S. ✗		✓ world view  ✗
education	✓  ✗	✓ unable to when hungry	✓ lack of impacts poverty ✗	✓	✓ decreased access  ✗
family structure		✗	✓ size affects poverty ✗	✓  ✗	✓ single parent usually mom
natural disasters	✓  ✗	✓ affect food availability	✓	✓	✓ hard time for poor to recover ✗
food insecurity	✓ kids work to survive, eat	✓  ✗	✓  ✗		✓
age	✓ kids ✗		✓ child labor ✗	✗	✗
gender	✓ more boys on streets ✗	✓  ✗	✓ single mom, gender gap		✓  ✗

shelter	✓		✓		✓
basic needs			✓ x		✓ x
medical concerns/ access to health care	✓ x	✓ food and nutrition	✓ impacts on poverty and mental illness x		✓ x

(6) About different schools all over the world; discussed poverty in Ch. 2 and how it affects access to schools, especially in developing countries; main focus is schools, but alludes to poverty and being poor; gender and education in pictures - page 29 facts; all kids pictured

(7) Mostly about famine and food/water shortages; poverty discussed as major cause of hunger; unable to purchase food; war-torn countries; grow own food; dishonest government; women mostly pictured, single moms; pictures of farm workers - men; all photos of developing countries - no caucasians depicted

(8) Defines poverty and basic needs; differ across societies; poverty line in U.S. is wealthy in other countries; poverty leads to mental illness and vice versa; poverty brings stressful situations; pictures of homeless show variety of ages, races, ethnicities; mental illness depicted

(9) Natural disasters and losing homes; illness - lose home; book to assist children in coping with loss of home, feelings; variety of races shown in pictures

(10) Views from around the world; history of poverty and defining poverty; effects of environment; cycle of poverty/causes; many statistics from 1990 - 2004

Book Number from Appendix B	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)
Textual indicator (✓) OR Illustrative indicator (X)	✓  X	  X	✓  X	✓  X	✓  X
occupation			✓  X	✓ children X	✓  X
income	✓ in regard to the homeless		✓ in poverty; low wages  X	✓  X	✓ not afford electricity or indoor plumbing
employment	✓		✓ still hard to break out of poverty	✓	✓ low paying jobs
unemployment			✓ relative poverty	✓ due to mental illness X	✓ no jobs in sight; Great Depression X
race		X		✓  X	X
ethnicity		X	✓  X	✓  X	
geographic locale	✓ world view		✓ world view	✓ world view	✓ United States

	X		X	X	
education	✓ women X		✓ lack of resources X	✓	
family structure		X	✓	✓ separated due to war X	✓ X
natural disasters			X		
food insecurity	✓ X		✓ poor have bad diet	✓ X	✓
age	X	X	✓ children X	✓ young people X	X
gender	✓ women		X	✓ variety of pics X	
shelter	✓ X	X	✓ X	✓ X	✓ poor lived on edge of town X
basic needs	✓ X	X	✓	✓ X	✓ X
medical concerns/ access to health care	✓		✓	✓ addiction, mental health and homeless	

			X	X	
--	--	--	---	---	--

(11) Mostly a book about activism and social justice; discusses the need to care for those in need and for those who have had rights violated; section addressing “fighting poverty” especially in developing countries; mentions how homelessness is accompanied by poverty and hunger; environmental factors affect poverty - factories and dumps more likely to be located around low income neighborhoods

(12) Minimal discussion of poverty; one photograph depicting a homeless veteran

(13) Begins with story of person from India who is living in poverty; defines absolute and relative poverty, discusses causes of poverty; HIV crisis in Africa and its effects on poor people; lack of access to health care, food, shelter; mostly discusses poverty in developing nations

(14) World views and stories from homeless people; statistics provided from 2002 and from other countries; many United Kingdom statistics

(15) Historical view from a boy’s perspective of stories his father told about living during the Great Depression; had to live without modern amenities; no work; lived off of the land

## APPENDIX D

## MATRIX OF DATA - STEREOTYPES OF POVERTY

Place a checkmark in the category if the reviewed text and/or illustrations are used to negatively depict those living in poverty. Make notes if needed.

Book Number from Appendix B	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Textual indicator (✓) OR Illustrative indicator (X)	✓  X	✓	✓	✓  X	✓  X
criminality		✓			✓ due to poverty
depression		✓ says homelessness can cause	✓ states facts and statistics to support	✓	
tendency toward violence					
uneducated	✓ backs up with reasons why this happens		✓ states facts; drop-out rates		✓ due to poverty
unmotivated					

lazy		✓			
socially irresponsible (alcoholic; drug abuse)		✓ says this is a common myth  ✗	✓ states facts and statistics; shares true story  ✗	✓ alcoholism; glue sniffing  ✗	✓ due to poverty  ✗

- (1) Pictures are mostly of ethnic groups; fewer photos of whites; white people are shown making donations to help others.
- (2) Talks about people facing social stigmas; can be labeled as lazy, mentally ill; states these are stereotypes and homelessness is complex; learn about homelessness and who is affected before passing judgment; blamed for their horrible situations; talks about how derogatory names are a form of harassment (whino, tramp, bum, bag lady)
- (3) Statistics given for single moms, depression, and drug abuse
- (4) Dispels stereotypes mentions it is an insult to say poor people are lazy
- (5) One photo of kids from Cambodia sniffing glue

Book Number from Appendix B	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Textual indicator (✓) OR Illustrative indicator (X)	no stereotypes depicted or discussed	no stereotypes depicted or discusses	✓  X	✓  X	✓  X
criminality			✓ may turn to crime due to poverty		
depression			✓ as a result of condition		
tendency toward violence			✓ homeless are victims of violence		
uneducated			✓		✓ talks about cycle of poverty
unmotivated					✓ dispels this myth
lazy			✓ mentions		✓ dispels this myth

			this is a stigma		
socially irresponsible (alcoholic; drug abuse)			✓ general public views this as reason for homeless		

(6) No additional notes.

(7) No additional notes.

(8) Pictures depicted many African Americans; one white woman with her daughter; mentioned job loss and poverty were linked to increases of violence in the home and child abuse; discussed substance abuse and dependence are common mental health issues among the poor - directly related to poverty; alcoholism common

(9) Pictures depict mostly African Americans in shelters along with single moms; states that a parent loses job and “she” cannot pay rent; pictures show people smiling and happy despite their circumstances and stressful times

(10) Poor must live in poverty due to number of mouths to feed; discusses population control, but this theory is dispelled; poor people choosing to have more children because of their poverty; need for children to help the family earn money

Book Number from Appendix B	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)
Textual indicator (✓) OR Illustrative indicator (X)	text dispels myths; no stereotypes depicted	illustrations - none of the stereotypes listed are depicted	✓  X	✓  X	no stereotypes depicted or discussed
criminality				✓	
depression				✓ homeless; explains why people suffer	
tendency toward violence				✓ as well as mental health issues; provides explanation	
uneducated			✓ backs up with statistics	✓	
unmotivated					

lazy	✓ dispels myth				
socially irresponsible  (alcoholic; drug abuse)				✓ dispels this myth  ✗	

(11) Pictures mostly of ethnic groups, African Americans; dispels myths that people deserve to be poor because of who they are or where they live; also dispels myth that homeless are lazy.

(12) Pictures are mostly of poor African Americans.

(13) Pictures are all of African Americans, minorities, or people from other developing countries. There is one white woman shown in a grocery store aisle deciding which coffee to buy; no photos from the U.S.

(14) Good variety of pictures; depicts a variety of people from many ethnic and cultural backgrounds; provides explanations for why people experience these things; asks if mental illness causes homelessness or if homelessness leads to mental illness.

(15) No additional notes.