Social Work Doctoral Dissertations | Social Work

Spring 5-8-2020

The Perceived Impact of Basic Need Insecurity on Social Work Student Success

Amy B. Downes
Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, abd350@lockhaven.edu

Recommended Citation

The Perceived Impact of Basic Need Insecurity on Social Work Student Success

A Dissertation Presented to

The Faculty of the Doctor of Social Work Program of

Kutztown University/Millersville University of Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Social Work

By: Amy B. Downes

March 30, 2020

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the lived experiences of undergraduate social work students who self-identify with struggling to meet their basic needs. Through individual in-depth semi-structured interviews coupled with photo-elicitation, several important considerations for social work educators and leaders emerged including: how undergraduate social work students define success; academic, social and financial barriers to learning; work-school balance; strategies for coping; messages for social work faculty and college/university administrators about their experience; adverse childhood events; and, the role of the academic advisor. The findings of this study can be utilized to help inform social work faculty and social work professionals who are employed at institutions of higher education regarding the needs and challenges facing students. Additionally, awareness of the issues and challenges facing these students can lead to advocacy regarding policies that impact students such as requirements for food stamps and affordability of college.

Keywords: Basic need insecurity, undergraduate social work students, food insecurity, phenomenological research, Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, photo elicitation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Joy. I have to acknowledge that the completion of this dissertation only occurred because I challenged myself to find the joy in the journey. It has not been easy, but the collection of people who have traveled with me, supported me, challenged me, and loved me along the way truly deserve some recognition.

First, I would like to thank my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Juliana Svistova. Her continuous belief in me and my work allowed me to propel myself forward when I felt totally and completely stuck. She is an outstanding professor and an even better person. I would also like to thank Dr. Janice Gasker, one of my committee members whose passion for social work education is palpable. Her feedback and attention to detail was greatly appreciated. Next, I would like to thank Dr. Heather Girvin who is a big picture thinker, a lover of nature and animals, and has served as an inspiration to me from the very beginning. All three of these women have provided me with unwavering support. I am truly grateful and blessed to have had them on my side. I am grateful to the collaborative program between Kutztown and Millersville for offering this degree. I am appreciative of the Kutztown University Graduate Research Grant Program as it allowed me to provide $25 gift cards for each student that participated as well as the funding to pay for a transcription service.

To Dr. Lynette Reitz, my mentor and inspiration for what it means to be a change agent. Your calm and consistent presence, reminding me that finishing is about persistence was always appreciated. I'm blessed to have you in my life. To LAW – it's because of you that I am. I love you big. To Shanon, my soul sister, you have always believed. To the fab 5- Pia, Amy S., Amy R., Karey, and Kim, thank you for checking in long after you were all done and encouraging me to just finish. To Emmy, JP, and Lisette – your presence in my life is so appreciated. I promise

more friend time is in the works! You are all such strong and amazing women. To my family who has always supported my educational endeavors.

To my girlfriend, Rona Houser, who has my heart. Your support throughout the past two years has helped me more than you will ever know. I'm so grateful we get to navigate this world together. I would be remiss to not thank my faithful canine companion who has spent countless hours under my desk, my sweet Cora.

And last, but certainly not least, to the brave and courageous social work students who participated in the study. Thank you for helping me to share your experiences, your challenges and your insights. I am honored to know you all.

The Perceived Impact of Basic Need Insecurity on Social Work Student Success

Chapter 1: Introduction and Problem Statement

Introduction

Entering college should be a time of excitement, where students are eager to begin their journey toward a better future in a professional career upon graduation. Students are encouraged to attend college in order to be successful, to contribute to a growing economy, to increase their earning potential, and to create an overall better life for themselves. For many students this is the path, but unfortunately for many others it is a journey fraught with significant challenges that threaten the possibility of completing their degree. These challenges include struggling with access to enough healthy, nutritious food, experiencing housing instability, and facing enormous financial debt because of the increasing costs of obtaining a college degree (Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, Coca, Looker, & Williams, 2019). These challenges also have implications socially as students struggle to be able to connect to faculty, staff, peers and activities that increase professional networking (Cady, 2014; Gaines, Robb, Knol, & Sickler, 2014).

Meeting one's basic needs, that of food, shelter, and safety, is a fundamental human right that sadly is not a reality for many members of society. The consequences of lacking basic needs as a college student manifests in a variety of ways academically, socially, financially, and in terms of physical and mental health (Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, et.al., 2019). Examples include hunger, anxiety, depression, inability to concentrate, financial debt, homelessness, poor academic performance, taking semesters off, or not completing their education at all. When students fail to complete their degrees, they are in vulnerable positions, and there are implications that extend beyond the student's experience in college, such as lowered earning potential and the inability to obtain credit due to not being able to pay on loans and limited job mobility (Broton & Goldrick-

Rab, 2016). Students who are especially vulnerable to struggling with issues related to basic needs include first generation college students, minority students, low-income students, single parents, especially mothers, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer students (LGBTQ) (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Cady, 2014; Dubick, Mathews, & Cady, 2016).

Social work students are represented in all categories of vulnerabilities listed above. Struggling with basic need insecurity may not be an unfamiliar problem for social work students as many students are drawn to the profession as a result of significant challenges and prior exposure to helpers while growing up (Newcomb, Burton, & Edwards, 2017b). These past adverse experiences can range from divorce of a parent, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, physical or mental illness, drug addiction, or death of a parent or guardian (Newcomb, et.al, 2017b; Thomas, 2016). Some social work students have also accessed programs and services such as food banks or counseling, as well as other income-based programs while growing up (Miles, McBeath, Brockett, & Sorenson, 2017).

Attainment of a college degree has long been touted as a key determinant to increased economic opportunities and stability, especially among vulnerable student groups as previously stated (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Hughes et. al., 2011; O'Neill & Maguire, 2017). According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2018), the persistence rates (e.g., number of students who transition from freshmen to sophomore year), across institutions of higher education for students entering college in the fall of 2015 who returned to their starting institutions in the fall of 2016 was 61.2%. African American and Hispanic students attending a four-year public institution, persisted at their starting institutions at 64.8 and 68.8% respectively, while white students persisted at 70.7% (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2018). While college may not be for everyone, what the data suggest is that a significant number

of individuals who begin their college career do not complete their degree and are left with sometimes significant financial burden without the potential for increased financial security or career options (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Dubick et. al., 2016; Gaines et. al., 2014; Knol, Robb, McKinley, & Wood, 2018).

As institutions of higher education begin to look deeper into the barriers that may be contributing to lower student retention and graduation rates, basic need insecurity is becoming a major contender (Goldrick-Rab, Coca, Baker-Smith, & Looker, 2019; Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, et.al, 2019). Important to note is that while studies report that there is an interruption for basic need insecure students related to graduation, there have been no studies that directly link basic need insecurity to rates of college completion. This is partly due to the challenges of being able to identify what factors truly caused students to be unable to complete their degrees, as students with basic need insecurity tend to have compounding problems (Henry, 2017).

Student success can be defined in a myriad of ways. In the literature, researchers typically examine academic performance and grade point average (GPA), retention and graduation rates, and engagement in campus activities (Cady, 2014; Henry, 2017). Students who perform well on exams, attend class regularly, play on an athletic team, and hold positions of leadership within clubs and organizations are examples of student success. In order to perform optimally, students must have their basic needs met as multiple studies have indicated the negative consequences and outcomes for students who are lacking the necessities (O'Neill & Maguire, 2017; Wood & Harris, 2018). This includes lowered GPA and mental health concerns, and can contribute to long term chronic physical health problems as well as interfere with degree completion (Knol, et.al., 2017). Colleges and universities are beginning to recognize how students are impacted by food insecurity and housing insecurity, and have started to take coordinated action to start food

pantries, provide hygiene and cleaning products, and coordinate referrals for both campus and community resources (Paola & DeBate, 2018; Twill, Bergdahl, & Fensler, 2016).

The social work profession has a rich history of addressing and advocating for the needs of vulnerable populations who experience poverty, oppression, discrimination, and marginalization (Kirst-Ashman, 2013). Social workers strive to practice ethically in diverse areas of practice while upholding the core values of social justice, integrity, service, competence, respecting the dignity and worth of an individual, and recognizing the importance of human relationships (NASW, 2017). For social workers who are employed at institutions of higher education as faculty, staff, and administrators, the need to respond and advocate for services, programs, and policies that help to support students and their success is paramount. In order to accomplish this, it is imperative to understand how basic need insecurity interferes with students' success from the perspective of the student who has experienced these potential challenges and barriers.

Purpose of the Study

This phenomenological analysis and photo-elicitation qualitative study aims to understand from the student perspective what it is like to experience basic need insecurity while trying to be successful as an undergraduate social work student. There are four broad research questions being asked in this study and include:

1. How do social work students who have experienced basic need insecurity define success?

2. How have their experiences been shaped academically, financially, and socially as a result of their struggle?

3. What are their coping skills and with whom did they share their experience?

4. What would they want their social work faculty and university administrators to know about their experiences?

While self-care is not specifically being studied, it could be argued that being able to thrive as a student depends upon having basic needs such as food, shelter, and safety met, and when those needs are not met there could be consequences that extend into the professional practice field upon graduation. Research in professional social work journals suggests that the profession must begin to focus on issues related to the high levels of burnout, compassion fatigue, and the numbers of social workers exiting the field (Decker, Constantine Brown, Ong & Stiney-Ziskind, 2015; Wagaman, Geiger, Shockley, & Seigal, 2015). With a specific focus on undergraduate social work students, this study may reveal information that can assist social work faculty in the development of curricula and meaningful assignments that can help transcend learning and ensure that healthy, ethical and competent students are graduating and remaining in the field. The outcomes of this study could help to inform policies, procedures, and practices that could enhance the learning experiences and overall well-being of vulnerable students who have a desire to enter the helping profession.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In recent years, there have been multiple studies conducted in the United States that have begun to examine the role that basic need insecurity, including food insecurity, housing insecurity, and financial instability play in the overall success of students pursuing degrees (e.g., Bruening, Woerden, Todd, & Laska, 2018; Frank, 2019; Watson, Malan, Glik & Martinez, 2017). Basic need insecurity is best understood as having deficits in access to food, shelter, financial stability and social connections. Common misconceptions are that students attending college or university do not struggle to afford basic needs such as housing or food due to financial support from parents, financial aid, private loans, and scholarships (Buch, Langley, Johnson, & Coleman, 2016).

Rising costs of tuition, housing, and meal plans coupled with insufficient amounts of financial aid, leave the door wide open for students to experience insecurity related to basic needs. Examples of how these gaps may impact a student include lacking stable housing and access to healthy, nutritious food. Furthermore, students may not be able to afford items that one would need to be able to be successful in college such as technology, textbooks and school supplies. For many students, this is a hurdle that can be insurmountable (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Knol et. al., 2018).

The Profile of Basic Need Insecure Students

The profile of the poor, struggling college student is not inaccurate, as one study found that almost 52% of college students were living at or near the poverty line in 2011, and due to various eligibility requirements, many students do not qualify for the aforementioned social welfare programs (Dubick et. al, 2016; Gaines, et.al., 2014). For example, in order to receive food stamps, a college student must work a minimum of twenty hours per week in addition to

typically maintaining a full course load. Among the general population, poverty is known to correlate with issues such as low wealth or inability to acquire assets, unemployment, low educational attainment, drug and alcohol use, and physical and mental health concerns (Gaines, et. al. 2014). For college students this can be compounded as they struggle to meet their needs without some of the formal support systems in place or ability to access resources due to eligibility requirements (Knol et. al., 2018).

In the United States, many of the students reporting basic need insecurity have grown up in homes where there was food insecurity, housing insecurity, and financial instability (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, et. al., 2019). According to the research, the most vulnerable populations of students to experience basic need insecurity include first generation, financially independent, low-income, non-traditional, minority, single parent, and international students (Gallegos, Ramsey, & Ong, 2014; Payne-Sturges, Tjaden, Caldeira, Vincent, & Arria, 2018; Reynolds, Johnson, Jamieson, & Mawhinney, 2018). Problems often associated with basic need insecurity include, food insecurity, housing insecurity, lower grades, increased reports of poor health outcomes including physical and mental health concerns, lower retention and graduation rates, and missing out on social opportunities (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Farahbakhsh, Ball, Farmer, Maximova, Hanbazaza & Willows, 2015; Gaines, Robb, Knol, & Sickler, 2014).

Housing Insecurity

Housing insecurity is described in the literature as having difficulty paying rent, living in overcrowded environments to be able to afford rent, having to move frequently, or the most severe form, being homeless (Dubick, Mathews, & Cady, 2016; Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, et. al., 2019).

Many times, in the literature regarding housing insecurity, researchers also indicate the prevalence of food insecurity among college students as it is not uncommon for these problems to co-exist (e.g. Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, et.al., 2019; Henry, 2017; Sutton, 2016; Wood & Harris, 2018). Community college students report higher rates of housing insecurity or homelessness compared to their four-year counterparts in part because community colleges typically do not provide any form of on-campus residence hall living (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, & Kinsley, 2018). Despite this difference, housing insecurity and homelessness remains a problem for both community and traditional college students as the cost of on and off campus housing continues to rise (Dubick, et. al., 2016).

In one of the largest studies to date on basic need insecurity, Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, and colleagues (2019) collected data from 167,000 students across the 101 community colleges and 68 4-year colleges across the United States. Sixty percent of students in 2-year community colleges and 48% at 4-year colleges reported issues with housing insecurity citing rent or mortgage increases as the primary reason. Researchers found at the City University of New York (CUNY) campuses (19 public campuses, including both traditional 4-year and community programs) surveyed 22,000 students and found that overall, 55% of students in the survey reported experiencing housing insecurity in the past year and 14% reported experiencing homelessness. Many times, students who experience housing insecurity have overlapping concerns with food insecurity and financial instability (Goldrick-Rab, Coca, et al., 2019) In a smaller qualitative study (N=82) at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), a public institution, Watson et. al. (2017) conducted focus groups with students who identified that the university was not adequately addressing needs specifically related to affordability of housing coupled with insufficient financial aid allocation.

Food Insecurity Across the Globe

Hunger is a world-wide problem. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) 2018 report, world hunger increased globally by 17 million from 2016 to 2017 (Fao.org, n.d.). In fact, the United Nations estimates that in 2017 over 821 million people in the world were undernourished. This translates to roughly one in nine people across the globe (Food, n.d.). There are many factors contributing to this significant rise, including climate change, increase in the cost of food, depletion of food stocks, and significant weather events causing disruption in food production in several major countries across the globe (Food, n.d.). In 2017, the poverty rate in the United States in 2017 was 12.3%, or approximately 39.7 million people (US Census Bureau, 2019). Food insecurity is directly linked to poverty as individuals and families who are food insecure tend to qualify and utilize social welfare programs aimed at alleviating food insecurity such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), food banks, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, & Children (WIC) (Buch et. al., 2016). Many times, college students are not eligible for such programs due to work or income requirements (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016).

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), in 2017, 15 million households struggled with some form of food insecurity (USDA, n.d.). Food insecurity means that at various times throughout the year, the individuals in the surveyed households were uncertain how they would obtain enough food to feed all the members of their household due to a deficiency in funding or access to other resources to obtain food (USDA, n.d.). Food insecurity is categorized into two distinct ranges, low food security and very low food security. For example, low food security occurs when there is "reduced quality, variety or desirability of diet

with little to no indication of reduced food intake. Very low food security involves multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns coupled with reduced food intake" (USDA, n.d.).

While the overall prevalence of food insecurity has decreased in the general population in the United States from 12.3% in 2016 to 11.8% in 2017, research continues to indicate that for several vulnerable populations within that group, the rate of food insecurity is growing. The group with the highest percentage of food insecurity (30.8%) are low income households with incomes below 185% of the poverty rate. Households with children led by single mothers is the second highest at 30.3% and Black, non-Hispanic households at 21.8% (USDA, 2019). Missing from the USDA statistics are the number of undergraduate and graduate students who are suffering from food insecurity.

Rates of College Food Insecurity in the United States

Rates of food insecurity vary among college students, but many researchers report rates higher than national averages (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Bruening et. al., 2018; Dubick, et.al.,2016). For example, Chaparro, Zaghloul, Holck, and Dobbs (2009) found in one of the first studies about food insecurity among college students, that the prevalence of food insecurity at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, a public institution of higher education was 21%, while Gaines et.al. (2014) reported 14% of the college students surveyed at a large public institution in Alabama were food insecure. Knol, Robb, McKinley & Wood (2018) also conducted a study at a public university in Alabama where 38.4 % of students struggled with food insecurity. Watson et. al. (2017) discovered that 54% of the students they interviewed were food insecure at the University of California, a public institution. In one of the larger studies, out of 3,765 students at community colleges and four-year institutions, 48% reported food insecurity in the previous month (Dubick, et. al., 2016).

According to the most recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on food insecurity (2018), the wide range of reported incidences of food insecurity among college students may be due in part to how food insecurity is measured. For example, many questionnaires ask if a student has experienced hunger or been uncertain about where their next meal will come from in the past thirty days, while others ask about the same experiences across a twelve-month time period. Furthermore, depending on the type (two versus four year) and number of institutions participating in a study (single or multiple), the rates may also be varied. Despite the variation in food insecurity rates among college students, there is agreement that this problem exists and requires attention (GAO, 2018).

A common misconception is the belief that students who have meal plans are immune to food insecurity. While meal plans certainly increase the potential access to a food supply, it is not uncommon for students to not be able to afford the meal plan that provides the most access (Dubick, et. al., 2016; Watson, Malan, Glik, & Martinez, 2017). Many students with a meal plan report purchasing the cheapest meal plan required and running out of meal swipes before the end of the semester. Depending on the size of the university or college, hours of operation for dining halls may not be amenable for student athletes, students who work, or students who are taking courses in the evening (Dubick, et. al., 2016).

Food Pantries and Programs Aimed to Help Basic Need Insecure Students

As colleges and universities across the globe have begun to recognize that students are struggling to meet their basic needs and be successful at school, many are turning to creative solutions to try to alleviate student access to basic needs such as food, shelter and other supportive services such as counseling and financial aid. One of the fastest growing programs being implemented are food pantries or food cupboards (Bazerghi, McKay & Dunn, 2016; Buch

et. al., 2016; Farahbakhsh et. al. 2015; Paola & DeBate, 2018; Twill, Bergdahl, & Fensler, 2016).

In 2012, the College & University Food Bank Alliance (CUFBA) was founded and had 88

members (CUFBA, n.d.). In 2019, according to their website, there are now over 700 CUFBA

members across the nation (CUFBA, n.d.). The main goal of a food pantry on a university

campus is to work to alleviate food insecurity and hunger for at risk students such as first

generation, single parent, minority, and low-income students (Dubick, Mathews, & Cady, 2016;

GAO, 2018). Other student populations that may be at risk include international and lesbian, gay,

bi-sexual, transgendered and queer individuals (Blundell et.al. 2019).

Several colleges and universities partner with local food banks to stock their pantry while

others use donations and grants to stock their pantry (Twill et. al., 2016). Food pantries typically

provide several days of perishable and non-perishable food to students. Most food pantries on

college campuses allow students to come once per week, while others once per month (CUFBA,

n.d.; Twill et. al., 2016). In addition to providing food to students in need, several colleges and

universities are incorporating information about nutrition as well as ways to prepare and store

food (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Watson, et. al, 2017). Campus food pantries have several

benefits to students aside from lowering risk of food insecurity. For example, students may feel

more comfortable utilizing a food pantry on campus because they may view the pantry as a

program or service offered by their college or university versus a formal service that may be

offered in the community (Dubick, et. al., 2016). Another benefit of an on-campus food pantry is

accessibility. Since food pantries are typically located on campus students who do not have a

vehicle have access (Dubick, et. al, 2016).

In addition to food pantries, many colleges and universities also have community gardens

where students, faculty, staff, and community members can access fresh produce depending on

what is in season. While others have worked to establish food recovery programs in partnership with campus dining hall service providers to reduce waste while helping students in need (Dubick, et. al., 2016). Other institutions quickly realized that for students struggling with food insecurity there were many other gaps in meeting basic needs such as hygiene and cleaning products, everyday clothing as well as clothing for career opportunities, and school supplies. To meet this need, many food pantries expanded to provide other items to students that would be considered essential to be successful as a college student (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016).

Another area where colleges and universities are attempting to help alleviate basic need insecurity is with referrals to programs that can help serve the student on a more long-term basis. For example, in the GAO report on food insecurity, it was learned that millions of SNAP eligible college students did not apply (GAO, 2018). Other colleges refer students to counseling services, homeless shelters, and to their local county assistance offices to assist with applications for state funded insurance for those without insurance (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Dubick, et.al., 2016). Colleges and universities are also working to find ways to keep dining halls open during winter and spring breaks as well as ways to provide year-round housing options for students who may be homeless and not taking summer classes (Dubick, et.al., 2016).

Barriers to Academic Success

For many years now, researchers have reported on the negative impact that hunger has in the K-12 education system (Chaparro et. al., 2009; Fletcher & Frisvold, 2017; Houston, Marzette, Ames, & Ames, 2013). Some of the consequences of hunger on younger children and adolescents includes lower academic performance, inability to focus, problems with cognitive and emotional development, absenteeism, behavioral problems, and lower scores on math and reading achievement tests (Houston, et al., 2013). Students who experience hunger are more

likely to have to repeat a grade than their food secure peers (Fletcher & Frisvold, 2017). As these young people grow, these barriers can ultimately interfere with their ability to attend and complete educational or trade programs that would improve earning potential. Programs such as the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) have been instrumental in helping low income children and adolescents access healthy, nutritious free or reduced cost breakfasts and lunches while they are attending school (Fletcher & Frisvold, 2017; Houston et. al., 2013). Unfortunately, when these young people graduate from high school and decide to pursue a college education, programs such as NSLP and SBP do not exist.

College students who are food insecure report that hunger had a negative impact on their academic performance ranging from not being able to afford the textbook or other supplies for a class, missing class, or having to drop a class (Dubick, et. al., 2016; Goldrick-Rab, Coca, et.al., 2019). Dubick, et.al., (2016) surveyed almost 3,800 students across thirty-four community and four-year colleges across the United States. Out of the surveyed students, 48% reported food insecurity within the past thirty days. Students reported they had difficulty concentrating when they worried about where they would obtain the next meal. Fifty-five percent of the students surveyed indicated that food insecurity interfered with their ability to attend and participate fully in class or purchase a required textbook. Four percent of the students had to withdraw and take one or more semesters off due to food insecurity, and 81% believed food insecurity caused them to not perform as well in their classes (Dubick, et. al., 2016).

In Nova Scotia, Frank (2018) reported similar findings when 1,030 students completed an online survey regarding food insecurity where 38.1% of the students reported food insecurity and that much of their time was spent being concerned about how to meet their basic needs than on studying and learning. Severely food insecure students were more than five times more likely to

report a failing grade than their food secure peers (Frank, 2018). In a qualitative section of the survey, one student specifically commented on how they chose to not purchase all of their books at the beginning of the semester in order to have money for groceries as the semester came to an end, while another student expressed that the less food they had impacted their energy and motivation to be able to focus on their school work (Frank, 2018). Other students identified the cost of higher education and the need to work to provide for their basic needs as a significant barrier to being able to attend and focus on school (Frank, 2018).

O'Neill & Maguire (2017) suggest that addressing food insecurity is essential in supporting students in their academic endeavors, and that there has been a significant focus on supporting students academically with tutoring, mentoring, and advising while ignoring issues such as food insecurity as potential barriers to completion of degrees. The researchers specifically invited students who had utilized a campus food pantry at a mid-sized rural public university in Northern California to participate in an online survey (N=65) about food insecurity that included both quantitative and qualitative questions to examine health and academic performance issues as they pertain to food insecurity and academic performance and overall health. Fifteen students in the study self-reported that not having enough nutritious food was related to having low energy in class, at their place of employment, and across their daily lives that interfered with focus and concentration. One student specifically expressed the challenge in paying attention when they are hungry. Quantitative data revealed an inverse relationship between food insecurity and grade point average (O'Neill & Maguire, 2017).

The results from studies examining how academic performance is impacted when a college student is struggling with food insecurity is consistent. Henry (2017) conducted an ethnographic, exploratory study with twenty-seven semi-structured interviews with food insecure

students and five focus groups with food secure students at the University of North Texas, a public institution (UNT). The students who were classified as food insecure reported high levels of motivation to be in college but identified lowered grades and difficulty concentrating due to hunger. Of the twenty-seven students interviewed, eleven were white and sixteen identified as a member of a minority group. Among the white students who were food insecure, the researchers noted that many identified depression, mood swings, and anxiety as it related to academic performance and food insecurity while none of the minority students spoke of these challenges. (Henry, 2017).

In a different study examining food insecurity at a large public mid-Atlantic university (N = 237), researchers suggested that using GPA as the sole indicator of academic success may not paint the entire picture for struggling students (Payne-Sturges et al., 2017). A convenience sample was recruited to complete an online survey from students majoring in family science, community health, or agriculture. Inclusion criteria to participate included being over the age of eighteen and having undergraduate student status. Utilizing the USDA 18-item Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM) to determine food security status along with questions surrounding basic demographics, living arrangements, housing stability, academic performance and health status were administered (Payne-Sturges et. al., 2017). Out of their sample, 15% of students were food insecure with an additional 16% being at risk for food insecurity. Students who identified as African American had higher rates of food insecurity than their Caucasian peers. Students who experienced both food and housing insecurity were more likely to be unable to complete their degrees (Payne-Sturges et al., 2017). The researchers suggested that examining additional areas such as delayed graduation, lowered academic goals, and discontinuing enrollment may also be academic consequences of food insecurity for students.

Barriers to Social Success

College is a time of transition academically, emotionally, physically, and socially for most college students. Friendships are built and students have opportunities to explore interests, but for the housing and food insecure student, the social consequences can be a significant barrier to being able to truly connect to the institution, commit to participating in events, and ultimately complete their degree (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Henry, 2017; Watson et. al., 2017). While none of the studies reviewed here specifically examined the social impact of basic need insecurity, it did emerge as a theme in some of the research (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Henry, 2017; Watson et. al., 2017).

At the University of California, Watson et. al. (2017) conducted eleven focus groups with eighty-two students. The intent of their study was to attempt to understand how students experience and deal with food insecurity and to see what opportunities exist to improve food literacy. Food literacy is considered a skill set where one understands how to plan, select, prepare, and consume food that is nutritionally adequate. Forty-four students in their study met the criteria for food insecurity according to the six item USDA food security module (Watson et. al., 2017). The students in this study identified the process of cooking and eating as a way to connect and show love. They expressed that college was a time for students to try new foods, experiment with their food preferences, and that sharing in those experiences helped them to feel connected in a "stressful and competitive environment" (Watson et. al, 2017, p. 135). For food insecure students, the opportunity to participate in social activities that revolve around eating may be limited due to lack of money, running out of meal plan credits, or having to work. The students in the study reported that missing out on social opportunities, like dining with friends,

can impact the overall college experience and prevent students from connecting with others

(Watson, et. al., 2017).

Food insecure students at the University of North Texas also identified the social

consequences of food insecurity by reporting that they did not know how to handle situations

where they could not afford to go out to eat with friends and so they often chose to not go out to

avoid feeling awkward (Henry, 2017). Interestingly, food secure students reported feeling

uncomfortable when their food insecure peers were unable to go out with them because they did

not know how to handle the situation and did not want to embarrass them. Stigma and feelings of

shame also permeated the experience of food insecure students who felt like they should be able

to provide for themselves or that many other students had worse circumstances than them and

they did not want to take resources away from those who had it worse. Shame prevented them at

times from seeking resources off campus because they did not identify themselves as community

members (Henry, 2017). Many students identified suffering in silence regarding their food

insecurity because they did not want to be judged. Other social consequences of food insecurity

included not being able to fully participate in social activities such as club participation, studying

abroad, attending school trips, attending parties or going to the movies, and working out due to a

lack of financial resources (Henry, 2017).

Throughout the literature, many researchers identified the role that shame and stigma

play for a student who is experiencing food, housing, or other forms of need insecurity. Food

insecurity as well as other forms of basic need insecurity is an invisible problem. It is not

possible to look at a student and assess that they are struggling with those insecurities (Henry,

2017). Many students identified being ashamed to ask for help or to seek and utilize the supports

that are in place at their colleges. For example, Zein and colleagues (2018) questioned why

students who are hungry do not seek help from on-campus food pantries. They surveyed almost 900 students at the University of Florida, a public institution, and found that stigma was one of the biggest barriers to seeking help. Oftentimes, students view food pantries as a form of charity and they did not see themselves as being worthy of receiving help, citing that they know of students who are in worse predicaments (Henry, 2017; Zein, Mathews, House, & Shelnut, 2018).

Barriers to Financial Success

The profile of the basic need insecure student comes with some significant financial challenges. As the cost of attending colleges and universities continues to rise, many students find themselves struggling to be able to afford basic needs to help them be successful (Gaines et al., 2014; Knol et. al, 2018). Broton & Goldrick-Rab (2016) report that over one-half of all Pell Grant recipients are from families whose income places them below the poverty line. These same students reported being concerned and worried about how they were going to pay for the things they needed to attend college during their first semester. Students reported not paying their bills on time, borrowing money, and postponing medical or dental treatments to be able to get by (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016). Bruening et al. (2018) also found that Pell grant recipients were more likely to be food insecure compared to non-Pell grant recipients.

Many students reported resorting to alternative methods of support and resource obtainment such as using student refund checks to purchase basic needs, taking out credit cards to purchase necessary items such as books or food, utilizing campus food pantries, attending events for free food, or stealing food (Knol, et. al., 2018; Miles et al., 2017; Watson et al., 2017). The consequences of using student loans or credit cards to purchase basic needs means that students are creating additional debt beyond what financial aid provides for the cost of their education. Some researchers contend that this decision directly impacts student success,

retention, and the enormous amount of debt with which students are exiting college (Buch, et. al., 2016; Henry, 2017; Knol et. al., 2018).

Non-traditional students may face even more barriers and challenges when it comes to finances. Non-traditional students include those who are financially independent, attend college part-time, work full-time, are a single parent, and provide for dependents (Dubick, et. al., 2016). Dubick and colleagues estimate that approximately 74% of college students meet one or more criteria that would classify them as a non-traditional student. Out of the 3,765 students who completed surveys across twelve states at both community colleges and four-year institutions, the researchers discovered that almost 52% of the students lived at or below the national poverty rate of 15.2% in 2011. According to this same study, almost 75% of financially struggling, food insecure students are employed but even with working, there is not enough money to support all of the costs associated with pursuing an education.

One study specifically examined the relationship between food insecurity and financial aid debt (Knol, et al., 2018). The researchers explain that assessing student income can be challenging because of the variety of places it can come from. For example, students may be employed, receive money from parents, have private loans, receive financial aid, or have personal credit cards. The study set out to find out what financial indicators are specifically related to food insecurity for students living off campus. They surveyed 395 students who live off campus at the University of Alabama, a public institution. The students were asked questions related to use of local, state, or federal food assistance programs such as churches, SNAP, WIC, or a food bank or pantry (Knol, et al., 2018). Inquiries were also made in terms of debt from financial aid or credit cards. Out of the survey respondents, 38.4% were food insecure. Students who utilized food assistance programs were more likely to be food insecure compared to their

food secure peers. Another interesting discovery was that students who owed more than $10,000 in financial aid were more likely to be food insecure, suggesting that financial aid debt may be a more reliable indicator of food insecurity (Knol, et. al, 2018). In this same group of students who owed more than $10,000 in financial aid debt, 61% were food insecure even with some level of employment and receiving some form of family support (Knol, et. al, 2018).

Social Work Education, Social Work Students, and Basic Need Insecurity

Social work education bears the responsibility of preparing students to enter the field, ready to engage with client systems across all levels of practice. The field of social work has sustained multiple changes and has responded to the ever-changing contexts of practice and complex problems facing vulnerable and oppressed populations. In 2008, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) significantly changed its Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) from a course-based to a competency-based model for accredited undergraduate and graduate schools of social work to provide consistency in preparing social work students across the United States (CSWE, 2008). The competencies were revised in 2015 to reflect continued changes to the profession and demands of practice so that social work programs can continue to provide quality education to social work students who need to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and values of the profession in order to graduate (CSWE, 2015). Social work students must be able to proficiently demonstrate their competence across several domains in order to graduate, and social work faculty members act as the ethical and professional liaisons for them to accomplish this goal.

What happens when social work students have barriers that can interfere with their ability to learn? For many social work students, the draw to the profession stems from personal experiences with a social worker or other helper as they were growing up (Newcomb, Burton, &

Edwards, 2017a). Research regarding adverse childhood experiences indicates that social work students who have experienced trauma and other hardships may have experiences with programs and services aimed at addressing other problems such as poverty, food insecurity and housing instability (Miles et.al., 2017; Newcomb, et.al., 2017a). As a result of some of their experiences, social work students may also have higher levels of empathy and compassion that can serve them well as professionals when coupled with adequate self-care strategies but when they are not, compassion fatigue and burnout are typically the result (Newcomb, et.al, 2017b; Thomas, 2016).

Newell & Nelson-Gardell (2014) sought to examine the ethical implications for teaching self-care in the social work curriculum and found high levels of burnout and compassion fatigue among social work professionals, especially new professionals who are exposed to high-trauma, high-stress work settings and client populations. They suggest that while the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) encourages professionals to engage in continuing education around the topic of self-care that at present there is not a specific competency or requirement that addresses self-care in the curriculum at either the BSW or MSW level. Social work educators find themselves having to choose between ensuring that students are obtaining the knowledge and skills required to practice with clients or teaching self-care and sadly, self-care takes a back seat due to competing time and resources of academicians across colleges and universities in the United States (Newell & Nelson-Gardell, 2014). For social work students who are struggling with basic need insecurity, self-care may seem like a privilege that they simply cannot afford due to limited financial resources, time constraints, and other obligations such as caring for a family member or parenting.

Newcomb et.al., (2017a) interviewed twenty social work or human service majors in Queensland, Australia. The twenty students were invited to participate in qualitative interviews

following responses from a larger research project regarding adverse childhood experiences by the same research team (Newcomb, Burton, & Edwards, 2017b) because they had self-disclosed having experienced child abuse or neglect, bullying, divorce, drug or alcohol use, witnessing domestic violence, death of a loved one, and surviving a natural disaster. Out of the twenty students, fifteen had been recipients of some form of formal social services. While many of the students identified learning about positive role modeling about the profession from these experiences, some also learned about behaviors that they would want to avoid as future social workers and helpers (Newcomb et. al., 2017a).

Interestingly, the largest concern for the students who had experiences with professionals before entering their majors was the fear of judgement and stigma from both peers and faculty should they disclose their past treatment history. Students also identified being concerned that their past involvement with service providers would impact their ability to continue in the major as they would be viewed as not well suited for the profession or not competent (Newcomb et.al., 2017a). Given that most of the students in the study expressed positive outcomes from their service provider involvement it was striking that none felt safe to disclose their use in a learning environment of future helpers. According to Fox (2013), "Social work education is about human contact, engagement, empowerment. Its singular defining and enduring mark is its intensely personal nature. It is characterized by the interconnection between you and your student, between students and students, and between students and their clients" (p. 1).

After a comprehensive search of the literature, only one study addressed food insecurity among social work students specifically, while no research could be found for this population regarding basic need insecurity. The researchers asked closed and open-ended questions in a cross-sectional online survey of 496 social work students enrolled in BSW, MSW and Ph.D.

courses at a public institution of higher education in the Pacific Northwestern region of the United States (Miles, et al., 2017). Questions about food insecurity were taken from the USDA measurement of food insecurity and demographic questions regarding self-identified information such as gender, race, ethnicity, and if they were a first-generation college student. Inquiry surrounded educational debt, coping related to food insecurity, and what types of resources they had accessed in the past year. Open ended questions revolved around students' perceptions and ideas regarding how campus and local leaders could respond to the issue of food insecurity (Miles, et al., 2017).

Over half (66%) of the responses came from students enrolled in the MSW programs. Seventy-five percent of the respondents were enrolled full time, 86 percent identified as female, and 20 percent identified as a person of color. A total of 43 percent of the students in this study reported food insecurity in the past year of completing the survey. Furthermore, the researchers discovered statistically significant results ($p<.05$) indicating that food insecure students were more likely to be a person of color, female, and a first-generation college student which is consistent with literature from other disciplines (Blundell et al., 2019; Bruening et al., 2018; Henry, 2017). Other key findings include the inability of food insecure social work students to be able to seek medical treatment due to cost and student debt that was almost ten thousand dollars more than their food secure peers. Despite more MSW students completing the survey, the students in the BSW program were more likely to report food insecurity at 65% versus 35% of the MSW students (Miles et al., 2017).

The authors clearly illustrate a need for social work educators and administrators to take the issue of food security seriously to better meet the needs of students while simultaneously impressing the importance of engaging in social justice work. They suggest that marginalized

and vulnerable students should get the necessary support to be successful from their respective

institutions, and that social work faculty have an opportunity to create a supportive learning

environment where "the experiences under 'study' (e.g., poverty, oppression) are considered to

exist principally or exclusively outside of the walls of the school or department, the values,

norms, and practices of the social work profession embedded in curricula lose their credibility"

(Miles et al., 2017, p. 662). It is suggested that food insecurity and the absence of other basic

needs may be limiting the social work profession's ability to prepare ethical and competent

social workers for the future. The researchers also question a student's ability to engage in self-

care when they are struggling to meet basic needs and suggest that they may be unable to engage

in advocacy work for others to the best of their actual ability due to their basic needs not being

met (Miles et al., 2017).

Gaps in the Literature

While the literature regarding basic need insecurity has increased across the country, to

date the majority of studies have centered around food insecurity and the negative academic,

social, and financial outcomes for students. What is missing from the literature is the

examination of basic need insecurity and its impact on student success from the lived experience

of the students. Basic need insecurity occurs when students do not have access to healthy,

nutritious food, have instability in housing, and limited financial resources as well as

opportunities for social connection (Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, et.al., 2019; Phillips, McDaniel,

& Croft, 2018). These barriers impact a student's ability to engage academically, socially and

financially in ways that encourage success. Student success is typically measured in terms of

grade point average (GPA), and retention and graduation rates, but it is not known how students

define their success in the midst of significant challenges toward the attainment of their degree. It

is the aim of this research to explore how barriers to student success impact undergraduate social work students who are supposed to be gaining the necessary knowledge, skills, and values to be able to enter the field to assist individuals, families, groups, and communities with similar struggles. Given the significant gap in the literature on this subject, this study hopes to contribute to the limited knowledge on this topic.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Theory helps to frame understanding of complex problems. When examining the role that basic needs play in student success, two prominent theories emerge. These two theories are Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) and Bloom's revised taxonomy (1956, 2001). Maslow's hierarchy suggests that humans must have their basic needs met in order to move to higher level needs such as self-esteem, while Bloom's taxonomy is the hierarchical ordering of cognitive skills regarding student learning as shown in Figure 1.1. Both theories stress the importance of meeting the needs or tasks at the lowest level before being able to move onto higher levels. Each theory will be explored individually and then connected to understand how the two theories guide the research regarding basic needs insecurity and student success.

Figure 1.1. Aligning Learning Performance with Need Fulfillment

Figure 1.1. A comparison of the two theoretical models, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) and Bloom's Taxonomy (2001)
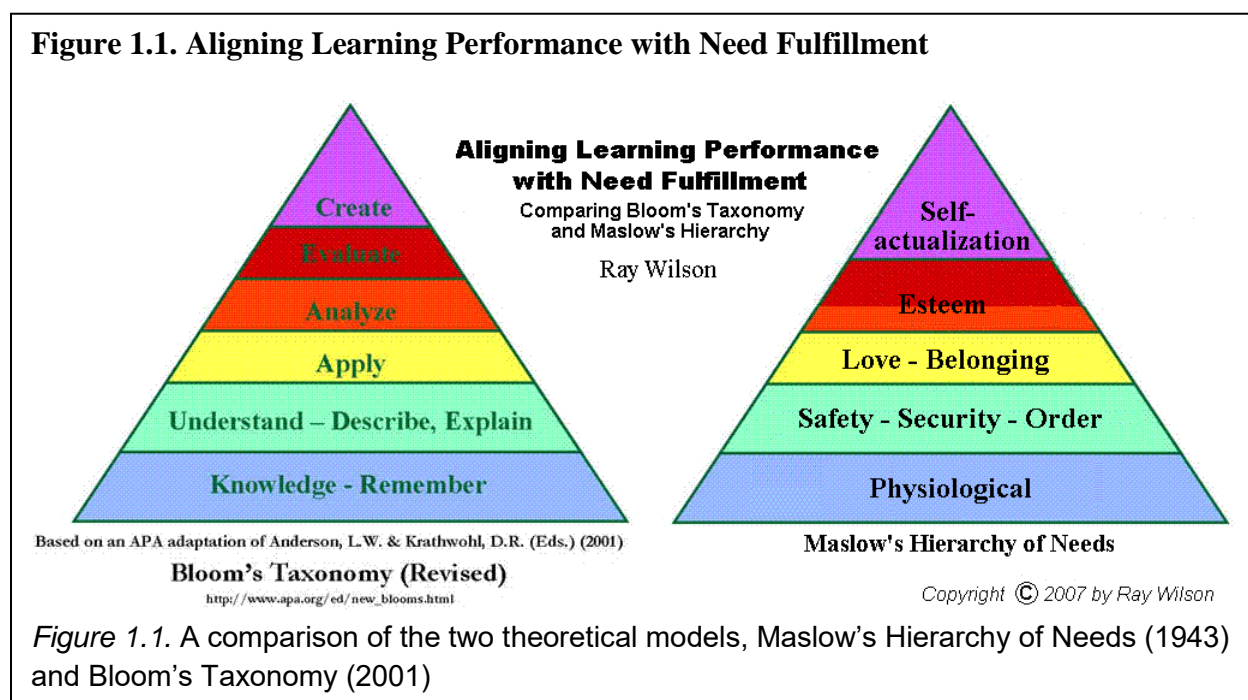
Basic Tenets of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Humans are driven and motivated by their needs. According to Maslow (1943), there are five stages of needs as illustrated in Figure 1.1. At the bottom of the pyramid are the needs considered to be most basic for survival, while the top of the pyramid represents higher order

needs. In order for humans to reach self-actualization, the others must be met and maintained.

Physiological. At the base of Maslow's pyramid are the physiological needs which include having enough food to eat, water, housing and clothing (Maslow, 1943). In his original paper, Maslow (1943) illustrates this using hunger and food as a primary need that must be met. "A person who is lacking food, safety, love, and esteem would most probably hunger for food more strongly than for anything else" (p. 373). He suggests that all energies would be put forth to satisfy one's physical hunger and that until that need is met, the awareness or desire for physical intimacy would be stymied. When individuals do not have their basic needs met they may experience discomfort such as illness or experience pain and this may drive individuals to seek to find ways to meet those needs (Gobin, Teeroovengadum, Becceea, & Teeroovengadum, 2012).

Safety and security. When the basic physiological needs are satisfactorily met, humans will focus on the need to feel safe and secure. The need to feel safe and secure begins during infancy and childhood and continues throughout adulthood. In children, these needs are met through routine and consistent behavior. When children perceive threat or experience times when they are not safe, anxiety and fear tend to be the resulting emotions (Maslow, 1943). A child who experiences comfort or protection from a parent or other caring adult following an incident where they feel afraid or unsafe will return to a state of homeostasis. As children mature into adulthood, safety and security needs can also be knowing there is enough money in the bank to be able to pay one's bills, having health insurance, and living in an environment where there is not a threat of violence.

Love and belonging. The next tier in Maslow's hierarchy is love and belonging. Love and belonging involve the desire to connect with others through friendship, partnership, marriage, having children and other meaningful relationships. Maslow suggests that when these

needs are not met, individuals may struggle with adjustment. It is important that while intimate

sexual relationships can fall into this category, love and sex are not synonymous and it is

possible to satisfy this level without being in an intimate sexual relationship (Maslow, 1943).

Other connections that are important for love and belonging can include the desire to belong to

clubs, attend church, and live with others (Gobin, et. al., 2012).

      Esteem. Esteem refers to how we think and view ourselves. Self-esteem includes feeling

confident about one's abilities and achievements. Maslow argues that most humans have a need

or desire to have a realistic view of themselves and how others view them. Humans have a desire

or need to be appreciated, recognized, and valued for the work they do and the person they are.

When self-esteem needs are met, the resulting feelings include having a sense of worthiness,

self-confidence, and strength. If these needs are not met, according to Maslow, the resulting

feelings include inferiority, weakness, and a sense of helplessness (Maslow, 1943).

      Self-actualization. Self-actualization can also be understood as self-fulfillment. It is the

desire to reach one's full potential by becoming "everything that one is capable of becoming"

(Maslow, 1943, p. 382). What one is capable of becoming or is driven to become depends on the

person. For example, one person may be driven to exceed in their profession while another may

be driven to be the best parent they can be. This is considered to be the highest level on

Maslow's pyramid and in his writings he acknowledges that self-actualization is the least studied

need because most humans do not consistently have their previous needs (esteem, love and

belonging, safety and security, and physiological) met over the course of their lifetime and so

humans are constantly striving to self-actualize but are distracted by the unmet needs that arise as

a natural part of the human experience (Maslow, 1943).

Application of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's theory of human motivation (1943) clearly articulates the importance of meeting one's basic needs in order to grow and thrive. When the most fundamental of needs, food and shelter are not accessible, it becomes challenging to meet other needs. For college students, the importance of having food, financial security, and shelter is paramount to their ability to focus and excel in the classroom (Henry, 2017). The short- and long-term negative health and wellness consequences for basic need insecure college students are well documented in the literature and include disordered eating, meal skipping, feelings of shame and guilt, and a sense of powerlessness as well as higher risk of chronic health issues, depression, and poor academic achievement (Knol et. al., 2017; Maynard, Meyer, Perlman & Kirkpatrick, 2018).

Basic Tenets of Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's taxonomy is a system that was created to help have a universal language regarding educational objectives for educators to be able to frame what students are expected or intended to learn. It was modeled after the classification system used by biologists to describe the natural world (i.e., phyllum, genus, species) (Masia, Krathwohl, & Bloom,1956). It is by far one of the most utilized pedagogical frameworks that help to guide educators as it helped to increase the ability for educators to communicate with each other and their students about the goals and objectives for their course and curriculum (Krathwol, 2002; Masia, Krathwohl, & Bloom,1956; Svinicki & McKeachie, 2014). The original taxonomy was published in 1956 and included the following six categories: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation (Masia, Krathwohl, & Bloom,1956; Krathwol, 2002). Like Maslow's Hierarchy, the categories are listed from what is considered to be basic and concrete to the more complex and abstract levels of cognition.

In 2001, Bloom's Taxonomy was revised by Anderson and Krathwohl. The revisions

were intended to "improve its pedagogical utility and accuracy" (Svinicki & McKeachie, 2014, p. 310). The revised six categories include: Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate and Create (Krathwol, 2002). Consistent with the original taxonomy, the categories begin with basic objectives and move to the more complex. One of the purposes of the changes was to help stress the importance of action, and the language change helps to do this with the use of verbs (knowledge versus remember). In order to explain in more depth, a brief description of each category follows.

Remember. The most basic category in the taxonomy involves being able to recall and retrieve information from memory (Krathwohl, 2002). Using social work education as an example, a social work faculty member might want a student in their introduction course to be able to recall what the core values of the social work profession are without being able to describe what they mean. At this level, the learning is focused on what the memory is able to recall and not on deeper levels of learning. It is considered to be the foundation for the next levels of learning.

Understand. To understand means to be able to decipher messages and instruction from oral and written cues. At this level, students should be able to complete tasks around summarizing, comparing and explaining concepts (Krathwohl, 2002). For social work students, this would include being able to compare and explain the difference between the medical model and the planned change process which requires them to remember the steps in the process.

Apply. Students who can remember and understand information are ready to be able to apply what they have learned in a practice setting. For example, a social work faculty member might present a student with a case study and ask them to role play with a classmate in the engagement step in the planned change process. The student should be able to recall that the

engagement step focuses on building relationships and beginning to establish an understanding of the problem from the client's perspective.

Analyze. When educators ask students to be able to analyze information, they are expecting the student to be able to take information that they have learned and be able to break the material down into parts and explain how they relate to one another. In social work, students might be asked to determine and select the most appropriate intervention for someone who is struggling with depression or anxiety.

Evaluate. Evaluation is considered one of the higher levels of cognition according to Bloom and colleagues. The ability to be able to come to a decision or conclusion about a situation based on the collected information requires the ability to think critically in order to make judgements. Students may be asked to consider how a particular program is functioning. In this category they would be critical about eligibility criteria, scope of services offered, and the effectiveness of the services provided.

Create. The highest category in the revised version of Bloom's taxonomy is to create. When students write a paper or prepare a speech that they deliver, they are producing work that reflects what they have learned in their own words. At this stage, students should be able to generate ideas independently and articulate them to others.

Students Must Maslow Before They Bloom: A Social Work Perspective

If students pursuing college degrees are expected to be successful and perform to the highest level of their capacity, it should be evident that they must have their basic needs met in order to function, grow and be able to engage in higher levels of learning. Maslow (1948) reflected that when basic needs are not met there are changes in the cognitive capacities including the ability to pay attention, to learn and remember as well as to think critically. For

social work students who are experiencing deficits in regard to their basic needs, there must exist a sort of cognitive dissonance when they sit in classrooms and learn about issues related to poverty, such as hunger and homelessness, while they themselves may be experiencing those very conditions. Social workers, especially those who are employed at institutions of higher education, need to be aware of and responsive to the needs of their students if they have expectations for what they want their students to know and demonstrate in and outside of the ▯▯. The next chapter will describe the methodology used to conduct this study.

Chapter 4: Methodology

As evidenced by the review of the literature, basic need insecurity which includes unstable housing or homelessness, food insecurity, and limited financial security impacts a student's ability to engage fully in their academics, participate in social activities, and interferes with their financial stability which impacts their overall capacity for success in and outside of the classroom (Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, et.al., 2019). While there is existing quantitative research detailing the rates of food insecurity, the rates of homelessness, and the increasing financial burdens that at-risk students are facing, there are limited qualitative studies that explore the lived experience of these students (Knol, et.al., 2018; Payne-Sturges, et.al, 2017). Furthermore, due to the scarcity of literature specifically regarding the experiences of undergraduate social work students who have struggled to meet their basic needs, this study provided knowledge that will contribute to a limited body of knowledge (Miles et.al., 2017). This chapter will explain the methodological approach and the rationale for selecting transcendental phenomenological analysis, individual in-depth interviews and photo elicitation. A description of the sample and recruitment process as well as the data collection and analysis process follow. Finally, the importance of keeping memos and reflexivity in qualitative research will be discussed.

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological photo-elicitation study was to gain insights into the lived experiences of undergraduate social work students who struggle with some form of basic need insecurity at a small, rural public institution of higher education. At the core, the purpose of the study was to gain insight from study participants regarding four main areas:

1. How do social work students who have experienced basic need struggles define success?

2. How have their experiences academically, socially, and financially been shaped as a result of basic need deficits?

3. What are their coping strategies and with whom did they share their experiences?

4. What would they want their social work faculty and university administrators to know about their experiences?

Rationale for Research Approach

Transcendental phenomenology is a popular method in qualitative research when researchers want to explore in depth the lived experience of certain problems, concerns, or phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Giorgi, 1997; Padgett, 2008). Participants share a common experience, or phenomenon and the analysis of interview data seeks to find the common themes in their experiences (Padgett, 2008). Phenomenological interviews are typically conducted with 6 to 10 participants and interviews questions are constructed using broad, open-ended questions at first to assist with rapport building and then become more focused as the interview progresses (Padgett, 2008). Stories emerge from experience and understanding the essence of the phenomenon, in terms of what participants experienced as well as how they experienced it, is a primary purpose in transcendental phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While interviews are most common to analyze, other sources of data can also be examined. For this study, photographs taken by the participants coupled with an in-depth individual interview were used to better understand the participant's perspectives.

One of the key features in transcendental phenomenology includes the researcher being able to set aside, or bracket their own experiences to attempt to take a fresh perspective on the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Giorgi, 1997). In college, I was fortunate to never personally struggle to meet my basic needs, however, I was aware of a few peers who

struggled at times to be able to afford everything that they needed to be successful. As I progressed in my social work career, I worked directly with client systems who were impacted significantly by poverty and the ability to afford basic needs such as food and shelter. For this study, I approached every interview with an open and inquisitive mind so that I could attempt to truly hear the experiences being shared by each of the participants. It is imperative in qualitative research for the researcher to share their positionality with participants. The students in the study were aware that I an in charge of the on-campus food pantry that helps to address food insecurity among college students. The students in this study were also aware that this research was being conducted as a component of a doctoral of social work program and that I was specifically interested in their experiences and perceptions as an undergraduate social work student who self-identifies with struggling to meet their basic needs.

Learning occurs in a social environment and for social work educators and leaders, helping students to be able to explain and understand how their experiences shape their learning and influence future learning and behavior is essential (Fox, 2013). The hope with any type of inquiry into a phenomenon is that it will help to inform key stakeholders or decision-makers about how to improve policies, practices, or programs that serve the people who are impacted by the phenomenon. Transcendental phenomenology is a good fit in order to understand how basic need insecurity impacts undergraduate social work students from their worldview. Vital information about how to engage them in being active participants in working to improve how they are served, supported and are ultimately successful while consumers of higher education was discovered. In the long term, how students are supported may influence how they then go and work with clients who are in a similar situation when they enter the profession.

Setting

The study was conducted in a small rural town located in central Pennsylvania. The population in the county in 2018 was estimated at 38,684 of which 96.4% identify as Caucasian and 51% are women (US Census Bureau QuickFacts, n.d.). It is a rural community where 87.7% of the population has obtained a high school education and 18% have a bachelor's degree or higher compared nationally to 31.5%. The poverty rate in the county is 16.2% (6,266 people), and 38.3% in the community where the study occurred which is well above the national average in 2017 of 12.3% (US Census Bureau QuickFacts, n.d.). Approximately 7.6% of individuals under the age of 65 do not have health insurance, 11.7% reported some type of disability and 15% receive SNAP benefits (US Census Bureau QuickFacts, n.d.; Food Stamps in Pennsylvania (State), n.d.).

Nestled in this rural community is one of the fourteen universities in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). There are approximately 3,425 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled across two campuses (LHU Fast Facts, n.d.). Six percent of the student population is from outside the state of Pennsylvania, covering twenty-one states and seventeen countries. Eighty-four percent of the student body identifies as Caucasian, 8% as African American, 4% as Hispanic, 2% as Asian, and 1% identify as international students (LHU Fast Facts, n.d.). The university reports a 65% persistence rate from the freshman year to the sophomore year, and a four-year graduation rate of 40.3% (LHU Fast Facts, n.d.).

The Social Work Department has approximately 100 undergraduate students enrolled in the program. Social work students at the undergraduate level are introduced to the profession through generalist practice coursework such as Human Behavior and the Social Environment, Social Welfare Policy, Diverse Populations and Groups, Practice with Individuals, and Practice with Families and Groups. Students are required to take courses in mental health, case work, and

they can choose among electives regarding special populations and topics such as health care,

veterans, and child welfare. Their educational journey culminates with the signature pedagogy of

the profession, the professional semester, often called Field Placement.

Sample & Recruitment

Given the specific and focused nature of this study, sampling was convenient, purposive,

and criterion-based as participants needed to meet certain criteria in order to participate in the

study (Padgett, 2008). Phenomenological analysis typically seeks to find individuals who have

experienced the phenomenon being explored because it facilitates opportunities for deeper

understandings of their lived experiences and photo elicitation provides a physical representation

of the participant's experience and can lead to richer conversation during in-depth semi-

structured interviews (Cresswell & Poth, 2018; Mannay, 2016; Padgett, 2008). To be included in

the study, participants had to be over the age of eighteen, a declared social work major, currently

enrolled in classes, and self-identify as having struggled at some point in their college career

with obtaining or meeting their basic needs, and have access to a digital camera or smartphone

camera.

Participants were recruited with the assistance of the program director of the social work

program. An email was sent (See Appendix A) to all social work students at the university via

the department secretary explaining the opportunity to participate in the study, the requirements,

expectations, and the potential risks and benefits. Four students responded directly to the email.

Two weeks after the email was sent to students, the researcher attended two social work classes

to talk about the study and six additional students reached out to inquire about participating in

the study. In total, 9 individual in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted. One student

completed the initial paperwork and photo ethics training but did not complete an interview. The

researcher made several attempts to reschedule without success.

Students in the study were provided with an informed consent form (See Appendix B)

along with an oral explanation of the risks and benefits of participating in the study. A separate

consent form explaining the ethics of using photography in research was also obtained (see

Appendix C) Participants were provided with information regarding their right to stop

participation at any point in time without fear of repercussions. Consistent with ethical research

practices, the researcher and each participant signed both the informed consent form and the

photo ethics form (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Detailed explanations regarding the management of

confidential information and the use of the photographs were explained to each participant

individually since anonymity and confidentiality can be harder to protect since participants own

the rights to the photographs that they take and can share them outside of the study (Mannay,

2016). To address and maintain the highest level of integrity, participants were reminded about

informed consent at the initial meeting and prior to the beginning of each individual interview

(Mannay, 2016).

Data Collection Methods

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews provide the opportunity for the researcher and the participant to

engage in meaningful dialogue regarding a phenomenon that the participant has personally

experienced (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Planning for an in-depth interview requires thoughtful

consideration to ensure that a private location with minimal interruptions is secured. Typically,

these types of interviews are planned in advance (Padgett, 2008). Each student who expressed an

interest in participating in the study was asked to come to meet the researcher in her office for an

initial meeting to review the study and ensure the participants met the criteria for the study. To

participate in the study, participants needed to be over the age of eighteen, a declared social work major, and self-identify as struggling with basic need insecurity. The initial meetings lasted between 35 and 55 minutes each.

Once it was determined that the student met the criteria for participation, the researcher and student reviewed the informed consent form, the ethics of taking photographs in research and completed the photo ethics consent form. Each participant was given an opportunity to ask questions regarding the study or any information presented in the consent forms before they formally signed the documents. Each participant received a handout developed by the researcher regarding tips to taking photographs as well as a reminder of the research questions being explored (See Appendix D). The scheduling of the in-depth interviews occurred during the initial meeting. A location, date, and time that was convenient for the participant and that was approximately ten days to two weeks after the initial meeting was scheduled. All but one of the nine individual interviews occurred at the office of the researcher at a time convenient for the student. One interview was conducted at an on-campus office where the student was employed at the student's request. All nine interviews were audio recorded.

A semi-structured interview guide was developed (see Appendix E) in order to capture the key questions of the study along with areas to probe to elicit more detail regarding their experience. For example, one of the questions asks participants to describe a time when their success as a student was impacted by not having some or all of their basic needs met. Depending on how the student responded, I would follow up with questions regarding affording textbooks or being physically hungry. While the interview questions and some probes were able to be developed before the interviews, it is important for qualitative researchers who are utilizing in-depth interviews to be in tune with the participant during the interview and to probe for issues

and experiences raised by the participant (Padgett, 2008).

Photo-elicitation

Photo-elicitation is a method that is used during interviewing where participants capture photographs to help tell the story of their lived experience (Bates, McCann, Kaye, & Taylor, 2017). Visual images have been known to prompt emotional responses and can help to trigger participant memory regarding a particular experience. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "There are several ways that visuals are being integrated; key among them are telling the story with images, telling the story about the images, and using images to inform the story-telling (whether they are found or made within the process)" (p. 74). Given the popularity of photography based social media applications such as Instagram and Snapchat, undergraduate college students of a more traditional age may feel more comfortable using photographs to help tell their story during the in-depth interviews. These images may help to uncover issues or make connections to experiences that the researcher may not have considered (Bates, et. al, 2017).

With photo-elicitation, the study participants are bringing a piece of their story to the interview space in the form of photographs. These participant-driven images can also serve to help the researcher not impose their own beliefs, perceptions, or conceptual frameworks about the subject (Bates, et.al., 2017). The use of photo-elicitation in research also allows the participants to potentially feel empowered and visible as their experiences are shared through the photographs they select to share. Since photo-elicitation relies on the images taken by participants, issues related to power imbalance is lessened as participants have control regarding the photographs they capture and share with the researcher (Mannay, 2016). This allows for the voice of the participant to remain the forefront. For participants who may have felt invisible or silenced about their experiences, having an active role in the research process may be therapeutic

(Bates, et. al. 2017).

According to Bates, et.al., (2017) there are three types of photo elicitation interviews or PEI's. The first two are participant driven where the participant is asked to take and share photographs of the phenomenon being studied without interference from the researcher (open) or with some guidance in the form of sharing some interview questions (semi-structured). In the third type, the researcher would provide the photographs for the interviews as a means to prompt conversation (Bates, et. al., 2017). This study employed the semi-structured approach of photo elicitation in order to help frame the experience for the participants based on the interview guide.

During the initial meeting with each participant, the researcher provided an overview of the study and the questions being asked. Each student was given approximately two weeks to capture photographs that helped to demonstrate their experiences with basic need insecurity and the impact it has on their success as a student. Each student was asked to provide between eight to ten photographs to the researcher for the in-depth interview as well as to be emailed to the researcher. Incentives were provided in the form of grocery, Amazon or Walmart gift cards in the amount of twenty-five dollars. Funding for the gift cards was provided by a graduate research grant from Kutztown University (see Appendix F). This study was approved by the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) from both Kutztown University and Lock Haven University (see Appendix G).

Data Collection

Demographic data was collected using a brief demographic questionnaire (see Appendix H) prior to the start of each individual semi-structured in-depth interview (see Appendix E). Participants were instructed to email 10 photographs prior to the start of their scheduled interview. Nine interviews were completed in total. Eight interviews took place at the office of

the researcher while one interview took place at another office on campus per the participant's

request. All interviews were scheduled at a time convenient to the student and were conducted in

a location that ensured participant privacy and minimized interruptions. Each interview was

audio recorded and lasted between 47 and 83 minutes. Every audio recording was stored on a

password protected computer and uploaded to NVivo 12, a qualitative analysis software

program. The interviews were also transcribed by NVivo 12, and then each transcription was

cleaned by the researcher who listened and corrected for accuracy and then listened again to

ensure accuracy. Funding for the transcription was provided by a graduate research grant through

Kutztown University (see Appendix F).

Data Analysis Process

In order to immerse herself in the interviews, the researcher decided on the following

steps for each interview:

1. Listen and make corrections to the interview transcript
2. Listen to the interview a second time
3. Code the interview (first cycle)

This process was repeated for all 9 interviews. After all 9 interviews had been coded once, the

researcher completed a second cycle of coding. Listening to each interview multiple times and

coding them one at a time allowed the researcher to ensure that the same practice was followed

which increases validity. After the second cycle of coding, the researcher reached out and met

with each participant to review some key findings and check that her interpretations reflected

what the participant meant. Member checking ensures that the meaning being ascribed is what

the storyteller intended and not inferred or imposed by the researcher, which could indicate bias

while increasing validity (Padgett, 2008). This is a validation strategy employed by qualitative

researchers to gain feedback from the participants in order to verify the interpretations and credibility of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Analysis

Coding. In qualitative research, codes are words or short phrases that encapsulate the essence of an idea, concept or experience. Codes are the link between the data that has been collected and the path to how meaning is constructed and explained (Saldana, 2016). They are generated by the researcher in order to determine themes, patterns, and common experiences (Saldana, 2016). Coding data is a form of building relationship with the data and is an interactive process between the researcher and the data (Charmaz, 2014). Based on subject knowledge, some codes were determined a-priori in line with the questions from the interview guide that was developed. Consistent with qualitative research, other codes emerged during the first and second cycles of coding (Saldana, 2016). During the first and second cycle of coding, units of meaning were defined as participant responses to questions. In some cases, this was a single sentence while in others it was a paragraph. The decision to use question responses as units of meaning was to help maintain the integrity of the participant's response. All codes were captured using NVivo12 and a codebook was developed (See Appendix I).

Memos. Memos are an important component of qualitative research as it creates a record regarding the research process including reactions, observations, and how decisions were made about codes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Memos help the researcher to record initial ideas and questions regarding the data as it emerges (Charmaz, 2014). In qualitative research, memos provide a concrete platform for researchers to actively engage in how they are conceptualizing the information being gathered and to practice critical reflexivity (Charmaz, 2014). Memos were kept and stored using NVivo 12.   The researcher kept two types of memos, analytic and

reflective. Analytic memos organized decisions about codes and definitions about codes as well

as observations regarding themes and patterns (Padgett, 2008). Reflective memos included

researcher reactions to the interview content, the research process, and potential implications.

Each memo was organized according to the type of memo, analytic or reflective, and by date and

time of the entry. The researcher kept memos following all interactions with participants,

including the initial meeting, the interview, and follow up meetings in order to capture

observations and insights regarding each interview. These memos were used during the analysis

process to remind the researcher of connections and observations during the interviews.

Positionality and Reflexivity

In qualitative research, it is imperative for the researcher to be ever mindful of their own

biases and positions in order to be transparent about how their perspectives could be influencing

the research. I have never experienced a lack of basic needs nor struggled financially. However,

as a trained social worker, I have worked all of my career with individuals, groups, and

communities where struggling to make ends meet was a daily concern. In my various positions, I

made sure to be aware of the programs and services that would help to alleviate some of the

suffering that my clients experienced. As a social worker who is employed in an institution of

higher education, my role currently is to work with students who encounter challenges and

barriers to being able to complete their education and to try to find ways to eliminate or reduce

the challenges and barriers that interfere with a student's ability to be successful in and outside of

the classroom.

Another important point to consider is the role that relationship may have played in the

study. As a small campus, many students are aware of who I am and what I do on campus to help

support students. My position is not considered faculty and this may have contributed to the

depth of information that was shared by study participants. I did not interview any student who was currently receiving supportive services from the office where I am employed. However, a few of the students have received support from the office where I am employed at some time during their college career including, book scholarships, winter attire, and referrals to tutoring or counseling services. This connection may have significantly impacted the level of trust and depth that was shared during each interview.

Limitations of Proposed Study

While there are many benefits to the approach described above, there are also some limitations that must be acknowledged. While transcendental phenomenology is designed to gain insight into the lived experiences of participants, it does require a willingness of the participants to share intimate details of the phenomena being explored (Padgett, 2008). For some, sharing at this level may bring up difficult feelings or trigger emotional reactions. Another limitation includes the amount of involvement required for participation (initial meeting, time taking photographs, in-depth individual interview, and follow up), students may be reluctant to engage in this level of participation (Mannay, 2016). For students who are already taxed for time between work, internship, and school work, asking them to participate in a study that requires approximately five to seven hours of their time may be a deterrent for recruitment and participation. Additional challenges could include access to the appropriate technology, such as a smartphone or camera. Finally, because the use of photo-elicitation requires ethics training regarding the types of photographs that can be used, the participants may feel that there are limitations placed on their ability to share their experiences authentically (Mannay, 2016).

Summary

This study was designed to capture the lived experiences of undergraduate social work

students who self-identify with struggling to meet their basic needs. The combination of in-depth

individual interviews and photo-elicitation allowed for rich conversation coupled with visual

images that represented their experience. The next chapter will discuss the findings in depth.

Chapter 5: Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of undergraduate social work students who have struggled to meet their basic needs. Photo-elicitation allowed for the participants to be engaged in the research process and to share their story both in words and in pictures. While each participant had a unique perspective to share about their experience with basic need insecurity, there were common themes that emerged during the analysis process and will be discussed in this chapter. This chapter will include a description of the participants, a detailed account of the student responses to the research questions, and the themes that emerged. Each theme will include examples of photographs from the students that illustrates the theme being discussed.

The four overarching research questions that underpinned this study included how undergraduate social work students who self-identify with basic need insecurity define success, their perceptions of how their academic, social, and financial experiences have been shaped, how they coped and who they shared their struggle with, and what messages they have for their social work faculty and university administrators regarding their experiences.

Participants

In total, nine undergraduate social work students who self-identified as struggling with meeting their basic needs participated in this qualitative study. All of the students who participated were of full-time student status and identified as female. Six students were Caucasian and three were African American. The average age was twenty-three. The nine students represented the sophomore class (N=2), the junior class (N=3) and the senior class (N=4). Six of the women identified as being single, two reported being in committed relationships, and one of the participants was married. In terms of sexual identity/orientation,

five participants identified as straight, three as bi-sexual, and one student identified as pansexual. Six of the students reported that they were the first in their immediate family to attend college. Eight of the students were employed and worked an average of twenty-one hours per week. Their average grade point average (GPA) was 3.04.

Each student was given the option to select a pseudonym in order to protect confidentiality. A brief demographic and background summary of each student follows in order to help paint a picture of the study participants and their experiences as a student who has struggled to meet their basic needs.

Tiffany. She is a 22-year-old African American female who will be entering her field placement in the spring semester. She is the first in her family to attend college and has a 3.3 GPA. She works approximately twenty hours per week. She lives in an apartment off campus and identifies as straight. She does not have a meal plan.

Edna. She is a 20-year-old Caucasian female who identifies as bi-sexual. She will be graduating this semester and works approximately 34 hours per week at two different jobs. Her GPA is a 3.0. She lives in an apartment off campus with three roommates and does not have a meal plan.

Cici. She is 21 years old, African American and a senior. She works 10 hours per week and has a 3.1 GPA. She lives in an apartment off campus with roommates and does not have a meal plan. Cici identifies as straight, and is in a committed relationship with her boyfriend.

Alissa. She is 19 years old, Caucasian, and a sophomore. She works 25-30 hours per week and has a 3.3 GPA. She lives in a traditional dorm on campus and has a meal plan.

Leona. She is 20 years old, Caucasian, and is a junior. She works 40 or more hours per week at three different jobs. Her GPA is 3.6. She lives with three other roommates in an

apartment off campus, does not have a meal plan and is in a committed relationship with her boyfriend. She identifies as bi-sexual.

Lizzy. She is 53 years old, Caucasian, and a senior who will enter field placement next fall. She works 25 hours per week and has a 3.9 GPA. Lizzy identifies as straight, is married and a veteran. She lives approximately twenty-five minutes away in her own home with her husband.

Sarah. She is 20 years old, Caucasian, and a junior. She works 20 hours per week and has a 2.8 GPA. She lives alone in an apartment off campus and has a commuter meal plan. She identifies as bi-sexual.

Rosa. She is 20 years old, African American, and a junior. She works 22 hours per week and has a 2.1 GPA. She lives in a traditional dorm on campus with one roommate and has a meal plan. She identifies as straight.

Stacy. She is 19 years old, Caucasian, and a sophomore. Her GPA is 2.3. She is the first in her family to attend college and she identifies as pansexual. She lives in a traditional dorm on campus and has a meal plan.

The first question that I asked each student to help warm them up to the interview environment was what led them to choose social work. The responses indicated a desire to help others, previous experiences with helpers, and encouragement to take a career test that led them to social work. The desire to help others as a primary driving force behind choosing social work as a major was clear from Lizzy, a non-traditional aged adult student who stated, "I love helping people and I always have." Sarah, Edna, Leona, Rosa, and Stacy, all identified having prior experiences with social workers that motivated them to study social work. Incidents with friends who had committed suicide during high school, struggling with mental health issues, and growing up with a parent who had struggled with an addiction to alcohol, or having a family

member adopt children were events or experiences in their lives where a helper was present to either help them or someone in their family.

Sarah who lost two friends to suicide during high school shared that the exposure to a grief counselor following that tragedy, helped her to feel better. "I felt better knowing that I was helping my friends and that was kind of helping me get through everything that I had to get through." Rosa had a family member who was a foster parent and adopted children and she would spend time with the case workers who were involved to help facilitate the adoption. "They always had good advice and stuff and like basically told me what to look for and go for as far as college. And basically, what I could expect in the field."

Leona, a 20-year old junior, chose social work after having positive experiences with social workers who helped one of her parent's find sobriety from alcohol (see Figure 1.2.) Her photograph shows two bottles of alcohol and while Leona does not drink alcohol, she recalled what it was like when one of her parent's was attending rehab and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and how "that um, kind of led me to the point where I was like OK, this is what I want to do, I

Figure 1.2. Leona's Photograph on Why She Chose Social Work

Figure 1.2. Leona's photograph of alcohol bottles to represent why she chose social work because a social worker helped her mother with her sobriety.

want to help people."

One student, Stacy, a 19-year old sophomore, explained that she had experienced with social workers that were positive and negative and "taking from both, I just wanted to learn from those mistakes that I've seen and wanted to put it into my own perspective and try to be the social worker I believe I would want to have if I was back whenever I had a social worker before." Rosa, a 20-year old African American said this, "Why not do something that I've technically grown up around and I've seen firsthand not necessarily what to do but how to help someone." She went on to explain that she was around social workers after a relative had adopted children.

Response to the Research Questions

How Social Work Students Define Success

All of the students described the importance of doing well in their classes and for many of them, this translated into getting good grades. For Tiffany, obtaining good grades, A's or B's, was an expectation that was set for her throughout her childhood and that she has maintained throughout for most of her collegiate career. Cici spoke about doing well in her classes while also focusing on the goals she set for herself for the semester such as improving her skills in a foreign language. Cici chose a photograph of the grade she received on an essay that she was able to revise in order to improve her grade. "So, after I did the corrections which is all the green

I got a 93 on the whole paper."

Figure 1.3. Cici's Photograph of Success
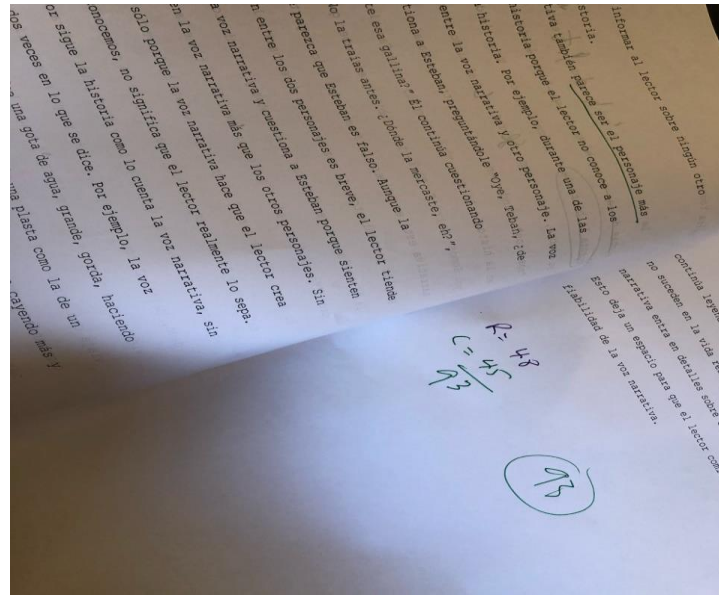
Figure 1.3. Cici's photograph of a paper she was able to revise for a better grade.

Several students also addressed the importance of understanding the knowledge that will

be needed for when they enter the profession, at times minimizing the importance of grades.

Alissa shared that while she would like to make the Dean's list, "Um, I think like, what I want to

do is like, to know the knowledge of how to help people like I want to. I mean it's not really

based on grades to me. I mean, it is, like obviously I want a good GPA but I wanna know how it

can do it." Sarah echoed this when she said "I think that if you are a good student you're

understanding the information that you're being taught and you're able to like practice with it

and it's not always just about like from the book facts."

Several of the women in the study spoke and shared photographs of their schedules or to-

do lists. Cici writes down everything that she has to do and as she accomplishes the task, she

crosses it off. "It's really satisfying." Stacy illustrated this further when she said "Because it um

showcases that I actually like have, I'm motivated to get this stuff done and it'll help me to go

through them and cross them off and know that in the end when everything is crossed off I will

feel like I have done all I can do to be a successful student."

Figure 1.4. Stacy's Photograph of Success
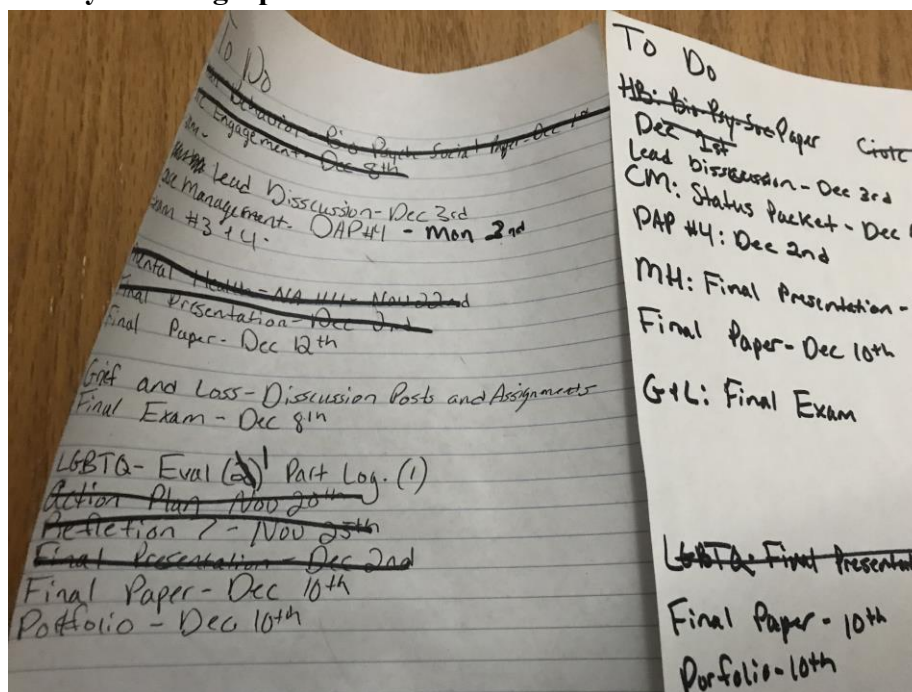
Figure 1.4. Stacy's photograph of her to do list. Crossing things off help her feel successful.

School and Work Balance as a Reflection of Success

Another theme that emerged from the students involved employment and being able to

balance both work and school. Leona took the following photographs to illustrate how working

and doing well in her classes translates into being successful (See Figure 1.5.). When I asked her

to tell me more about the photographs she stated,

> "This is me at work. This is me at my other work. And me at my other work. So to me
> being a successful student is um not only doing well in school but being able to balance
> school with other things. Um so for me that's having a job because I hate not doing
> anything. So I work a lot but I still get my schoolwork done and I'm still doing well."

Figure 1.5. Leona's Photographs of Success

Figure 1.5. Leona took a picture of her feet at each of her jobs. Balancing her jobs and school is an example of success.

Tiffany shared this about success and work, "I would say working because I work all the time. I don't know, I like to work and you need money to do everything so I just feel like, I don't know, it's successful to have a job. You know what I mean? And be in school still." Edna shared that she felt like being a successful student meant being able to put her studies first and not having to worry about how she would pay her bills. As a student who works upwards of 34 hours per week, she would have preferred to be able to work less to be able to focus more on her studies.

Perceived Barriers to Success

The students who participated in the study all identified challenges or barriers they have encountered while attempting to pursue their education. The majority of challenges and barriers fall into three categories, academic, social, and financial. For many of these students, their ability to be successful was dependent upon their ability to work to afford their tuition, rent, textbooks, and food.

Academic

Many of the academic challenges were connected or overlapped with the students'

financial challenges and ability to purchase textbooks or have access to technology. For example,

Alissa was concerned as the semester was ending that because she had a balance on her bill that

she would be unable to register for the classes she needed to take in order to remain on track with

her course sequence in the major. "I didn't have enough money to like, because I knew my bills

were coming up from my car, my insurance. I was like, I want to pay that first and then I'll just

like hopefully get into the classes that I need to." Edna, who was in her last semester shared that

there was a point where she was uncertain if she would be able to graduate because her grades

were slipping due to the number of hours she was working in order to make ends meet. At times,

she shared that she was so tired driving home from work that she almost fell asleep at the wheel.

Textbooks and their affordability were a common concern from the students in the study.

Alissa spoke about how at the beginning of the semester it was very challenging because she did

not have any money in her bank account and she needed to purchase an access code for one of

her classes (See Figure 1.6.). "And I like, I have homework that I have to do and like no money

in my account." Rosa also struggled with the cost of her books, especially during her freshman

year when "I didn't have enough money to like pay for my books all at once." This meant that

she would end up not always having all of her textbooks or required materials until several

weeks into the semester. Rosa reported that this significantly impacted her ability to stay on track

and keep up with what was being covered in class.

Figure 1.6. Alissa's Photograph of an Academic Barrier
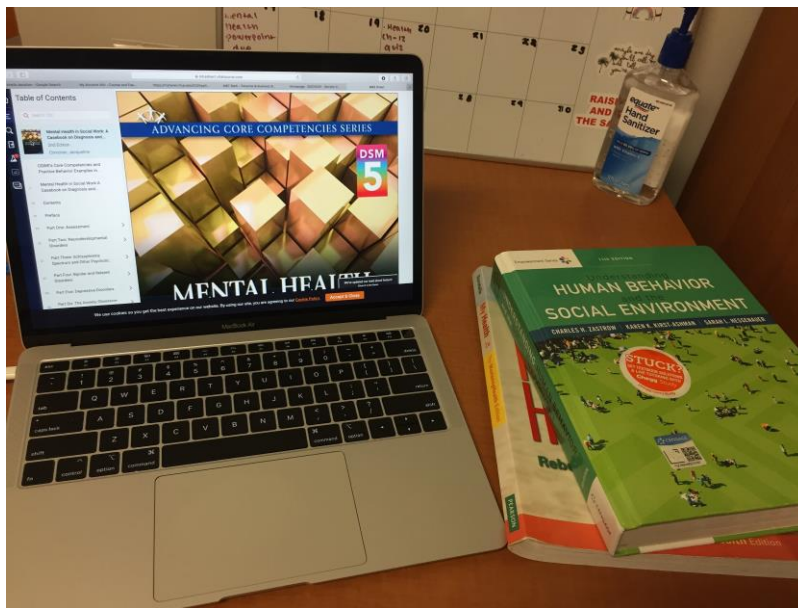
Figure 1.6. Alissa's example of an academic barrier when she did not have the money to be able to purchase the access code for a textbook.

For Lizzy and Stacy, having access to a computer proved to be of significant challenge for each of them. Lizzy began her college career only owning a tablet and she completed all of her work on this device for the first year because she could not afford a computer. Stacy had to rely on the extra money she received from her loans to cover the cost of a laptop when it broke mid-semester. Another challenge that presented for Lizzy was when she went to seek out tutoring services for her biology class. "This was a barrier for biology, not having a tutor available and then whenever they did get one she didn't show up and then she quit and then they didn't have one."

Figure 1.7. Lizzy's Photograph of an Academic Barrier

Figure 1.7. Lizzy took this picture of an empty classroom with no tutor.

Stress emerged as a theme among several of the students as it related to their academic success. For Tiffany, stress presented in several places including being hungry, worrying about her sister who is in an unhealthy relationship, and how she is going to afford nice clothing for her internship next semester. "Sometimes when I'm in class, I'm like oh my gosh, I'm super hungry and then I can't focus cause then I'm thinking about eating and then like I'm not paying attention to anything that's going on in class." Leona also experienced difficulty paying attention when she was under stress. "When I'm super stressed, I don't pay attention as well because obviously like I'm sitting there focusing on all my problems." Cici had this to say about stress, "When I get stressed, I get really overwhelmed and like I don't do anything and like I feel like school's already stressful and then like being stressed like ok, I have to pay bills, and then only have this much money for like the next time I get paid, it just adds more to the stress and like, I feel like I don't do as well."

Social

For the students who participated in the study, how they experienced social barriers were varied. Some students identified making connections to others as a challenge because of how much time they spend in class, volunteering for a class, and working. Edna captured this in the following words, "Just being so busy between my internship and class and homework and work, I don't really have a social life." Tiffany shared that she does not hang out with friends because she spends so much time working to get money to be able to meet her needs. She elaborated that when she is hungry she gets irritable and does not want to take that irritability out on others. She explained that this then interferes with social time spent with friends. Tiffany took a photograph (See Figure 1.8.) of her empty couch to illustrate being alone and isolating.

Figure 1.8. Tiffany's Photograph of a Social Barrier

Figure 1.8. Tiffany took a photograph of her empty couch to show how struggling to meet her basic needs impacts her social life.

Being able to engage in campus events or eat in the dining hall with their friends due to

their work schedules impacted several women in the study. For example, Alissa and Sarah both

talked about having to miss out on events because of their work schedules and how sometimes

their friends who do not share the same struggles, do not understand why they are not able to go

with them to those events. Sarah even had a few friends suggest that she "skip work" to be able

to go to an event on campus. Some of the women expressed a desire to join the social work club

on campus as a way of being connected to others in the major but were limited in their ability to

engage because of work and family commitments.

For many college students, eating together is a time where they can be social. Two

students in the study spoke about the inconvenient hours of operation in the dining hall. For

Alissa, by the time she is finished with class and work it is eleven o'clock at night and none of

the locations provided by the dining program on campus are open. This means that for Alissa,

many nights after work she is not using her meal plan, buying fast-food and even though she

Figure 1.9. Alissa's Photograph of a Social Barrier

Figure 1.9. Alissa took this photograph of a fast food meal she buys after work when the dining hall in not open, preventing her from using her meal plan.

knows that it is not a healthy option, it is the only option at that hour.

Financial

As previously discussed, for the students who participated in the study, financial stressors emerged when they were talking about the barriers they perceive academically. Curious about this connection, I asked each participant in the study to describe their top three financial stressors as a college student. For the students who lived off campus in an apartment, rent was identified as a financial stressor along with some of the bills that accompany living in an apartment such as electric or internet. Both Tiffany and Edna discussed how having internet connection as a college student is essential because so much of what they are asked to do for class requires the ability to check email, submit assignments, and even apply for employment. For the students who have vehicles, affording their car payment and gas to be able to travel to volunteer sites, work, or their internship was a financial stressor. Lizzy, Leona, and Edna, all had some issues with their vehicles at some point during their college careers. These issues centered around having older vehicles that ended up having mechanical challenges that had them scrambling to figure out how to get them fixed. At one-point Leona was without a car for a period of time and this impacted her ability to class and to her place of work. Edna shared that her vehicle is older than her and is no longer being manufactured. Lizzy ended up having to get a newer vehicle and then while the car was more reliable, she now had a car payment.

Several students identified that figuring out how they were going to pay their student bill or navigating their financial aid was a significant stressor. Rosa is a student who had struggled academically in her first few semesters as a student and as a result, lost her financial aid. She struggled with the burden of knowing that her father and grandmother took out private loans to help finance the semesters during which she did not qualify for her aid. For Sarah, challenges in getting her parents to fill out the paperwork so that she could receive all of her aid was a

challenge. Alissa struggled with her bill balance because her financial aid did not cover the entire

bill and her parents have bad credit so were ineligible for a loan. She was able to qualify for a

needs-based scholarship that was applied at the end of the semester from the school or she would

not have been able to register for classes (See Figure 1.10.). A source of financial stress for Cici

is thinking about the debt she is incurring between her financial aid and loans and worrying

about how quickly she will be able to pay it off. "So right now, I'm like $33,000 in debt and

$9,000 of that is from my bank, which I like really want to pay that off before I graduate, or

before the interest starts because the bank is gonna be more interest than like the federal student

loan."

Figure 1.10. Alissa's Photograph of a Financial Barrier

= Session
Balance Due

1,436.00

Figure 1.11. Edna's Photograph of a Financial Barrier
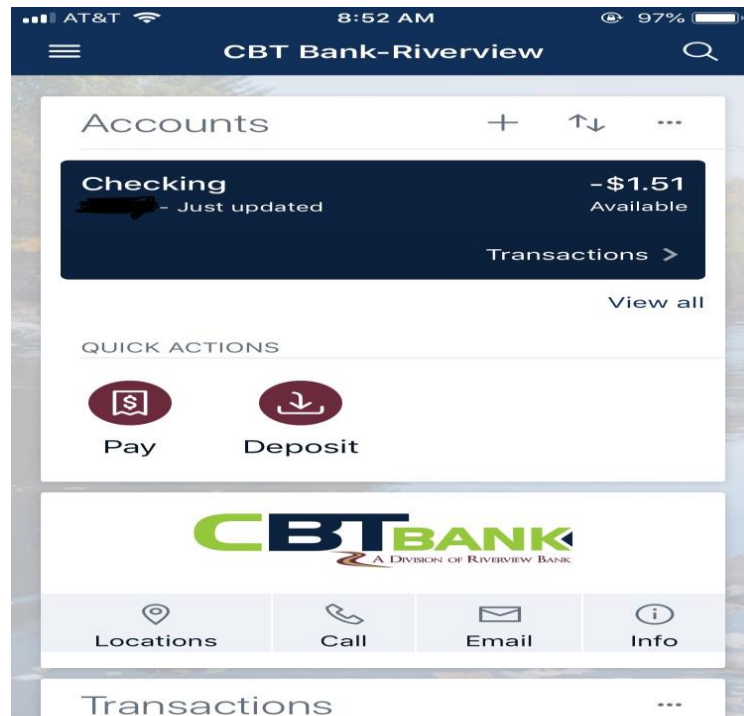
Figure 1.12. Edna took this photograph of a negative balance in her bank account.

Strategies for Coping with Basic Need Insecurity

All of the women in the study identified various strategies for coping with basic need

deficits; however, most of them identified food as the most common deficit. Tiffany, who

described being physically hungry at various points in her college career, would "drink a whole

bottle of water" to feel full. She also would try to keep her schedule very busy because if she was

bored she would notice feeling hungry. Attending events on campus where there would be free

food or having friends who had meal plans use a guest swipe to eat with them in the dining hall

were other ways that Tiffany made sure that she had food. Couponing and sharing her grocery

bill with her boyfriend are one of the ways that Cici helps to have access to food. She shared that

she has also been involved with employment on campus where food is provided such as during

open house weekends. Leona also is employed at a place where she has access to food and attends events on campus where there is food such as the youth group and the wing night sponsored by the student activities office. She said she likes to attend those events with food because "nobody knows that I'm there because I don't have food." Sarah also identified working in an office on campus where the supervisor makes sure that there are snacks in the office for the student workers and that this was very helpful to her.

Four of the women shared that they utilized the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). For Sarah, Tiffany, Edna, and Leona, having food stamps improved their access to food. Sarah said this about her experience with food stamps, "I would say that one month that I had food stamps was the best month of my life because like I really wasn't even buying groceries. But just the idea that I could. It was like monumental to me." She went on to describe how nice it was to be able to have fresh fruit in her refrigerator. Unfortunately, for two of the women, they ran into some challenges with their SNAP benefits. Edna, who works two jobs, received a warning from SNAP because she was making too much money to continue to receive the benefits by approximately fifteen to twenty dollars. She considered reducing her hours at work but would have been potentially demoted to a position that paid less and so Edna was faced with a decision to let her SNAP benefits end or continue working. Edna chose to continue working and stated that fortunately, the food pantry on campus opened a few weeks after her SNAP benefits ended. Sarah also had issues with receiving reminders about paperwork that was required for her to continue receiving benefits. This resulted in her losing SNAP and then having to reapply.

Figure 1.12. Tiffany's Photograph of Food Insecurity

Figure 1.12. Tiffany took this photograph of her refrigerator to show her struggle to purchase food.

A few students identified that trying to obtain or save money was a way that they coped to be able to pay bills such as rent and heat. For Sarah, she ended up selling her video games to get additional cash to be able to pay her rent and other bills or doing other small jobs for cash. She also stated that one time she offered to pick up lunch for a friend and told them that they owed her more than what it cost just to get a few dollars. "I only did that once because I felt really bad about it." Leona also shared that when her friends would ask her to go get food, she would tell them that she did not have the money and that she would pay them back even though she knew she could not pay them back.

Perceived Barriers to Sharing Struggle

The students in the study were asked to share who in their lives knew about their struggles with basic need deficits. For the most part, the students identified family members or friends as being aware of their struggle. A few students shared that a boss was aware of a few

struggles. Two students reported that they did not share their struggle with anyone. When asked about what got in the way for them to let others know about their struggle, pride, stigma, fear of judgement, and concerns about other people's perceptions emerged as the barriers that interfere with them sharing their struggle.

For Leona, pride was directly related to not wanting to ask others for help and being concerned that she would be pitied. She also expressed fear of being judged and guilty if she asked for help. "Like I feel bad asking people to help me because I don't know what they're going through." Edna echoed this when she expressed concern that not wanting to admit she needed help and being worried that someone else had it worse than her kept her from sharing her struggle. She also felt that stigma about asking and receiving help was a barrier, especially as a social work student. "Number one stigma. Um, someone else has it worse. And if you ask for help, as a social worker, you're supposed to be giving these things to, giving these resources to other people. You're not supposed to be using them for yourself." For Stacy, she was concerned that if she shared some of her struggle, especially with faculty or staff at the university that "in their eyes it wouldn't seem as such a big deal as it does in mine."

What Students want Social Work Faculty and other Administrators to Know

The women in the study had several messages for their social work faculty and university administrators mostly around workload, resources, awareness of issues facing students, and self-care. Regarding workload, Leona shared that it is frustrating when major assignments are all due during the same week especially as a student who has to work more than twenty hours per week to make ends meet. Leona shared that sometimes this translates into doing "half assed" work to complete assignments that were not worth many points in order to complete a major assignment that carried a lot of weight for her final grade. Alissa talked about her struggle to find a volunteer

placement that met the requirements for a class and wishing there was more leniency in the requirement, especially because she did not have a vehicle initially and no agencies were returning her phone calls.

Several students requested additional resources such as a place where students could obtain supplies such as notebooks and pens as well as access to textbooks to help offset the cost of books such as putting textbooks on reserve in the library or listing a previous edition as an option. Cici thought that creating a mentoring program for first generation college students who did not participate in other programs would be helpful, especially for social work students. Sarah suggested expanding resources to serve students so that the helper to student ratio was larger to be able to help more students. For Alissa, offering more on campus employment opportunities was important because she felt that they would be more flexible with hours. She also stated that at some jobs on campus students are allowed to study if there is not work to be done whereas at her place of employment she is not permitted to study at work.

The importance of self-care was important for both Stacy and Lizzy. They both talked about Thanksgiving break and how they both had a significant amount of school work to attend to which took away from being able to relax and spend time with family. Lizzy expanded this to spring break as well. "It is not a total break. A lot of times you have a paper to write or you know, something big to have to do." She was clear that her social work faculty have spoken about the importance of practicing self-care but that for students who are working and full-time students, there is limited time to be able to practice self-care.

A few of the students had some very powerful personal messages to share about their journey. Edna said, "I may be holding it together on the outside but I'm breaking because of all the stress and everything that's going on." Stacy said, "Try to look at the perspective of how I

see what I'm going through as something that's personally hard for me to handle. Actually try to

look at it in a perspective that if you were in my shoes what would you be doing?" Sarah shared

that she felt it was important to pay attention to signs that students are struggling such as

attendance in class. "There are always going to be internal struggles that you're not going to be

able to see that a student is going through. Like, and just because something is healed doesn't

mean it's over." Tiffany wanted to make sure that all advisors are asking their social work

students questions beyond talking about what classes to take when they meet with them each

semester. Rosa spoke about her failure from an academic standpoint and how she questioned her

worthiness for the major, especially how social work faculty would view her grades. She shared

this photograph (See Figure 1.13.) to illustrate what it was like when she received this letter of

acceptance into the major by mistake. She said, "So yeah, I failed but I'm still here and I think

more than anything this has shown me I deserve to be a social worker because I'm going to be

working with people who have resilience and have faced adversity and are still willing to come

in to see me to get help."

Figure 1.13. Rosa's Photograph

> Congratulations!! You have demonstrated the knowledge, qualities, and skills that indicate that you are committed to being a Level 2 social work major. You have submitted the required documents, completed an interview with two social work faculty members, and have been approved by the faculty of the social work program to continue your studies in the social work major. We are very proud of you!
>
> As you progress through the social work program, we expect you to continue to maintain a high level of achievement and to continue to grow in your self-awareness. We expect you to act in a professional manner and to follow the policies of the social work program as outlined in the student handbook. To maintain your standing in the social work program, you must achieve at least a 2.0 overall grade point average, a 2.5 grade point average in your social work classes, and earn a C or better in all of your social work classes.
>
> We look forward to watching you grow as you continue
>
> Reply to All

Figure 1.13. Rosa took this photograph of an acceptance she received by mistake into the major following significant academic struggle.

Summary of Findings

Each interview proved to be enlightening as well as humbling as these nine women shared their experiences of what it is like to be an undergraduate social work student who has struggled to meet their basic needs. It was very evident that working while being a full-time student was a reality for eight out of the nine students. For the student who was not employed, she had family obligations that required her to travel about an hour each direction on weekends. Affording tuition, rent, and food emerged as some of their biggest challenges. For many of them, being concerned about what others would think of them and stigma prevented them from letting

others know about their struggle.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain insight and understanding into the lived experiences of undergraduate social work students who self-identify as struggling to meet their basic needs and their perceptions on how those struggles impact their success as a student in and outside of the classroom. While the existing literature surrounding food insecurity and the college population has grown significantly in the past few years, there is limited research that extends beyond food insecurity among this population. The majority of the research is quantitative and while it provides important data, it does not fully capture the experiences and impact of the struggle. Furthermore, the literature regarding undergraduate social work students and their experiences with basic need insecurity is non-existent. The results of this study begin to shed light on the needs that include food, affordability of college and the expenses that accompany the path toward degree attainment among undergraduate social work students who are among the at risk and vulnerable student population who struggles to meet their basic needs (Branson et.al., 2019; Miles, et.al., 2017).

Many of the themes present in current literature were evident in this study including the impact on academic performance, the financial challenges, and the social barriers that manifest for students who struggle to meet their basic needs as well as the struggle to find the work, school, life balance. This chapter will discuss how the findings presented in the previous chapter compare to the existing literature within the theoretical context of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) and Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001). The presence of adverse childhood experiences (ACE) among students who self-identify as struggling to meet their basic needs, stress, and the relationship with their social work advisor also emerged as themes in the study. These will be discussed at length as they have implications for social work education and leadership. Finally,

recommendations to address the implications for social work education and leadership as well as the limitations and areas for future research will be presented.

Comparison of Findings to the Current Literature

The majority of the current literature focuses on implications for college students who have food insecurity while only a limited amount of research has been conducted examining how basic need insecurity impacts students (Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, et. al., 2019; Henry, 2017). Some of the consistent findings in the literature regarding food insecurity and the impact on college students includes issues regarding mental health, academic performance, financial instability and social connections or engagement on campus were identified in the current study (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Gaines et. al., 2014). These themes will be explored in detail in the following section as they compare to existing literature.

Academic Barriers

This study aimed to understand how students who self-identify with basic need insecurity define success as well as cope with barriers related to their academic success. The majority of the literature related to academic success and the barriers therein are focused solely on food insecurity. While several of the women in this study identified having access to food and being hungry as an issue for them, they also identified challenges to their academics that related to the ability to purchase textbooks or register for classes due to having a tuition bill that had not been paid off.

In terms of issues related to academic performance and food insecurity, the literature regarding college students suggests that difficulty concentrating and being focused on how to meet their basic needs interfered with their ability to study and learn (Frank, 2018). In the study, a few of the participants described the impact that hunger had on their ability to focus in the

classroom clearly illustrating the point that when hunger is present, learning is interrupted. Tiffany reported that she had trouble focusing in class when she was hungry and that this prevented her from paying attention to what is being presented in class. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) suggests that in order for an individual to grow and achieve self-actualization that needs must be met at a basic level before one can progress to higher levels. Having access to nutritionally adequate food and shelter over one's head are fundamental basic needs and aids a student in being able to engage in learning in the classroom.

Students faced with food and financial insecurity are sometimes forced to make decisions between purchasing materials such as textbooks or food (Frank, 2018; Henry, 2017). Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001) purports that for students to learn, they must engage in a hierarchical process from mastering basic objectives to more complex levels of thinking. Being able to complete a college degree requires the fortitude to engage fully in the academic process, including participating in class, completing assignments, and studying. This high level of academic rigor can be compromised when students are unable to focus due to hunger or high levels of worry regarding their housing status or financial situations. Leona and Cici both expressed concern about their learning and academic performance. Stress about being able to pay bills or problems with transportation served as distractions for both of them and interfered with their ability to focus during class and their motivation to complete the work to obtain a good grade.

Payne-Sturgess and colleagues (2017) suggested that solely considering a student's GPA as a measure of success may not accurately represent a student's struggle to meet their basic needs. The average GPA of the women in this study was 3.04. For a student to be in good academic standing at the institution where the study took place, they must have a GPA above a

2.0. The lowest GPA was a 2.1 and the highest was a 3.9, clearly suggesting that GPA is not

always an indicator of struggle. Many of the participants described the importance of doing well

in their courses and having goals of making the dean's list but overwhelmingly, the students

described the importance of being able to understand and retain the information they were

learning, especially in their social work courses.

Social Barriers

Making connections and building relationships is an important aspect of college life for

many students. According to Maslow (1943), the need for love and belonging is important for

human development and follows physiological and safety needs in terms of hierarchy. For

students who are struggling to meet their basic needs, being able to engage in campus activities

such as participation in clubs and ability to share meals in the dining hall or at local restaurants

can be significantly impacted due to lack of financial resources, work schedules, or family

obligations (Henry, 2017; Watson, et.al., 2017) As a non-traditional college student, Lizzy

reported that her social life was non-existent due to her work, class and family situation. The lack

of social life was also shared by Stacy, a traditional aged college student who shared that her

social life is sometimes impacted due to having to travel home on the weekend to help her

parents. However, Stacy emphasized that while her ability to spend time with friends or engage

in campus activities on the weekend might be limited, she viewed going home to help her family

as a form of success because it meant that she was able to balance doing well in school while still

being available for her parents.

In a study by Henry (2017), participants identified feeling awkward when having to try to

explain to peers why they were unable to afford to go out due to financial constraints and so

avoided going out at all to manage this challenge. Tiffany reported that she did not go out at

times because she did not have money and did not wish to feel obligated to peers who might offer to purchase drinks or food for her. Leona also expressed frustration with peers who did not understand her financial situation that prevented her from doing social things such as going and getting a manicure together. She explained further that for some peers, they can depend on their family for additional financial resources but in her circumstance, her family does not have extra money to help her.

Financial Barriers

The cost of attending and completing a college degree has continued to rise and according to the literature many students struggle to be able to afford tuition as well as basic needs such as housing, utility bills, and the supplies necessary for success in the classroom such as textbooks and technology (Gaines, et. al., 2014; Knol, et. al., 2018). To cope with financial challenges students have used refund checks to purchase food or have taken out credit cards to be able to afford basic needs (Knol, et. al., 2018). In this study, there was general agreement that if they received a refund, the money went toward paying rent, other utilities, and to purchase textbooks. When asked about the use of credit cards, many of the women stated that they did not have a credit card because either they did not qualify for one or they did not want to incur more debt. However, for Tiffany who identifies as an independent student, meaning she does not get any support financially from her parents, having a credit card was one way for her to begin to build credit. She reported that without a credit score she was unable to sign for a loan for herself that would have helped her to be better able to meet her needs. Leona reported having a credit card that she tries to only use for emergencies like car repair or gas to be able to get to one of her three jobs. She reported that in the previous semester she did use it to purchase her textbooks but did not consider lack of food an emergency.

Financial aid was a common theme for the women in the study. Several of them spoke about the challenges in being a first-generation student whose families did not understand the process for applying for aid while others spoke about the challenges in figuring out their aid once it was received. Alissa was one of the students in the study who did not receive a refund and owed money on her bill because her financial aid package did not cover the cost of her tuition, room and board. This bill was a source of significant stress for her as the end of the semester approached because the balance on the bill was preventing her from registering for classes. For Sarah, who is not close with her family, getting support to complete the parent portion of the financial aid application was a challenge that prevented her from obtaining all of the aid she was eligible to receive. These findings are consistent with the literature that suggests first generation, non-traditional and employed students struggle to be able to afford college and are at higher risk for experiencing food or basic need insecurity (Dubick et. al., 2016; Knol, et. al., 2018).

Findings from Study that Contribute to the Literature

As previously discussed, there is very little known about the perceived impact of basic need insecurity on social work student success and this study begins to fill the significant gap in the literature. While many of the themes described in the previous section are consistent with the current literature regarding food insecurity there were three other themes that emerged from the in-depth individual interviews that are important to discuss. The themes include the impact of mental health issues, experience with adverse childhood events, the role that support from family, friends, or faculty/staff played in their struggle, and stress as it specifically relates to struggling with basic need deficits.

In the study it became clear quite quickly when seven out of the nine participants referred to the role that mental health concerns played in their experience as a student who has struggled

to meet their basic needs and the perceived impact on their success. Several of the students spoke about missing class due to anxiety or depression or having trouble focusing due to a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Another student shared that because of her bipolar diagnosis she struggled to connect with peers and this compounded her challenges with social engagement. Regardless of the diagnosis, the common theme was that struggling with meeting basic needs, combined with mental health concerns was perceived as a barrier to their success as students. Previous studies have connected the impact of food insecurity and mental health concerns among the college population and the consequences on their academic success (Bruening et.al., 2018; Cady, 2014). This study reinforced this concept while also pointing to a larger concern for students who have mental health issues and struggle to meet their needs beyond food.

According to the literature regarding adverse childhood experiences (ACE), social work students are more likely to have experienced an ACE event such as divorce of a parent, death of a parent, abuse or neglect when compared to non-social work majors (Branson, et.al., 2019). This study did not specifically ask questions to elicit reports of adverse events growing up or of traumatic events that have occurred since they have turned eighteen but every student who participated in the study mentioned at least one event that would be categorized as an ACE. The women in the study reported ACE events including; an incarcerated parent, death of a parent, a substance abusing parent, divorce, witnessing domestic violence, sexual abuse, and family history of mental health concerns. This is significant because it suggests that students who are struggling to meet their basic needs may have higher numbers of adverse childhood events compared to other students and may need referrals to formal supportive services such as counseling and food pantries.

Each participant spoke about the support that they have received from family, friends, or from faculty and staff at the institution. The majority of support from family came in the form of occasional financial help for things such as textbooks and emotional support to continue pursuing their education. For Edna and Leona, support from family also included having relatives who were mechanics and could help to repair their vehicles when they had issues for a much lesser cost. Seven of the women in the study identified support they received from friends including encouragement to seek professional help, bringing snacks to class, meal swiping them into the dining hall, and encouraging them to attend class despite their stress and challenges. Several students identified relying on friends to help with transportation to work and class when they were experiencing issues with their vehicles.

Several women also identified support they received from individuals who worked at the university and included things like helping them to understand their financial aid better or where to apply for scholarships. Other students shared that professors allowed them to take photographs of textbooks that they could not afford to purchase. Two students spoke about the emotional support they found from a faculty or staff member when faced with a challenging event such as the death of a parent or the end of a relationship. The institutional support identified by the students in the study support the need for faculty, staff, and administrators to be aware and in tune with the challenges facing basic need insecure students in order to best serve them.

The last theme that emerged in the study that was significant was the role of stress in their struggle. All nine participants mentioned stress in relation to their experience as a student who has struggled to meet their basic needs. Stress ranged from being concerned about how they were going to afford all of their bills, food, and manage to balance both school and employment demands. Stress and struggle with basic need insecurity is well documented in the literature

(Henry, 2017; Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, et. al., 2019a) Having employment opportunities during winter and summer intersessions was important for Sarah who only had jobs on campus and when the university is closed, she does not have an income. She would stress about facing eviction if she did not have the money to pay her rent. Stress also appeared in their commitments to activities that would build their leadership skills such as helping to organize a campus event. Several of the women talked about how being worried about friends or family members also played a role in their level of stress. For Stacy, who is an only child and whose parents have some mobility issues, she worries about them during the week while she is away at school. Regardless of what was causing the students in the study to feel stress, they indicated that their stress levels were compounded by the worry about grades, bills, and having enough money for food and other essentials.

Implications for Social Work Education and Leadership

For social work education, having students in the classroom that are suffering because they are hungry, stressed about financial burdens, and distracted is problematic on several levels. Students who are hungry and struggling to make ends meet in their classroom translates into significant barriers for their learning. It is imperative for social work students to build a foundation of knowledge about the profession and then expand that knowledge as they progress through the curriculum but for the student who is overwhelmed with meeting their basic needs, their learning is impaired. When learning is impaired, this can potentially impact future clients that these students may serve because they have not been able to build the foundation they need to be able to help effectively (Miles, et. al., 2017; Newcomb, et.al. ,2017). While social work educators are not clinicians, they do have an obligation to uphold the core values and ethics of the profession. Faculty must be aware of the prevalence of basic need insecurity and the negative

consequences that accompany those concerns.

The student-faculty advisor relationship emerged as a significant connection for several students in the study. Research regarding the advising experience for social work students supports this finding (Daly & Sidell, 2013; Hessenauer & Guthrie, 2018) Hessenauer and Guthrie (2018) conducted a mixed method study regarding the advising experience for undergraduate social work students and the experience of the social work advisor. The two-phase study included the 20 qualitative interviews with recently graduated social work students and 111 quantitative surveys completed by faculty who advise undergraduate social work students. The most significant finding in their study included the positive impact on the student regarding the relationship that was built between the student and their advisor (Hessenauer & Guthrie, 2018). For example, the students reported that the more contact they had with their advisor, the more they were satisfied with the advising process.

In this study, no specific question was asked regarding the relationship the students had with their social work faculty advisor yet it was mentioned by four of the nine participants as a part of their narrative regarding success, support, and the need for advising to be holistic in nature. This is consistent with the finding from Hessenauer and Guthrie (2018) who found that advisors viewed advising as an opportunity to model professional boundaries as well as act as a broker for students who needed referrals for services such as counseling or tutoring. Daly & Sidell (2013) suggest that the social work faculty advisor serves as a role model to undergraduate social work student regarding how the helping process functions, complete with emotional support and appropriate boundaries and referrals.

Educators and administrators in higher education may want to examine ways to support students creatively that require some out of the box thinking. For example, while food pantries

and clothing closets function to help provide some basic needs, there is a larger need for coordinated, holistic student-centered services. Many times, faculty, staff, and administrators function in siloed roles on their campus and a holistic response to better serve students with basic need insecurity would require that all of the aforementioned professionals work collaboratively to best serve students. For example, it could be beneficial to set up a book sharing program to help address the costs of textbooks, especially in learning communities where students are grouped together for several courses. Encouraging faculty to place a book on reserve in the library may also help struggling students to offset the cost of textbooks.

Beyond meeting the needs for food and textbooks, some institutions have begun to create case management positions on their campuses to better serve students and attempt to improve retention. Case management services on college campuses can serve to coordinate prevention, intervention, and supportive interventions on the campus and within the community (Shelesky, Weatherford, & Silbert, 2016). A coordinated and holistic assessment and referral process for college students who are faced with basic need insecurity may improve the retention and graduate rates among this population of at risk, vulnerable students.

At the macro level it may be important for institutions of higher education and social work faculty in particular, to consider adopting a syllabus statement that addresses basic need insecurity and where to seek support. It is common practice for faculty to include information in their syllabi regarding Title IX, tutoring services, counseling services, and disability services. Goldrick-Rab (2019) encourages this practice as a way to share information with students that increase awareness of the resources available to them. Furthermore, by having a syllabus statement, faculty may also have increased awareness of programs aimed to help struggling students and can direct students in their classes and advisees to seek out this support.

The implications of this study for social work leadership is also significant. There is a plethora of literature in our profession regarding the high levels of stress and burnout in part as a result of exposure to trauma of practicing social workers (Newell & Nelson-Gardell, 2014; Newcomb, 2017a). For social workers to be able to lead properly, there must be a climate in our agencies, organizations, and among each other, that promotes self-care and encourages help-seeking behavior when necessary. Sadly, beginning in college, social work students report being concerned about judgement and stigma if they disclose even a past treatment history or exposure to professional helpers (Newcomb, et. al., 2017a). In a profession whose guiding philosophies and values encourage help seeking behavior for clients, we need to be working to decrease the stigma and shame surrounding social workers who seek formal support.

At the policy level, it would be important for social workers to be involved in advocating for changes to polices and program that impact college students at the national level. For example, not all students qualify for financial aid or the amount of aid that is awarded is not enough to be able to cover the true cost of a college education (Dubick, et. al., 2016; Knol, et. al., 2018). Another example includes establishing clearer guidelines for colleges students who are eligible to receive SNAP benefits. In a review completed by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2018), of the 3.3 million college students who were eligible to receive SNAP, less than half participated in the program. Social workers are uniquely prepared to advocate for changes at the micro, mezzo and macro levels of practice. It may be important for social workers who are working in addressing the needs of college students to form a special interest group to explore the creation of an association in order to provide a platform to share information and resources in this area.

Limitations

While this study provided important insights into the lived experiences of undergraduate social work students who self-identified as struggling to meet basic needs, there are some limitations that must be addressed. First, all of the participants in the study identified as female so the lens through which this study is viewed does not represent the experiences of men or other-gendered individuals. Second, while there was some diversity present among the women in the study in terms of race and sexual orientation, the sample was small (N= 9) and is not representative of all undergraduate social work students. The study was conducted at a small, rural, public institution of higher education and the findings are specific to the experiences of the undergraduate social work students who participated. Students who attend public or private institutions in suburban and urban areas may have experiences that are dramatically different from the experiences of the students in this study.

The purpose of the study was to better understand the experiences of undergraduate social work students and their perceptions of how their success is impacted when they do not have what they need to be successful. Since the focus was on undergraduate social work students, another limitation is that the experiences of graduate social work students were not explored. The participants in this study were asked to contribute 5 hours in total for the study. They were asked to complete an individual meeting to review informed consent including the ethical requirements of using photographs in research. They were then required to take photographs on their own time between the first meeting with the researcher and the individual semi-structured in-depth interview which lasted between 45 minutes and 90 minutes. This time requirement may have served as a barrier in terms of recruitment since college students have many demands on their time including class, employment, club involvement, and studying or completing assignments. Reliability in qualitative research is possible through the use of

intercoder agreement (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Intercoder agreement happens when multiple coders analyze the transcription data and have high levels of agreement on the assigned codes. Intercoder agreement was not employed during this study and despite the researcher's attention to accuracy of transcription and use of analytical and reflective memos, this could limit the reliability of the findings.

Future Research

Future research in this area should continue to explore the experiences of college students and basic need insecurity from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective to gain additional knowledge about how these concerns impact student success given the limited data on this topic in the general college student population. While many studies have emerged since 2009 regarding food insecurity and the consequences for college students, there is limited understanding of the broader context when students do not have other needs met that interfere with their pursuit of a college degree.

For social work education, research that focuses on the experiences of both undergraduate and graduate social work students who struggle to meet their basic needs would be beneficial since this study focused solely on undergraduate social work students at a small, public university in a rural area. In this study, the number of adverse childhood experiences experienced by all nine participants was consistent with the findings in the literature regarding social work students having higher incidences of ACE events compared to non-social work majors (Branson, et. al., 2019). Future studies may want to explore the potential relationship between ACE events and basic need insecurity. With the increased focus on trauma informed care and practices, graduates at all levels of social work will be faced with clients and systems that have experienced trauma (Branson, et. al., 2019). For students who have experienced

traumatic events, there is opportunity to help them make connections to resources and strategies that will allow them to manage the complex challenges they may face in the field.

Another area that would be beneficial for social work education to explore is the role that advising plays, especially since students have identified the significance of this relationship when they feel that they have built trust. One of the core values of our profession is the value of human relationships and how relationships help to provide the platform for change to begin to occur (NASW, 2017). It might be important for the CSWE to consider expanding the charge to accredited social work programs regarding advising to include helping to guide some of the personal challenges that have been discussed in this study. Presently, in the implicit curriculum, social work programs must describe "academic and professional advising policies and procedures" (CSWE, 2015, p. 15). Students in this study spoke clearly about the importance of their relationship with their advisor and how they viewed their advisor as someone they could depend on to help guide them professionally. A few also shared about the emotional connection they had with their advisor as someone they felt they could share some of their personal struggles with in order to gain support and assistance. Again, to reiterate, while the social work faculty member is not in a role to provide clinical support to a student, they may be the person who can identify and refer students who are struggling to the appropriate offices or services.

Finally, it is imperative to stress that the role of the researcher in future studies must be considered. As discussed in the statement of positionality, I am not a faculty member and my role on campus is to support students in their journey to degree attainment. My personality is friendly and engaging and I believe this contributed greatly to the depth of information that was shared with me by the students who participated in the study. Researchers interested in replicating this study would want to consider both the role and personality of the researcher.

Conclusion

Understanding how basic need insecurity impacts student success is essential for anyone working in the higher education system. With concerns about retention and completion rates, universities and colleges need to consider ways to help support vulnerable students in a more comprehensive way that includes a focus on affordability, access to resources and support services beyond food pantries. As the cost of college continues to increase, it is important for administrators and educators, staff and support personnel to be fully engaged in advocating for resources that support students. For the social work field, it is perhaps even more pressing to begin to understand how the experiences of social work students who face challenges in meeting their basic needs is impacting their learning and overall preparation for working in the field upon graduation. Both Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) and Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001) inform us that in order to achieve higher order needs and for learning to occur, the foundational needs and knowledge must be mastered. For students who are struggling to meet their basic needs there are additional challenges and stressors that present significant barriers to their learning and well-being.

References

Anderson, L.W., & Krathwohl, D.R. (2001). A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing:

A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of educational objectives. New York: Longman.

Bazerghi, C., McKay, F., & Dunn, M. (2016). The Role of Food Banks in Addressing Food

Insecurity: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Community Health, 41*(4), 732–740.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s10900-015-0147-5

Branson, D. C., Radu, M. B., & Loving, J. D. (2019). Adverse Childhood Experiences Scores:

When Social Work Students and Trauma Mix. *Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work*,

24(1), 339.

Broton, K., & Goldrick-Rab, S. (2016). The Dark Side of College (Un)Affordability: Food and

Housing Insecurity in Higher Education. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*.

https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2016.1121081

Blundell, L., Mathews, M., Bowley, C., & Roebothan, B. (2019). Determining Student Food

Insecurity a Memorial University of Newfoundland. *Canadian Journal of Dietetic*

Practice & Research, 80(1), 14–21. https://doi.org/10.3148/cjdpr-2018-026

Bruening, M., Woerden, I. V., Todd, M., & Laska, M. N. (2018, 01). Hungry to learn: The

prevalence and effects of food insecurity on health behaviors and outcomes over time

among a diverse sample of university freshmen. *International Journal of Behavioral*

Nutrition and Physical Activity, 15(1). doi:10.1186/s12966-018-0647-7

Buch, K., Langley, S., Johnson, T., & Coleman, N. (2016). A University-Community Partnership

to Combat Food Insecurity among College Students. Partnerships, 7(1), 16–26. Retrieved

from

http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=122229907&site=eds-

live&scope=site

Cady, C. L. (2014). Food Insecurity as a Student Issue. *Journal of College and Character, 15*(4),

265–271. Retrieved from

http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1045931&site=eds-

live&scope=site

Chaparro, M. P., Zaghloul, S. S., Holck, P., & Dobbs, J. (2009). Food insecurity prevalence

among college students at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Public Health Nutrition,

12(11), 2097–2103. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1368980009990735

College and University Food Bank Alliance. (n.d.) "About Us." https://cufba.org/about-us/

Council on Social Work Education. (2008). Educational policy and accreditation standards.

Alexandria, VA: CSWE

Council on Social Work Education. (2015). Educational policy and accreditation

standards. Alexandria, VA: CSWE

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among

five approaches. SAGE.

Daly, M. E., & Sidell, N. L. (2013). Assessing Academic Advising: A Developmental

Approach. *Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work*, *18*, 37–49.

Decker, J.T., Constanting Brown, J.L., Ong, J., & Stiney-Ziskind, C.A. (2015). Mindfulness,

Compassion Fatigue, and Compassion Satisfaction among Social Work Interns. *Social

Work & Christianity, 42(1), 28-42.*

Dubick, J., Mathews, B., & Cady, C. (2016). Hunger on Campus: The Challenge of Food

Insecurity for College Students. https://studentsagainsthunger.org/wp-

content/uploads/2016/10/Hunger_On_Campus.pdf

Fao.org. (n.d.). SOFI 2018 - The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World. Retrieved

from http://www.fao.org/state-of-food-security-nutrition/en/

Farahbaksh, J., Ball, G. D. C., Farmer, A. P., Maximova, K., Hanbazaza, M., & Willows, N. D.

(2015). How do Student Clients of a University-based Food Bank Cope with Food

Insecurity? Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice & Research, 76(4), 200–203.

https://doi.org/10.3148/cjdpr-2015-020

Food. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/food/

Food Stamps in Pennsylvania (State). (n.d.). Retrieved from

https://statisticalatlas.com/state/Pennsylvania/Food-Stamps

Fox, R. (2013). The call to teach: Philosophy, process, and pragmatics of social work education.

CSWE Press.

Frank, L. (2019, 03). "Hungry for an Education": Prevalence and Outcomes of Food Insecurity

Among Students at a Primarily Undergraduate University in Rural Nova Scotia. *Canadian

Journal of Higher Education, 48*(2), 109-129. doi:10.7202/1057106ar

Gaines, A., Robb, C. A., Knol, L. L., & Sickler, S. (2014). Examining the role of financial

factors, resources and skills in predicting food security status among college students.

International Journal of Consumer Studies, 38(4), 374–384.

https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12110

Gallegos, D., Ramsey, R., & Ong, K. W. (2014). Food insecurity: Is it an issue among tertiary

students? Higher Education, 67(5), 497-510. doi:10.1007/s10734-013-9656-2

Giorgi, A. (1997). The theory, practice, and evaluation of the phenomenological method as a

qualitative research procedure. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 28(2), 235-

261.

Gobin, B. A., Teeroovengadum, V., Becceea, N. B., & Teeroovengadum, V. (2012).

Investigating into the Relationship between the Present Level of Tertiary Students' Needs

Relative to Maslow's Hierarchy: A Case Study at the University of Mauritius. *The*

International Journal of Learning: Annual Review, 18(11), 203-220. doi:10.18848/1447-

9494/cgp/v18i11/47813

Goldrick, R. S. (2018). Addressing Community College Completion Rates by Securing Students'

Basic Needs. New Directions for Community Colleges, 2018(184), 7–16.

https://doi.org/10.1002/cc.20323

Goldrick, R. S. (2019). Beyond the Food Pantry: Spreading the Word – Supporting students'

basic needs with a syllabus statement. Retrieved from https://hope4college.com/wp-

content/uploads/2019/06/SpreadingTheWord-3.pdf

Goldrick-Rab, S., Richardson, J., & Kinsley, P. (2018). Guide to Assessing Basic Needs

Insecurity in Higher Education. #Real College. The HOPE Center.

Goldrick-Rab, S., Coca, V., Baker-Smith, C., & Looker, E. (2019). City University of New York

#RealCollege Survey. The HOPE Center.

Goldrick-Rab, S., Baker-Smith, C., Coca, V., Looker, E., and Williams, T. (2019). College and

University Basic Needs Insecurity: A National #RealCollege Survey. The HOPE Center.

Henry, L. (2017). Understanding Food Insecurity Among College Students: Experience,

motivation, and local solutions. Annals of Anthropological Practice, 41(1), 6–19.

https://doi.org/10.1111/napa.12108

Hessenauer, S., & Guthrie, D. D. (2018). Advising in Social Work Education: Student and

Faculty Perceptions. Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work, 23(1), 11–30.

https://doi.org/10.18084/1084-7219.23.1.11

Hughes, R., Serebryanikova, I., Donaldson, K., & Leveritt, M. (2011). Student food insecurity:

The skeleton in the university closet. *Nutrition & Dietetics, 68*(1), 27-32.

doi:10.1111/j.1747-0080.2010.01496.x

Key Statistics & Graphics. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-

assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics/

Kirst-Ashman, K. K. (2013). Introduction to social work & social welfare. Cengage Learning.

Knol, L. L., Robb, C. A., McKinley, E. M., & Wood, M. (2018). Food Insecurity Is Related to

Financial Aid Debt Among College Students. *Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences,*

110(4), 35–41. https://doi.org/10.14307/JFCS110.4.35

Krathwohl, D.R. (2002). A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy: An Overview. Theory Into Practice,

41(4), 212. Retrieved from

http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.1477405&site=

eds-live&scope=site

LHU Fast Facts. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://lockhaven.edu/about/facts.html

Mannay, D. (2016). *Visual, narrative and creative research methods: Application, reflection and*

ethics. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Masia, B. B., Krathwohl, D. R., & Bloom, B. S. (1956). Taxonomy of educational objectives :

the classification of educational goals. New York : D. McKay Co., 1956-64. Retrieved from

http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat06287a&AN=lhup.9931239257

03567&site=eds-live&scope=site

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. Psychological Review, 50(4), 370–396.

https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346

Maslow, A. H. (1948). Journal of Personality, 16(4), 402–416. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-

6494.1948.tb02296.x

Maynard, M., Meyer, S. B., Perlman, C. M., & Kirkpatrick, S. I. (2018). Experiences of Food

Insecurity Among Undergraduate Students: "You Can't Starve Yourself Through School."

Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 48(2), 130–148. Retrieved from

http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=133511893&site=eds-

live&scope=site

Miles, R., McBeath, B., Brockett, S., & Sorenson, P. (2017). Prevalence and Predictors of Social

Work Student Food Insecurity. Journal of Social Work Education, 53(4), 651–663.

https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2017.1299062

National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (2017). Code of Ethics of the National

Association of Social Workers. Retrieved from:

https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English

Newcomb, M., Burton, J., & Edwards, N. (2017a). Service user or service provider? How social

work and human services students integrate dual identities. *Social Work Education*, *36*(6),

678–689.https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2017.1327574

Newcomb, M., Burton, J., & Edwards, N. (2017b). Childhood Adversity and Self-Care

Education for Undergraduate Social Work and Human Services Students. Journal of

Teaching in Social Work, 37(4), 337–352. https://doi.org/10.1080/08841233.2017.1345821

Newell, J. M., & Nelson-Gardell, D. (2014). A Competency-Based Approach to Teaching

Professional Self-Care: An Ethical Consideration for Social Work Educators. *Journal of

Social Work Education, 50(3), 427-439*. doi:10.1080/10437797.2014.917928

O'Neill, M., & Maguire, J. (2017). College Students Self-Reported Food Insecurity and

Correlations with Health and Academic Performance. Journal of Behavioral & Social

Sciences, 4(1), 34–40. Retrieved from http://proxy-

lhup.klnpa.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN

=123429542&site=eds-live&scope=site

Padgett, D. (2008). Qualitative methods in social work research: Challenges and rewards. Sage

Publications.

Paola, J., & DeBate, R. (2018). Employing Evaluation Research to Inform Campus Food Pantry

Policy. Health Behavior & Policy Review, 5(4), 83. Retrieved from http://proxy-

lhup.klnpa.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edb&AN

=130901496&site=eds-live&scope=site

Payne-Sturges, D. C., Tjaden, A., Caldeira, K. M., Vincent, K. B., & Arria, A. M. (2018).

Student Hunger on Campus: Food Insecurity Among College Students and Implications for

Academic Institutions. American Journal of Health Promotion, 32(2), 349–354. Retrieved

from

http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=s3h&AN=127589969&site=eds-

live&scope=site

Phillips, E., Mcdaniel, A., & Croft, A. (2018). Food Insecurity and Academic Disruption Among

College Students. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 55*(4), 353-372.

doi:10.1080/19496591.2018.1470003

Persistence & Retention (2018). (2018, August 04). Retrieved from

https://nscresearchcenter.org/snapshotreport33-first-year-persistence-and-retention/

Reynolds, E., Johnson, C., Jamieson, J. A., & Mawhinney, H. (2018). Prevalence and Correlates

of Food Insecurity among Students Attending a Small, Rural Canadian University.

Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice & Research, 79(3), 125–128.

https://doi.org/10.3148/cjdpr-2018-004

Shelesky, K., Weatherford, R. D., & Silbert, J. (2016). Responding to the Increased Needs of

College Students: A Case Study of Case Management. *Journal of College Student

Psychotherapy*, *30*(4), 284–299. https://doi.org/10.1080/87568225.2016.1219613

Svinicki, M. D., McKeachie, W. J. (2014). McKeachie's teaching tips: Strategies, research, and

theory for college and university teachers. Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

Thomas, J. T. (2016). Adverse Childhood Experiences Among MSW Students. Journal of

Teaching in Social Work, 36(3), 235. Retrieved from

https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edb&AN=115994830&site=eds-

live&scope=site

Twill, S. E., Bergdahl, J., & Fensler, R. (2016). Partnering to Build a Pantry: A University

Campus Responds to Student Food Insecurity. Journal of Poverty, 20(3), 340–358.

https://doi.org/10.1080/10875549.2015.1094775

US Census Bureau. (2019, April 16). Income and Poverty in the United States: 2017. Retrieved

from https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2018/demo/p60-263.html

U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Clinton County, Pennsylvania. (n.d.). Retrieved from

https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/clintoncountypennsylvania

U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2018). Food insecurity: Better information could help

eligible college students access federal food assistance benefits. (GAO Publication No. 19-

95). Washington, D.C.

Wagaman, M.A., Geiger, J.M., Shockley, C., & Segal, E.A. (2015). The role of empathy in

burnout, compassion satisfaction, and secondary traumatic stress among social workers. *Social Work, 60(3), 201-209.* doi:sw/swv014

Watson, T. D., Malan, H., Glik, D., & Martinez, S. M. (2017). College students identify university support for basic needs and life skills as key ingredient in addressing food insecurity on campus: Food insecurity is a persistent stressor for some students; food literacy may help improve student well-being. *California Agriculture, 71(3), 130–138.* https://doi.org/10.3733/ca.2017a0023

Wood, J. L., & Harris, F. (2018, 01). Experiences With "Acute" Food Insecurity Among College Students. Educational Researcher, 47(2), 142-145. doi:10.3102/0013189x17752928

Zein, A. E., Mathews, A., House, L., & Shelnutt, K. (2018, 08). Why Are Hungry College Students Not Seeking Help? Predictors of and Barriers to Using an On-Campus Food Pantry. *Nutrients, 10*(9), 1163. doi:10.3390/nu10091163

Appendix A

Recruitment Email

Dear Social Work Students,

You are being invited to participate in a study about being an undergraduate social work major at Lock Haven University. This study is being conducted by Amy Downes, Assistant Director of the Center for Excellence and Inclusion for her doctorate degree in social work through Kutztown University. *The purpose of the study is to better understand the experiences of social work students who struggle to make ends meet while trying to be successful in the classroom.*

To be able to participate you must be:

· Over the age of 18

· A Declared social work major

· Currently enrolled in at least 3 credits at LHU

· Self-identify as having struggled to meet your basic needs. Examples include:

      o Not having enough food to eat or knowing where your next meal will come from

      o Not having enough money to pay your bills

      o Being homeless or couch surfing with friends

      o Not having proper clothing for the season (no winter coat)

What the study involves:

· Participants must complete a 20-minute photo ethics training with Amy

· Participants must be willing to take photographs that help tell the story of their experience

· Participants must be willing to share their photographs during a 45 minute to an hour-long interview

· Participants must be willing to follow up with Amy once the interviews have been analyzed to make sure there is accuracy in interpretation

How your participation can help the social work profession:

· Sharing your story and shedding light on these issues may help to inform campus about better ways to support students

· Research is an important part of how social workers share information and advocate for

services and policies.

· You would be contributing to a knowledge base that is very limited in the social work field

Your participation in this study has no bearing on your academic standing, grades, or status at the University or within the Social Work Department. Your decision to participate in this study will not be disclosed to the social work faculty or staff. All efforts will be made to ensure that your confidentiality is protected. This study has IRB approval at both Kutztown University (IRB#07092019) and Lock Haven University (LHU Protocol FA19-05).

Should you want to participate in this study, or have questions about the study, please email Amy Downes at abd350@lockhaven.edu. She will set up individual meetings to explain the study further and to determine if you are eligible to participate. **If you are eligible and decide to participate in the study you will receive a $25 gift card to Walmart or Amazon at the completion of the study.**

Thank you for reading and considering this important project!

Amy Downes, Asst. Director

Center for Excellence & Inclusion

570-484-2305

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM

You are being invited to participate in a research study being conducted through Kutztown University. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before you decide whether or not you want to participate in the study. The University requires that you give your signed agreement if you decide to participate.

This study is being conducted by Amy Downes, MSW, LCSW, DSW Candidate

Title of Study:

The Impact of Basic Need Insecurity on Social Work Student Success

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this research study is to understand how basic need insecurity such as limited access to food, housing, and financial resources impacts social work student success in and outside of the classroom.

Procedures:

By agreeing to participate in this study, we would ask you to complete the following things:

1.   Meet individually with the researcher for 15-20 minutes to obtain information regarding the ethics of using photography in research

2.   Take photographs over the course of the next two weeks using your own smartphone camera or digital camera that show what it is like to struggle when you do not have what you need to be successful (examples: food, clothing, time to study due to work schedule or other commitments)

3.   Email 10 photographs to the researcher

4.   Participate in an individual interview with this researcher that will last from 45 minutes to an hour

5.   Follow up with the researcher after the interview to ensure the accuracy of the researcher's analysis and interpretation

Risks & Benefits of Being in the Study:

While the likelihood of risk to study participants is minimal and the researcher will work to ensure that risk is minimized, it is important to be aware of the following potential risks:

1.   As with any study, all efforts will be taken to protect your privacy and maintain your confidentiality but it cannot be guaranteed due to the possibility that photographs can potentially give away identifying information

2.   The use of photography in research increases the risk of revealing identifying information about you and your experiences. It is important that you consider this when deciding what photographs, you will share with the researcher for this study.

3.   Sharing about struggles regarding needs not being met may bring up a need for referrals to campus and community resources that could be of benefit to the participant such as counseling services, housing services, food pantries and financial support services. An information sheet will be provided to all participants about campus and community services.

   The benefits of participating in this study include:

> 1. Help to inform administrators, faculty and staff about better ways to help students who are struggling
>
> 2. While sharing your photographs could reveal identifying information, images are powerful and have the ability to enhance the understanding of your experience. This potential to increase understanding of your experience may help to improve student services on your campus.
>
> 3. Gain knowledge about resources that may benefit the participant
>
> 4. Be a part of contributing to a relatively new area of study in the social work field

Compensation:

Each participant will receive one $25 gift card to Walmart or Amazon as an incentive for participation in the study.

Confidentiality:

All records will be kept private and managed in a confidential manner. Documents that will be stored on a computer will be password protected. Any written documents or printed photographs will be stored in a locked file cabinet.

All individual interviews will be audio recorded for the sole purpose of the researcher to be able to transcribe and analyze the information contained in the interview. Full names and identifying information will not be disclosed.

This researcher is a mandated reporter which means that any information related to child abuse or neglect that is disclosed by study participants must be reported to the proper authorities. Furthermore, as a licensed social worker in Pennsylvania, the researcher would have to break confidentiality if a participant shared they had intention to harm themselves or someone else.

Photographs:

It is entirely up to each participant what photographs they take and share with the researcher. By consenting to participate in this study, you are agreeing to allow the researcher to use the photographs you share in research publications, professional conference presentations, and

trainings.

Since you own the rights to the photographs you take during this study, you can decide at any time to retract permission for one or all of the photos to be used even after completion of the study up until the point in time where photographs have been published.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There are no penalties for deciding not participating in this study or for deciding to stop participating in this study at any time.

Future Research Studies:

Identifiers might be removed from the identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens and that, after such removal, the information or biospecimens could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from you.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is:

Amy Downes, MSW, LCSW, DSW Candidate

Email: adown733@live.kutztown.edu

Phone: 570-484-2305

Dissertation Chair:

Dr. Juliana Svistova

Kutztown University of Pennsylvania

Assistant Professor, Social Work Department

Old Main 339, P.O. Box 730

Kutztown, PA 19530

610-683-4330

svistova@kutztown.edu

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later regarding the research study, you may contact the researcher listed above. If you have any questions or concerns about

the rights of research participants, please contact the IRB Committee at Kutztown University at 484-646-4167.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the information described above and have received a copy of this information. I have asked questions I had regarding the research study and have received answer to my satisfaction. I am 18 years of age or older and voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

Printed Name of Participant: _____

_____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Researcher Signature   Date

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix C

Photo-elicitation Ethic Agreement Form

Participant's Name: _____

In this study, you and other participants will be taking photographs about your experiences as a college student. The purpose of the photographs is to help you show others what it is like to be a college student who struggles to have everything they need to be able to be successful in school.

By signing this ethics form, you are agreeing to abide by the ethics of photo-elicitation as explained to you by this researcher, Amy Downes, MSW, LCSW, DSW Candidate. Please read each of the following statements and sign your initials next to each statement to confirm that you have read and understand and agree to each statement.

_____ I will not intrude into an individual's personal space both publicly or privately.

_____ I will not take any photographs that could embarrass, shame, or humiliate any other individual or groups.

_____ I will not place individuals in false light with my photographs.

_____ I will obtain the permission and signature from any individual represented in my photographs.

_____ I will not reveal the name (s) of any individuals in my photographs and will not use them when creating captions for my photographs or when discussing my photographs with the researcher.

By signing this photo-elicitation ethics agreement form, you are acknowledging that you have read, understand, and agree to respect the ethics and privacy of this research project. If you cannot follow these principles, you will not be able to participate.

_____

Printed name

_____   _____

Signature   Date

Appendix D

Directions for photographs

Thanks for agreeing to participate in the study! Here are a few reminders of the research questions to keep in mind when you are taking your pictures:

· Why you chose social work

· What success looks like for you

· How financial stress gets in the way of your success

· How your social life is impacted when you don't have everything you need

· How your academics are impacted when you don't have everything you need

· How you cope

· What gets in the way of being able to get what you need to be successful

Photography tips and tricks with a smartphone

1. Keep your photo simple

   a. Sometimes photos with too much in them take away from the message you are trying to capture

   b. Empty space in photography is called negative space and it is a great way to make the subject of your picture stand out

2. Take your picture from a lower angle

   a. This shows a different angle of what you are taking a picture of

3. Capture close up detail

   a. Close up pictures capture details of an image that has many details to it

   b. Close up shows patterns and textures and colors

4. Take silhouette photos

   a. A silhouette is a dark shape of an object taken against bright light

5. Use shadows in your pictures

6. Adjust the lighting or use the feature on your phone to gain or change lighting

7.   Keep your lens clean – dust and fingerprints can impact the quality of your picture

8.   Try to keep the phone as still as possible when taking the photo

        a.   Lean on a wall or other surface to steady your body

        b.   Use both hands to take the pictures

9.   If your phone has burst mode, don't be afraid to use it to capture the best image

10. Use filters

11. Have fun and be creative

Appendix E

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

1. What led you to choose social work as a major?
   a. Probe for motivation to help others?
   b. Probe for circumstances that led them to want to be a change agent (grew up poor, had a social worker in their life, negative experience such as bullying, racism etc.).
2. How do you define what it means to be a successful student?
3. Describe a time where your success as a student was impacted by not having some or all of your basic needs met?
   a. Probe for issues with housing, meals, books
   b. Probe for issues with class attendance, GPA, physical symptoms of hunger, anxiety or depression, academic probation
4. What are your reflections about how your academic success has been impacted as a result of your struggle with meeting your basic needs?
   a. Probe for poor grades, inability to remember or understand key concepts, problem solving problems
5. What are your reflections about how your social life has been impacted by your struggle with meeting your basic needs?
   a. Probe for issues with social connections to campus such as belonging to a club or organization, sports team, ability to engage in college experiences such as attending meals out off campus, for those 21 and over, going to the bar to have a drink with friends, attending programs in their residence halls
6. What are your top 3 financial stressors as a college student?
   a. Probe for issues about debt, having enough aid to cover tuition and other expenses, inability to qualify for loans
7. Can you share with me who else knew about your struggles with basic needs?
   a. If they told no-one, probe as to what got in the way of telling someone
   b. If they did tell someone, probe about the nature of relationship (family, staff, professor, another student)
   c. Then inquire about if it was helpful and what made it that way or if it was not, how come?
8. What resources or strategies did you use, if any, to cope with not having your basic needs met?
   a. Probe for SNAP, food pantry, attending events on campus where free food is provided, online dating, meal swipes from friends, employment, couch surfing, stealing food, borrowing or sharing textbooks
9. What barriers did you encounter when you tried to resolve the problems that were interfering with your success as a student?

       a.   Probe for eligibility barriers, experiencing shame, fear of stigma or being judged, non-student friendly staff or faculty

10.   What would you want your social work faculty and university administrators to know about your experiences as a social work student facing challenges in meeting your basic needs?

       a.   More aid, better support services, more awareness

Appendix F

KUTZTOWN UNIVERSITY GRADUATE STUDENT GRANT APPLICATION FORM

Student Name _Amy B. Downes_____   Date   ___10/17/19_____

Address 14 Oak Run Road, Lock Haven, PA 17745   Email:adown733@live.kutztown.edu

 Telephone Number _570-932-0850_____   Graduate Credits Completed   __42___

Program of Study   ___DSW_____

Faculty Member Supporting Application   ___Dr. Juliana Svistova_____

REQUEST IS FOR (*please check*)

          __X___   Research/Creative Project

          _____   Travel Expenses (*to present a paper at a professional conference*)

AMOUNT REQUESTED (*The maximum grant award for a single student proposal is $1,500. The maximum grant award for a joint proposal is $3,000. Reviewers may elect to fully fund, partially fund, or not fund a request.*) __$1125_____

TITLE OF RESEARCH, CREATIVE PROJECT, OR PAPER PRESENTATION

The Impact of Basic Need Insecurity on Social Work Student Success

 STUDENT STATEMENT

If a Graduate Student Grant is awarded, I agree to the following conditions:

·   Complete the research, creative project, or paper presentation as outlined in my proposal.

·   Submit a brief report and short biography at the completion of the research, creative project, or paper presentation.

·   If applicable, present the results of the research or creative project at a regional, national, or international conference.

·   Submit budget expenditures.

Student Signature   ___Amy B Downes_____   Date   ___11/6/19_____

Department Chair _____   Date   _____

ATTACH NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION TO THIS FORM *(refer to Graduate Student Grant Application Guidelines)*

Relevance & significance of the topic:

The purpose of this study is to gain better insight into the lived experiences of undergraduate social work students who struggle to make ends meet while trying to be successful in the classroom. This study is being undertaken for dissertation purposes by Amy Downes and has IRB approval at both KU (IRB#07092019) and Lock Haven University (Protocol FA19-05).

Basic need insecurity among college students has gained significant attention in the past few years among many disciplines. As administrators, faculty, and staff at institutions of higher education attempt to understand how to best help struggling students, what they are finding is a significant number of students who do not have enough food to eat, stable housing, or ability to afford the costs associated with college such as tuition, books, and supplies (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Cady, 2014; Dubick, Mathews, & Cady, 2016). The majority of studies are quantitative and there is only one study that specifically aims to understand how the experience of food and housing insecurity impacts future social work professionals (Miles, 2017). There are currently no qualitative studies in the social work field that are exploring this topic so the research will contribute to a body of knowledge that is lacking currently in the social work field.

Project description:

This study is qualitative research design with photo elicitation. The sample will be convenient, purposive, and criterion based as participants will need to meet certain criteria to participate. The goal is to recruit 10-15 students who self-identify as struggling to make ends meet while being a student. The project has support from the social work program director at LHU. Interested students will meet with the researcher to determine eligibility and to complete consent forms as well as a photo ethics training. Participants will have up to two weeks to take photographs that reflect their experience. Semi-structured individual interviews will be scheduled at a location of the participant's choosing once the two-week photograph taking period is over. A brief demographic questionnaire will also be given for study participants at the time of the individual interview. Given the information in the literature regarding at-risk student populations, it is imperative to collect some demographic data regarding age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, financial aid, GPA, meal plan and housing arrangements as well as employment status. Given the size of the social work program, it is very likely that 10-15 participants will be willing to participate and meet criteria.

Proposed budget:

Amount	Item

$ 375	Provide a one-time gift card to student participants that complete the study in the amount of $25 per student. (15 students @ $25 = $375)
$ 750	Cost of 25 hours of transcription service (30 dollars per hour 30 dollars X 25 hours = $750)
Total: $1,125	

Appendix G

Kutztown University

Institutional Review Board

Application for IRB Initial Review

Date Submitted: 9/17/19

Title of Study: The Impact of Basic Need Insecurity on Social Work Student Success

> **Researchers' Information** – All student applications and applications submitted by non-university personnel must have a Kutztown University advisor or sponsor.

Principal Investigator

Name of Investigator: Amy Downes

Please check one:

___Faculty   ___Administration/Staff

___Undergraduate student   _X__Graduate student

_X__Affiliation other than KU: Lock Haven University_____

 Department/Program/Affiliation: Doctoral of Social Work Program

E-mail: adown733@live.kutztown.edu

Phone: 570-484-2305 (work)

Fax: NA

Mailing Address: Lock Haven University

401 North Fairview Street

134 Ulmer Hall

Lock Haven, PA 17745

Date of when the IRB training was completed: June 25, 2017 Submit a copy of the certificate with this application. Applications will not be reviewed until training is verified.

Co-investigator(s) or Sponsor/Advisor (if applicable) (copy and paste this section as needed)

 1. Name: Dr. Juliana Svistova

Please check one:

_X__Faculty   ___Administration/Staff

___Undergraduate student   ___Graduate student

___Affiliation other than KU

Department/Program/Affiliation: Social Work Department, Dr. Juliana Svistova, Dissertation Chair

E-mail: svistova@kutztown.edu

Phone: 610-683-4330

Mailing Address: Old Main 339

                   PO Box 339

                   Kutztown, PA 19530

Date of when the IRB training was completed:_____01/22/2017_____ Submit a copy of the certificate with this application. Applications will not be reviewed until training is verified.

2. Name:

Please check one:

___Faculty   ___Administration/Staff

___Undergraduate student   ___Graduate student

___Affiliation other than KU

Department/Program/Affiliation:

E-mail:

Phone:

Mailing Address

Date of when the IRB training was completed:_____ Submit a copy of the certificate with this application. Applications will not be reviewed until training is verified.

Will there be Research Assistants (RA) involved in this project who will have direct contact with participants and/or identifiable data? RA must complete IRB training program.

___Yes   __X_No

List any other individuals who will assist or view data: N/A

 PROJECT TYPE AND FUNDING

Type of project:

___ Faculty/Staff project to be submitted for external funding

             -Funding institution or agency:

             -Date of grant submission:

        Include copies of grant applications with this application.

___ Faculty/Staff project NOT to be submitted for external funding

___ Master's thesis

___ Class project (provide course name and number:_____)

_X__ Other___Dissertation_____

How will this research be funded?

 ___ Non-funded research

_X__ Internally funded (department, college, university)

___ Externally funded (state, federal, private)

___ Corporate sponsor

___ Other, please describe_____

RESEARCH PROJECT DESCRIPTION

You must give the IRB enough information to enable them to make judgments regarding the status, approval or disapproval of your research. So it is very important that you answer each question and section carefully and completely. If a section or subpart does not apply to your research, please indicate this by putting "N/A" in that space. Use as much space as you need. If the IRB doesn't have enough information to make an adequate judgment, it will table your submission and request additional information. This can cause significant delays in the process.

Please use language and terminology that is understandable by people who are unfamiliar with your area of research.

A. Purpose and Significance of the Research Study

1. Clearly explain the goals and/or hypotheses of this study, including their significance.

> a.   The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of undergraduate social work students who have struggled to have their basic needs met while in college and how those struggles have impacted their success as a student. Examples of basic need struggles include not having enough money to purchase food or a meal plan, running out of food or meal swipes, insecure housing, and inability to purchase items related to school such as textbooks. Student success will be defined by the student but may include references to their GPA, ability to graduate on time, ability to pass classes while taking care of family or working full time.

> b.   As a helping profession, this study will help administrators, faculty, and staff to better understand the needs of students who struggle in order to potentially improve how student support services are offered.

> c.   There is only one study in the social work field regarding food insecurity and the impact on social work students in particular. This study will contribute to the gap in knowledge in social work education.

2. Give a brief description of the most recent relevant research in this area *(cite sources)* and how your goals relate.

> Meeting one's basic needs, that of food, shelter, and safety, is a fundamental human right that sadly, it not a reality for many members of society. For college students seeking opportunities through degree attainment, not having basic needs fulfilled bring about significant barriers toward degree completion. These barriers include complications in social connections, academic performance, and financial strain. When students encounter such challenges, their ability to be successful

may be compromised as their experience with hunger, anxiety, depression, and homelessness begin to increase (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Cady, 2014). When students fail to complete their degrees, they are in vulnerable positions, and there are implications that extend beyond the student's experience in college such as lowered earning potential, difficulty obtaining credit due to not being able to pay on loans, and limited job mobility (Dubick, Mathews, & Cady, 2016).

The most vulnerable students at risk for basic need insecurity include first generation, minority, low-income, LGBTQ, and single parent college students (Frank, 2019; Maynard, Mayer, Perlman, & Kirkpatrick, 2018). Rising costs of tuition, housing, and meal plans coupled with insufficient amounts of financial aid, leaves the door wide-open for students to experience insecurity related to basic needs such as food insecurity, housing insecurity, and lacking items that one would consider necessary to be successful in college such as textbooks (Gaines, Robb, Knol, & Sickler, 2014).

Social work students experiencing basic need insecurity may face additional challenges as they struggle to learn how to advocate for future clients who are faced with the same issues they are presently facing, often in silence. As a helping profession, social work students are educated and trained to address the needs of individuals experiencing poverty, discrimination, and marginalization (Kirst-Ashman, 2013). While the literature regarding food insecurity is growing, there is only one study that specifically examines the prevalence and implications of food insecurity and social work students (Miles, McBeath, Brockett, & Sorenson, 2017). This qualitative study aims to contribute to the social work profession's understanding regarding basic need insecurity and the impact on social work student success from the perspective of the student. The findings could potentially aid social work educators and administrators in advocating for services, programs, and policies that better serve social work students.

B. Participants in this Study

1.   Identify all participant groups (e.g. undergraduate students, teachers, elementary school students, administrators, other groups). Describe the basic characteristics of each group (including anticipated number of participants from each group, age range).

      a.   Undergraduate social work students at Lock Haven University

      b.   Over the age of 18

      c.   Seeking 10-15 participants from any age category

2.   Describe any specific requirements for including or excluding individuals from participation (e.g. particular gender or racial/ethnic background) and the rationale for the exclusion.

      a.   Inclusion criteria:

            i.   Participants must be a declared social work major

ii.   Participants must be currently enrolled in at least 3 credits at Lock Haven University

iii.   Participants must self-identify as having struggled with meeting their basic needs

b.   Exclusion criteria:

i.   Any participant who currently is employed by the researcher or in a program lead by the researcher will be excluded

3.   If this research involves vulnerable populations (e.g. minors, the persons with mental disability, persons whose competency might be questioned, prisoners, pregnant women, or any others whose ability to give a fully informed consent might be questioned), justify their inclusion.

a.   N/A

4.   Describe any relationship(s) between any researchers involved with this study and potential participants (e.g. professor-student, resident assistant-resident, supervisor-employee). Please note that existing relationships between a researcher and potential research participants create special concerns related to recruitment, informed consent and confidentiality of research data that must be addressed in subsequent sections of this protocol.

a.   The researcher is employed at the university where the study is being conducted and any student who is currently employed by the department where the researcher work or who is in a program led by the researcher will be excluded from participation in the study.

b.   As a part of the researcher's employment, she does connect students to resources that help to meet basic needs. If there were to be a social work student she is presently assisting, that student would also be excluded from participation in the study to avoid the dual relationship as a part of the Code of Ethics of the social work profession.

C. Identification and Recruitment of Potential Participants

Attach copies of ALL materials that will be used to recruit participants (e.g. letters, advertisements, flyers, posters, email scripts)

1.   Describe how you will gain access to potential participants, how participants will be contacted, and what information will be given during the recruitment process.

a.   Participants will be recruited via email from the social work department at the university where the study is being conducted. The current program director has agreed to send an email on behalf of the researcher to all currently enrolled undergraduate social work students. Potential participants will receive information about the purpose of the study, the risks and benefits, and be invited

to contact the researcher directly if interested to set up individual appointments to learn more about the study, complete consent forms, and receive ethics training regarding the taking and use of photographs.

2.   If participants will receive compensation in any way for their participation (e.g. money, course credit), indicate the type and the amount, the method of distribution of compensation and identify the source(s) of funds used for the compensation.

   a.   Participants will be provided the option of conducting the individual interviews during a meal time. Since the study participants may struggle with food insecurity, providing a meal is appropriate.

   b.   Participants who complete all stages in the study will each receive a $25 gift card to either Walmart or Amazon.

 3.   Will participants and/or data be accessed from a cooperating institution (e.g., school, university, business, agency)? If yes, a permission letter signed by an appropriate official (on the cooperating institution's letterhead) granting access to participants and/or data must be provided to the IRB committee.

   a.   Participants will be undergraduate social work students enrolled at Lock Haven University. As a sister school in the PASSHE system, once IRB approval is granted through Kutztown University, Lock Haven University's IRB will be able to review and approve the study. A letter of support from the Program Director of the Social Work Program is attached to this application.

 D. Interventions, Assessment Procedures and Other Sources of Data

   Attach copies of everything that is being used for the purposes of this study (e.g. tests, surveys, observation recording sheets, interview questions, laboratory reporting sheets, debriefing materials).

1.   Describe your procedure, including all testing, observations, interviewing, interventions, educational programs or laboratory procedures. Describe how data will be recorded (e.g. survey, online, video or audiotape, notes). Give approximate amount of time needed from subjects.

   a.   For this study there are 5 phases.

      i.   The first phase is the individual meeting where participants will review the purpose of the study, complete the consent forms, and the ethics training in the taking and utilization of photographs. (30 -45 minutes)

      ii.   The second phase involves the participants taking photographs to bring to their individual interview with the researcher. The photographs are not of the students but rather photographs that demonstrate their experience with basic need insecurity. The participants will have two weeks from their first meeting with the researcher to take their

photographs. Participants are asked to take as many photographs as they wish but to bring a minimum of 10 to their individual interview. (1.5 – 3 hours)

iii.   The third phase of the study is the individual interview with the researcher. Each interview will take approximately 45 minutes to an hour and a half to complete. The interviews will take place at a location determined by the participants. Interview locations will be comfortable, convenient and ensure the privacy of participants. During the interview, students will complete the brief demographic questionnaire and then be asked the questions from the interview guide and given the opportunity to share their photographs with the researcher. Each interview will be audio recorded (45 minutes – 1.5 hours).

iv.   The fourth phase is data analysis by the researcher.

v.   The fifth phase is a member checking phase where the researcher will meet again with each participant for 15-20 minutes to review the information and ensure that the interpretation of the researcher is what the participant intended to convey. (15 – 20 minutes)

vi.   The total estimated time for each participant is approximately 7 hours over the course of 3-4 months

2.   What data or information will be collected?

a.   The brief demographic form will be collected

b.   Participants will also be asked to share the photos they selected to show during their individual interviews via email with the researcher after the interview is completed

3.   If this study is using archival data (data that has already been collected for other purposes than this study that has been on file), describe the nature of the data archive. Explain which data is to be accessed for this study and how it will be accessed. If data are publicly available, state this. If not, explain how you will get access to the data and attach documentation that you have authorization to do so.

a.   N/A

4.   Is the research involving the collection and/or use of health (physical or psychological) data from a healthcare provider (hospital, physician's office, health departments, etc.)? If yes, you may need to follow the guidelines established by the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

a.   N/A

5.   If this study is a qualitative project that involves unstructured or semi-structured interviews

or observations, provide a detailed description of the nature and scope of these procedures. Include the purpose of the interviews or observations, where they will take place, by whom they will be conducted, expected length of time, type of information and general areas of information to be covered and sample questions and/or behaviors to be observed.

a. This study will include semi-structured individual interviews and photo elicitation. Photo elicitation can assist participants in the telling of their experiences as they can focus on the image and it's meaning as it pertains to the questions being asked. A brief demographic questionnaire will also be used.

b. The researcher will meet with study participants individually who express an interest in the study to determine that they meet the criteria, to review the consent forms, and to provide a brief ethics training regarding the taking of photographs and overview of the study. The individual meetings will take place at a time and location that is convenient, comfortable, and ensures privacy for the participant and should last no longer than 30-45 minutes.

c. After each participant has taken the photographs, the researcher will schedule the individual interviews. These will take place at a time and location convenient to the participant. Individual interviews should take between 45 minutes to an hour and a half depending on the participant. During the interview, the researcher will ask questions regarding what is means to them to be a successful student, how their academic, social and financial success has been impacted by not having the resources they needed, who knew about their struggles, and what resources they may have used to try to get their needs met. The students will use the photographs of their choosing to help tell the story of their lived experience. The interview guide is attached to this application.

6. Where will the study take place? (please be specific)

a. Lock Haven University

7. If deception is involved or if information will be withheld from participants, describe the type of deception or the information being withheld and explain why this is necessary. Describe your procedures for debriefing participants. Include a copy of the debriefing statement with this application.

a. N/A

E. Potential Risks to Participants and Procedures to Minimize These Risks

1. Discuss any physical, psychological, financial, social/economic or legal risks, or harm from breaches of confidentiality that might result from participation in this study and assess the likelihood and seriousness of these risks. Explain why it is necessary to expose participants to potential risks.

a. Confidentiality and privacy cannot be guaranteed if students choose to submit photographs that reveal identifying information

b.   The use of photography in research increases the risk of revealing identifying information about you and your experiences. It is important that you consider this when deciding what photographs, you will share with the researcher for this study.

c.   Sharing about struggles with basic needs may bring up a need for referrals to campus and community resources

2.   For each risk identified, describe actions that will be taken to minimize the risk.

a.   Participants will be reminded throughout the study about the ethics of using photographs in research and how the researcher intends to utilize the photographs (conference presentations, publications). Study participants are not expected to take photographs of themselves or other students where their identity would be revealed. Study participants will receive clear instructions regarding the taking of photographs to tell their story and not photographs of themselves or others.

b.   Consent will be reviewed with each participant at each point of contact throughout the study and participants will be reminded that at any point in the study, they can decide to withdraw consent or retract photographs with the exception of photographs that have already been published.

c.   An information sheet will be provided to all participants about campus and community services. If there is a specific issue raised, the researcher will direct participants to the appropriate referral options on the list.

F. Benefit/Risk Assessment

1.   What are the potential benefits of the research? (Please note – if participants will not benefit directly in any way from their participation, state this. Compensation, including course credit, is not considered a benefit.) Do benefits outweigh potential risks?

a.   The information in the study can help inform administrators, faculty and staff at colleges and universities about better ways to help struggling students

b.   Participants may gain knowledge and be connected to resources that can help them to be more successful

c.   Participants will be a part of contributing to a relatively new and scarce field of study in the social work field

2.   If benefits do not outweigh risks, explain why this project is justified.

a.   N/A

G. Procedures Used to Protect the Anonymity and/or Confidentiality of Participants

and Records Management

Records (including consents) must be maintained for as long as applicable regulations require.

1. Explain how data will be recorded (describe any coding procedure). Will anyone besides the principal investigator and co-investigators have access to the raw data or any other form of data (please describe)? How will data be reported if presented or published (particularly important – will identifying information be masked)?

> a. Individual interviews will be audio-recorded on a personal device and stored on a password protected device. All audio recordings will be transcribed using NVivo 12 and then uploaded on a password protected computer. All signed consent forms will be stored in a locked file cabinet. Any notes taken by the researcher will also be stored in the locked file cabinet or on the password protected computer. No one besides the principal and co-investigator will have access to the data.

> b. Photographs will be saved on a password protected computer. Any photograph that could reveal an individual's identity must have a signed consent form from the person in the photograph. Any photographs that do not have a signed consent form will be excluded from publication.

> c. Participant names will be changed in order to protect identity in any written report or publication or presentation. Participants will be asked to provide a pseudonym to be referred by.

2. Explain any limits to confidentiality (e.g. child abuse reporting laws, individuals besides the researchers who will have access to data).

> a. As a mandated reporter, any concerns involving child abuse will need to be reported to the proper authorities. Furthermore, if a participant discloses that they are of risk to themselves or others, confidentiality would be compromised as the researcher is a licensed clinical social worker.

3. If Internet or Web-based surveys are being used, describe procedures for ensuring that confidentiality is protected.

> a. N/A

4. How will records be stored during the study? What will happen to records at the conclusion of the study? (Please refer to the IRB website for policy and procedure on record retention.) What will happen to data at the conclusion of the study?

> a. All records will be maintained for at least 3 years after the completion of the study. Computerized records such as photographs, audio recordings and transcribed interview data will be secured on a password protected computer where the researcher is the only one who knows the password. Paper records will be stored in a locked filing cabinet owned by the researcher.

5. If audiotaping or videotaping is conducted, describe how tapes will be stored and what will happen to them at the conclusion of the study?

> a. Audiotapes will be stored on a password protected device that is owned by the researcher and will be maintained for at least 3 years per federal regulations.

6. Describe how records (e.g. consents, survey, tapes, notes) will be destroyed. If records will not be destroyed, please explain why not. Until records are destroyed, they must be kept in a secure place, accessed only by the investigator, co-investigators or sponsor/advisor.

> a. All audio recording and computerized data will be stored on a password protected computer that is only accessed by the researcher. Any paper records will be contained in a locked failing cabinet that belongs to the researcher. All records will be retained by the researcher for at least 3 years after the completion of the study.

7. Expected length of time for study to be completed (data collection and analysis)?

> a. 6 months

H. Informed consent - Attach consent and assent forms and/or script for oral explanation

(if any).

More information about what is required and templates of informed consent / assent are provided on the IRB website. All forms should be readable and must be presented in age and developmentally appropriate language.

1. Describe the process involved in obtaining informed consent (e.g. when, where, who, and how)

> a. Informed consent will be obtained from each participant for participation in the study as well as for the use of photographs. The consent forms will both be explained verbally to each participant during one-on-one meetings with the researcher. Each participant will be afforded time to ask questions or express any concerns they may have about their study and their decision to participate. Participants will be asked to sign both consent forms and copies of each form will be provided to them. Participants will be reminded that their participation in the study is voluntary and that they can decide to stop participating at any time without concerns of repercussion.

2. If subjects include members of vulnerable populations or are vulnerable because of their relationship with the researcher, explain what special procedures will be followed to ensure informed and voluntary consent.

> a. N/A

3. If potential participants are minors, describe procedures for obtaining their assent to research

and procedures for obtaining parental or guardian consent.

        a.   N/A

4.   If you believe your project requires a waiver or alteration of informed consent, or a waiver of the requirement to obtain a signed consent, you must request a waiver. Complete the appropriate form provided on the IRB website and attach it to the end of this application.

        a.   N/A

TYPES OF REVIEW

Please indicate which category you are applying for review. Please note that the IRB Committee will make the final determination for type of review. If applying for an exempt or expedited review, you must indicate the category number. The category numbers are located on the IRB website located at http://www2.kutztown.edu/about-ku/administrative-offices/grants-and-sponsored-projects/institutional-review-board.htm, under Types of Review.

_____Exempt Review (indicate category number 1 – 8) _____

X_____ Expedited Review (indicate category number 1 – 8) 2G_____

_____Full Review

SIGNATURES - All student applications and applications submitted by non-university personnel must have a Kutztown University advisor or sponsor.

The principal investigator, co-investigators and the advisor/sponsor must sign the application. By signing and submitting the application to the IRB, all parties listed agree that they have read and agree to the following statements.

I understand that I have responsibility for the protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects and the ethical conduct of this research project.

I agree to comply with all Kutztown University policies and procedures, applicable federal, state and local laws, and the ethical principles of my profession.

I have completed the required IRB training within the last three years.

I understand that if any revisions/changes are made in the project I must obtain IRB review and approval prior to implementation of changes.

I understand that IRB approval is only for one year (except exempt applications). If my research will continue beyond one year, I will file the yearly review form with the IRB prior to the expiration date. I understand that failure to file may result in termination of the project and require resubmission as a new project.

I will immediately report any adverse events or unanticipated problems to the IRB.

 I understand that no part of the proposed research described in this application may be carried out until I have received final approval from the IRB.

Additional statement for advisors/sponsors - I understand that I am the primary responsible party for legal and ethical performance of this project. I certify that I have read and approved this protocol and I agree to meet with the principal investigator(s) on a regular basis to review project progress and help resolve any problems which arise. I also certify that I will provide written approval of all revisions and additions to this protocol.

Principal investigator:

Amy Downes

Name (please print)

Please see attached signature page

Signature   Date

 Co-investigators (if applicable) (copy and paste additional signatures lines as needed):

Dr. Juliana Svistova

Name (please print)

Appendix H

Demographic Questionnaire

Participant Name: _____

Demographic Questions:

1. What is your current age? _____

2. What is your hometown? _____

3. Check all that apply: Are you a:

☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior

☐ Commuter student ☐ Transfer student

4. What is your race/ethnicity?

☐ Black/African American ☐ Asian

☐ American Indian/Alaska Native ☐ Hispanic/Latino

☐ Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander ☐ White

☐ Prefer to self-describe: _____

☐ Prefer not to answer

5. What is your relationship status?

☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Committed relationship

☐ Prefer to self-describe: _____

☐ Prefer not to answer

6.   What is your gender?

☐ Female   ☐ Male   ☐ Non-binary/ third gender

☐ Prefer to self-describe _____

☐ Prefer not to say

7.   What is your sexual orientation?

☐ Straight/Heterosexual   ☐ Gay or Lesbian   ☐ Bisexual

☐ Prefer to self-describe _____

☐ Prefer not to say

8.   How are you paying for college? Check ALL that apply:

☐ FAFSA   ☐ Parent Plus Loan   ☐ Personal Loan   ☐ Scholarship

☐ Pell Grant (Pennsylvania residents only)   ☐ Self-pay (parents/savings)

☐ Other – please describe _____

9.   Are you the first person in your immediate family to go to college?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

10.   Do you have a job?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If yes, how many hours per week do you work? _____

11.   What is your current GPA? _____

Appendix I

Code Book

Nodes

Name	Description	Files	References
1st generation	Used when student mentions they are the first in their family to go to college	3	5
Barriers to sharing struggle	Used when students share about what got in the way of them telling someone about their struggle	7	31
Barriers to success	Used when students describe things that get in the way for them about their success such as transportation, work, MH issues	9	80
Feeling disconnected from major	Used when students describe feeling disconnected from the major and peers in the major due to having to work or other interferences	1	3
Burden	Used when participants describe not wanting to bother or burden others with their problems or concerns	3	4
Commitment to family	Used when participants refer to the importance of their relationship with family	2	12
Coping	Used when students describe positive or negative coping strategies such as smoking, drinking, exercise	5	24
Credit cards	Used when students mentioned having and using or not using credit cards	5	9

Disappointing oneself	Used when students talk about the pressure they put on themselves to make it	1	1
Embarrassment	Used when students use the word to describe how they feel about people knowing about their struggle	3	5
Employment or Work	Used when participants mention employment or work	8	46
Family messages about help seeing	Used when participants talked about messages from family about seeking help for problems or concerns	2	4
Financial stressors	Used when students identified their top 3 financial stressors	9	89
Guilt	Used when participants describe feeling badly for having a need, asking for help	2	2
Helping others	Used when students refer to helping others, friends or family, sometimes before they do something for themselves	0	0
Hunger or lack of food	Used when participants talked about being hungry or not having food	4	10
Meal plans	Used when students refer to having or not having a meal plan	1	3
Issues with housing		2	9
Judgement	Used when participants describe feeling judged or being worried about judgement if they ask for help	3	5

Knew about their struggle	If someone knew, about their struggle who was it, if they didn't tell anyone, how come?	9	20
Mental health issues	Used if a participant discloses a MH diagnosis or mentions anxiety, depression etc as part of their struggle	6	17
Motivation to help	Used when described as reason for why they chose SW as a major	3	3
Pride	Used when participants use the term proud or pride to explain why the did not seek help	8	16
Prior exposure to helper	Used when participants shared they had previous experiences with helpers, positive or negative	6	10
Reasons they chose SW	Used when students describe why they chose SW as their major	9	17
Relationships with SW Advisor	Used when participants talked about their social work advisor	4	14
Resilience	Used when students describe how they keep moving forward in their journey or what motivates them to keep going. Also if the word is used.	2	6
SNAP	Represents Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also food stamps. Coded as SNAP or food stamps.	5	18
Strategies for coping with hunger	Used when students described how they coped with hunger, drinking water, borrowing from friends, getting swiped in to dining by friends	7	26

Stress	Used when participants mention stress as a student, stress from not having what they need	9	30
Success	How students define what it means to be successful	9	39
Balance	Used when students refer to having balance as a part of what it means to be successful as a student	2	4
Support from family	Used when participants mention support from family. Could be financial or emotional	7	19
Support from friends	Used when participants mentioned that they had support from friends that was helpful. Could be emotional or financial.	7	17
Support from professors	Used when students refer to their professors as helping	5	11
The Haven Cupboard	This is the food program on campus. Just started in October. Used when students reference it.	6	9
What they want faculty or admin to know about their struggle	Used when students describe what would be helpful or what faculty and administrators could do to be helpful	9	43
Institutional help	Used when the student references help from the institution such as scholarship	4	7