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# Resilience and Success of Graduated Undergraduates Who Experienced Homelessness During Their Undergraduate Years

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MSW, Baylor University, 2013

BSW, Texas A&M University, Central Texas, 2012


Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services


Walden University

May, 2022

Abstract

Approximately 9% of students who attend 4-year colleges and community colleges have experienced homelessness at some time during their undergraduate years. Researchers have primarily focused on the negative effects of homelessness of these students related to academic success. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to investigate the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency of graduated undergraduates as well as support systems they believed helped them overcome barriers to become academically successful. Resiliency theory was the theoretical framework for the study. Semistructured interviews were conducted with two women regarding their experiences. Data were analyzed using a combination of cross-case synthesis and pattern matching. The sample for this study had the unique perspective of being undocumented individuals as well as being homeless during their undergraduate years, yet they were able to graduate. Positive social supports that were outside of the university structure helped them overcome barriers to completing their undergraduate programs. This information could be used by higher education leaders to identify gaps in the supports offered through the institution and to inform their policies, practices, and support programs to increase positive outcomes for these undergraduate students.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. First and foremost, to my loving husband, who has been a constant source of support and encouragement, my CEO (Chief Encouraging Officer). To my mother, sister, and children for their love and endless authenticity.

Acknowledgments

First, giving honor to God, Who is the head of my life. As I continue to lean on the scripture "It is the Lord Who goes before you. He will be with you: He will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed" (Deuteronomy 31:8), however, this scripture is manifesting: "This is the Lord's doing; it [is] marvelous in our eyes" (Psalms 118:23). To my husband, who has been my rock through this entire process, I don't have the proper words to articulate how you have helped me or the space to annotate the many ways. I love you with all that I have and thank God for you being my best friend. Thank you to my mother and sister for your encouragement and strength. I love you both to the moon and back. To our children, I hope this dissertation is an example that leaves an indelible mark on each of you and encourages you to shoot past the sky as your limit.

I want to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Shari Jorissen, with whom I have been extremely blessed. I could not have been in better hands through this educational journey. Your professionalism, providing feedback promptly, and always being accessible is something I will never forget. To my other committee member, Dr. Barbara Benoliel, thank you for playing an integral role in supporting and guiding me as you provided your knowledge and expertise through this qualitative process. My mentor, Dr. Tameca Harris-Jackson, who was a calming presence during my times of being overwhelmed, thank you for making yourself easily accessible.

This educational marathon would not have been possible without each of you. Thank you for assisting me in producing a dissertation that I can be proud of in meeting this academic milestone.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Broton and Goldrick-Rab (2017) found that up to 14% of students attending 2-year higher education institutions experienced homelessness at least once, and 2% of 4-year college students reported that they had experienced homelessness when attending college. Homelessness during undergraduate college years appears to be due to three primary reasons: insufficient income (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2017; Kena et al., 2015), lack of affordable housing (Tsui et al., 2011), and/or conflict with family or parents (Sainthilaire, 2019). These circumstances can put undergraduate students into situations in which they cannot meet their basic needs, while negatively impacting their academic pursuits. Previous researchers have focused on the number of undergraduate students who have experienced homelessness (UGSEH; Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2017; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018) as well as the negative effects of homelessness on these students concerning their academic success (Hallett & Freas, 2018; Silva et al., 2017).

I did not find researchers who had studied what had contributed to the success(es) of those individuals who had graduated with a bachelor's degree even though they had experienced homelessness when they were undergraduate students. I attempted to understand the experiences that these individuals believed contributed to their success (graduation) when they experienced homelessness at some point during their undergraduate education. Chapter 1 includes a background of the research topic, the research problem, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. I also discuss the theoretical framework used in this study, the nature of the study, definitions of key terms,

assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and a description of the potential significance of the study.

## Background

Researchers have studied how homelessness when attending college can negatively impact the academic success of undergraduate students (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2017; Crutchfield, 2018; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019; Gupton, 2017; Hallett & Crutchfield, 2018; Opsal & Eman, 2018; Silva et al., 2017). UGSEH when attending college are 13 times more likely to fail courses and 11 times more likely to withdraw from courses/college or not register for more classes than undergraduates who are not homeless (Silva et al., 2017). The stress of housing insecurity is related to a decrease in the chances of degree completion and could negatively impact other elements of a college student's experience (Hallett & Crutchfield, 2018; Opsal & Eman, 2018). Researchers have discussed the increased stress levels that UGSEH may encounter that differ from their peers not experiencing homelessness, including family conflict, mental/physical trauma, and other educational issues (Gupton, 2017). These stressors are related to lowered retention for UGSEH (Crutchfield, 2018; Gupton, 2017). Societal attitudes toward the homeless are generally negative (Aberson & McVean, 2008), which also applies to higher education settings. There could be many forms of the stigma associated with experiencing homelessness, including feelings of exclusion (Lankenau, 1999).

Furthermore, students who have experienced homelessness while attending college have reported feeling invisible while on campus (Gupton, 2017). Some students had indicated that this level of invisibility has been beneficial because they could blend in

and avoid the feelings of stigmatization that occurred when others knew they were experiencing homelessness (Gupton, 2017). A downside of this invisibility is when these students need assistance, they may not know where to access support (Gupton, 2017). Mentoring is one possible solution addressing this feeling of invisibility by developing relationships between students who have experienced homelessness and adults in the higher education setting (Huang et al., 2018). Within college environments, students are not required to identify as homeless to college faculty and staff (Crutchfield, 2018; Hallett & Crutchfield, 2018).

Many UGSEH may hide their circumstances and be unwilling to discuss their difficulties with those who can help them, which may be due to the stigma associated with experiencing homelessness (Crutchfield, 2018; Gupton, 2017). UGSEH may be unfamiliar with the university's support structures available to them. In addition, they may be reluctant to ask a college advisor or instructor for help because they may not know how the individual may react to them disclosing their homelessness or may believe that they will experience repercussions (Gupton, 2017). An issue that can complicate the pursuit of support is that although some university staff members may be knowledgeable about supports for UGSEH, some may not be (Gupton, 2017). Despite the barriers created by homelessness, including the insufficient services provided by campuses, these institutions should ensure a level of educational services are provided for these students to continue pursuing their education (Hallett & Freas, 2018; Klitzman, 2018). Although homelessness has many challenges, some individuals are still successful (graduated) in their academic work despite this challenge.

**Problem Statement**

Homelessness was defined as lacking a regular, fixed, and adequate residency during nighttime hours, either temporary or long-term (National Center for Homeless Education, 2012). UGSEH are undergraduate students who have not had access to their residence at some point during their time attending a higher institution education (Paden, 2012). Approximately 9% of undergraduates who attend higher education institutions in the United States have experienced homelessness at least once during their undergraduate academic career (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018). Previous researchers have focused on the extent of the homelessness problem for students (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2017; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018) as well as the negative effects of homelessness on these students concerning their academic success (Hallett & Freas, 2018; Silva et al., 2017). Although these researchers have focused on the negative elements of being homeless, some individuals who experienced homelessness when they were undergraduates have been successful and attribute their success (graduation) to their resilience. For the purpose of this study, resiliency was defined as an individual's positive response to stressors (see Rutter, 1987) related to their successful (graduated) experiences despite adversities.

Although the aforementioned research regarding UGSEH at some point while attending college illuminated important findings, I did not find researchers who had studied the experiences of what contributed to the success(es) of those individuals who had graduated with a bachelor's degree even though they had experienced homelessness when they were undergraduate students. Given such, further research was warranted to

explore the experiences that led to the success (graduation) of students who experienced homelessness at some point during their undergraduate education so that this information could be used by higher education leadership to inform their policies, practices, and support programs to increase the positive outcomes for this group of current undergraduate students.

## Purpose of the Study

Although it is essential to understand the barriers UGSEH face when being homeless, it is also valuable to have an understanding of how some were able to be academically successful (Morales, 2008) despite being homeless to inform higher education leadership regarding how to assist current undergraduate students who are in similar situations. The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to investigate the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency of graduated UGSEH while they were enrolled as undergraduates. In addition, I explored what support systems they believed helped them overcome barriers to become academically successful (graduated).

## Research Questions

RQ1: What were the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency of college graduates who experienced homelessness when they were undergraduates that they believed helped them overcome barriers to academic success?

RQ2: What supports did college graduates who experienced homelessness when they were undergraduates believe helped them overcome barriers to being academically successful?

**Theoretical Foundation**

Resiliency theory was the theoretical framework for this study (see Zimmerman, 2013). Resiliency theory is different from resilience/resiliency. Rutter (1987) stated that resilience describes the positive tone of individual differences in response to stressors and adversity. Perry (2002) defined resilience as when faced with stressors, the individual's functioning is limited, and there is no significant negative disruption mentally. Other authors described the ways resilience has been discussed by healthy personality characteristics and positive outcomes that promote protective inner risk factors (Bonanno, 2012; Ledesma, 2014). Masten (2005) defined resilience as a class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes despite severe threats to an adaptation of development, and Ledesma (2014) defined resilience as the ability to bounce back from adversity, frustration, and misfortune. Survival, recovery, and thriving are concepts associated with resilience and describe the stage at which a person may be affected after facing adversity (Ledesma, 2014).

Some individuals being exposed (demonstrated resilience/resiliency) to risk still have the ability to become a healthy adult, the abstract framework of understanding and studying resiliency theory (Garmezy, 1991a; Masten et al., 2008; Rutter, 1987). A strengths-based approach has been compared to resiliency theory, which has transpired to offer an understanding of informing the intervention design for an individual's growth (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Zimmerman, 2013). Resiliency theory was used to explain how some individuals was able to overcome barriers while others were not when faced with similar situations (Zimmerman, 2013). A key component of resiliency theory is the

presence of risks and fundamental factors with the individual that help bring about a positive outcome, or reduce, or avoid an adverse issue (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005).

Resiliency theory focuses on the attitudes and approaches individuals take to confront and overcome barriers that may otherwise result in negative outcomes (Zimmerman, 2013) that may be enhanced by personality traits (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2018). By focusing the current study on the positive experiences students felt protected them, I sought to provide information that would inform interventions and programs, provide support, and encourage academic success (graduation) for current UGSEH (see Strolin-Goltzman et al., 2016). Resiliency theory was selected to better understand the needs of this population and how they use resiliency (see Strolin-Goltzman et al., 2016).

## Nature of the Study

I used a generic qualitative design to investigate the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency of graduated undergraduates who experienced homelessness while they were enrolled as undergraduates. In addition, I explored what support systems they believed helped them overcome barriers to become academically successful (graduated). A generic qualitative method is not guided by an explicit or established set of philosophical assumptions in the form of one of the known qualitative methodologies such as phenomenology, grounded theory, or ethnography (Caelli et al., 2003). According to Percy et al. (2015), the generic qualitative method can be used to investigate participants' interpretation of events that they experienced when other qualitative designs are not appropriate.

There are a few limitations associated with generic qualitative research methods that need to be considered. Kennedy (2016) stated that the generic qualitative research method lacks academic literature due to not being considered a traditional qualitative approach. A lack of commitment to a particular methodology could leave a new researcher without a clear starting point. In addition, limited theoretical research was the result of using a nonestablished method (Kahlke, 2018), which was viewed as a flaw. However, this can also be looked at as a possible gap in the literature that I addressed by providing an additional example of research conducted using the generic qualitative method.

The generic qualitative method provides the flexibility to focus on the outward observations of participants (Kennedy, 2016). This method afforded me the opportunity to explore the perspectives and experiences of graduated undergraduate students through interviews and investigate the internal goals and drives they perceived helped them overcome barriers to academic success (graduation) when they experienced homelessness. Percy et al. (2015) noted that a generic qualitative approach should be used to explore an individual's experiences and circumstances. Although I considered other qualitative methods, they were not appropriate for the current study. The phenomenological approach was not appropriate because it focuses on the lived experiences of individuals related to the phenomenon rather than the psychological opinion or physical description of the individual (see Patton, 2015; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

Grounded theory was a design also considered for this study. However, this design was not appropriate because a grounded theory combines concepts and hypotheses that have emerged from the data (see Glaser, 2016). The generic qualitative method was more suitable for this study because I examined the participants' subjective perceptions of the phenomenon without creating a theory to explain the experiences (see Percy et al., 2015). Data were collected through individual semistructured interviews related to the study's research questions (see Barriball & White, 1994). Purposeful, convenience, and snowball sampling were used to recruit 10–12 participants through Facebook groups, LinkedIn, and the Walden University Participant Pool. Participant inclusion criteria included individuals over 18 years of age who graduated from their undergraduate program and experienced homelessness while they were undergraduate students. I used Microsoft Excel to organize and analyze the data (see Meyer & Avery, 2009). I applied thematic inductive analysis to analyze data; I synthesized patterns, themes, and inferences as they emerged (see Percy et al., 2015).

## Definitions

*Academic success*: A positive or goal-meeting attainment of outcomes specific to educational experiences, which may include course grade(s), grade point average (GPA), graduation (graduated with a bachelor's degree), etc. (York et al., 2015).

*Homelessness*: Lacking a regular, fixed, and adequate residency during nighttime hours for at least one academic semester or quarter (National Center for Homeless Education, 2012).

*Resilience*: An individual's positive response to stressors related to their successful (graduated) experiences despite adversities (Rutter, 1987).

*Undergraduate students who experience homelessness (UGSEH)*: Students who did not have access to their residence at some point for at least one academic semester or quarter during their time as undergraduates attending a higher education institution (Paden, 2012).

## Assumptions

Qualitative researchers assume that participants' reflections of a lived experience are experienced uniquely and accurately conveyed (Hathaway, 1995). From the qualitative approach, the assumption is that the participant's role is to understand and comprehend the reality of their situation (Hathaway, 1995). One assumption I had for this study was the information provided by the participants would vary from other participants' knowledge (see Hathaway, 1995; H. Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Due to the interview being in a private setting, I assumed that the participants would answer all interview questions openly and honestly (see Guest et al., 2006; Patton, 2015). I asked the participants to provide personal information on a sensitive topic; therefore, the data the participants chose to disclose may have been limited.

Participants seemed to be comfortable providing insight into their experiences (see Sheparis et al., 2010) related to homelessness while they were undergraduate students. However, participants may have held back details they were uncomfortable discussing and may have chosen to divulge only the information they were comfortable sharing. Lastly, I assumed that the participants could sharply recall their experience (see

Hathaway, 1995) of being homeless as an undergraduate. Because the participants experienced homelessness, they may have forgotten the details or filled in the blanks of their memory with what they hoped would have happened, which Rosenquist (2012) defined as imagination.

## Scope and Delimitations

The scope of a study refers to the parameters under which the study will be conducted (Simon & Goes, 2013). The parameters of the current study included individuals who were over the age of 18 who had graduated from their undergraduate institution and experienced homelessness while they were undergraduate students. My primary focus was the experiences of these individuals when they were undergraduates. According to Simon and Goes (2013), the delimitations of a study are the boundaries that arise from limitations in the scope of a study. Purposeful, convenience, and snowballing sampling methods were used to recruit participants.

## Limitations

A potential challenge seemed to be the difficulty of finding individuals who graduated from their undergraduate program who experienced homelessness when they were undergraduate students because they may not have wanted to self-identify. However, because only those who had experienced these barriers and who were academically successful and graduated were included, this may have lowered the potential stigma of being homeless at some point because they were able to be academically successful (graduated). To address this limitation, I recruited participants using purposeful, convenience, and snowball sampling methods to widen the possibilities

of recruiting as many eligible individuals as possible (see Patton, 2015). A sampling

method will allow for collecting data that will be rich and in-depth information (Patton,

2015). I used probing questions during the interviews, which allowed the participants to

clarify any information they provided (see Price, 2003). Probing can provide participants

the opportunity to discuss clarifications of their answers or prevent participants from

straying off topic (Price, 2003).

## Significance

This information may be useful to higher education administrators and others who

provide support to current UGSEH by advocating for social change in helping to identify

the positive and protective factors among undergraduates who experienced homelessness

and provide an understanding of how they were able to be academically successful

(graduated) despite being homeless. The information gathered from this study may

facilitate dialogue between professionals to identify ways to develop more effective

programs and supports for current UGSEH. This information may also improve the

understanding of how the experiences of homelessness may impact present undergraduate

campus life in higher education, society, and families. This study may lead to positive

social change by providing a greater understanding of the problem, which may lead to

improving higher education, more effective programs, and supports for current UGSEH,

which could reduce the barriers to academic success (graduation).

## Summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the study. I discussed the background

literature to support the topic of the study. I also explored the need for the current study

through the problem statement and purpose of the study. In discussing the need for the

study, I identified the gap in current research. I attempted to fill this gap by exploring the

resilience and success (graduation) for UGSEH. I briefly addressed the theoretical

framework of the study and how the theory related to the research questions. I explained

how the study was conducted, including the method I used to recruit participants, collect

data, and analyze data. I also presented assumptions, delimitations, and the significance

of the study. Chapter 2 provides a detailed review of the literature related to the research

topic and includes a more detailed discussion of the theoretical lens that guided this

study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Many postsecondary institutions do not provide on-campus housing to undergraduate students resulting in fewer resources being available for those in need of housing support (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2017; Silva et al., 2017). Undergraduate students may struggle to find affordable housing near their campuses, and higher education federal and state aid awards may fall short in covering the cost of housing during undergraduate years (Crutchfield, 2018). Researchers have estimated that 9% of undergraduates who attend higher education institutions have experienced homelessness at least once during their undergraduate years (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018). Furthermore, 4.3% of undergraduate students reported not knowing whether they could continue to sleep in the same place they slept the previous night for the next 2 weeks (Silva et al., 2017).

Approximately 1% of undergraduate students have found themselves living in shelters, 11% in public housing, and 6% in Section 8 housing (Silva et al., 2017; Tsui et al., 2011). However, some undergraduate students may not report that they are homeless due to stigma, fear of repercussions, or the shame of being homeless (Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018; Geis, 2015; Hallett & Freas, 2018; Gupton, 2017; Moon Johnson, 2015; Ringer, 2015; Silva et al., 2017; Tierney & Hallett, 2012). UGSEH while attending higher education institutions have a wide range of unique barriers, needs, strengths, and aspirations that influence their participation in college (Crutchfield, 2018; Gupton, 2017; Hallett & Crutchfield, 2018; Hallett & Freas, 2018; Tierney et al., 2008). Previous researchers have focused on the extent of the homelessness problem for students (Broton

& Goldrick-Rab, 2017; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018) and the negative effects of homelessness on these students' academic success (Hallett & Freas, 2018; Silva et al., 2017). Policymakers have recognized that homelessness negatively impacts educational engagement and attainment (Hallett & Freas, 2018), however, universities are beginning to realize that homelessness has influenced the success of students (Crutchfield et al., 2016; Hallett & Freas, 2018).

Although it is essential to understand the barriers students face when being homeless while attending college, it was also valuable to know how they succeeded (graduated; Morales, 2008) despite being homeless to assist current undergraduate students who are in similar situations. My aim was to investigate the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency of graduated UGSEH while enrolled as undergraduates. In addition, I explored what support systems they believed helped them overcome barriers to become academically successful (graduated). Information in this chapter includes the search strategy used to locate relevant literature for this study, a discussion of the theoretical propositions of the selected theory, and a comprehensive review of previous research and related literature.

**Literature Search Strategy**

I conducted literature searches in discipline-specific library databases including human service, public policy, education, psychology, and social work. These included ProQuest Central, Academic Search Complete, Higher Education journals, Education journals, PsycINFO, Education Source, ERIC, and ScienceDirect. I also used SocINDEX with full text, Social Work Abstracts, and Google Scholar. The parameters of the search

covered 2009–2020 for literature that pertained to the problem. I used a date range of 1991 to 2020 for inquiries related to the study's theoretical framework.

The search was limited to peer-reviewed scholarly journals using critical search words *resilience AND college students* (21,395 results), *university students AND resilience* (265 results), *homeless AND higher education* (24,916 results), *resilience AND higher education* (819 results), *undergraduate AND homeless* (3,507 results), *resiliency theory* (66,898 results), *resilience* (126,674 results), *homeless university students* (16,870 results), and *homeless college students* (10,134 results).

I added subject and/or classification filters to the search term groups. Specifically, the filters English language materials, adulthood, and young adult were added to key search words, which reduced the results to *resilience AND college students* (358 results), *university students AND resilience* (265 results), *homeless AND higher education* (145 results), *resilience AND higher education* (396 results), *college students AND homeless* (89 results), *undergraduate AND homeless* (40 results), *resiliency theory* (164 results), *resilience AND undergraduate students* (208 results), and *resilience* (5,767 results).

**Theoretical Foundation**

Resiliency theory was used as the theoretical framework for this study. It is easy to confuse resiliency theory with resilience. Rutter (1987) stated that the term resilience describes the positive tone of individual differences in people's response to stressors and adversity. Some individuals being exposed (demonstrated resilience/resiliency) to risk still can become healthy adults, the abstract framework of understanding and studying resiliency theory (Garmezy, 1991a; Masten et al., 2008; Rutter, 1987). A strengths-based

approach had been compared to resiliency theory, which transpired to explain informing the intervention design of an individual's growth (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Zimmerman, 2013).

Perry (2002) defined resilience as when faced with stressors, the individual's functioning is limited, and there is no significant negative disruption mentally. Other authors described the ways resilience has been discussed by healthy personality characteristics and positive outcomes that promote protective inner risk factors (Bonanno, 2012; Ledesma, 2014). Masten (2005) defined resilience as a class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes despite severe threats to the adaptation of development, and Ledesma (2014) defined resilience as the ability to bounce back from adversity, frustration, and misfortune. Survival, recovery, and thriving are concepts associated with resilience and describe the stage at which a person may be after facing adversity (Ledesma, 2014).

Although the distinction between resilience and resiliency may not be necessary because both words have the same root, it is vital to distinguish resilience from a trait-based conception (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Fergus and Zimmerman (2005) stated that apprehension regarding resilience as a trait results from the blame being placed on the individual for not overcoming the risk or adversity. The conception of a trait ignores background factors; however, resiliency theory combines environmental circumstances and social influences (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). According to Zimmerman (2013), an individual's developmental trajectory could be disrupted by the outcome of poor health, problematic behaviors, and mental anguish that is the focus of resiliency theory.

Furthermore, the valuable framework of resiliency theory provided the experiences of how the positive development of an individual was encouraged (Zimmerman, 2013).

**Development of Resiliency Theory**

In the 19th century, scientists in diverse fields ranging from biology to psychoanalysis focused their attention on human adaptation and how certain individuals were successful while others were not (Masten & Narayan, 2012; Mayr, 1982). In the 1970s, some psychologists (Garmezy, 1971; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977) and psychiatrists (Kobasa, 1979) drew attention to the phenomenon of resilience in individuals at risk for mental health diseases and problems in development due to true-life circumstances (Masten, 2001). Several authors found that resiliency can be applied to the process of avoiding risk related to negative paths when exposed to traumatic events, coping successfully, and overcoming the negative consequences of the risky experiences (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Luthar et al., 2000; Masten & Powell, 2003). Information from people who did well while in the environment of risk or adversity might increase understanding of the development of mental health and what makes a difference in the lives of individuals at risk (Masten, 2001).

Resiliency was derived from the concept of an individual's ability to recover and maintain adaptive behavior during stressful events (Garmezy, 1991b). Moreover, all people who experience stressors and resilience are not viewed as brave individuals who may retreat compared to people when faced with similar situations (Garmezy, 1991b). The concept of resilience created a surge of research on protective factors, which signified a change in the focus from treating existing mental illness to promoting mental

health for everyone (Shean, 2015). Resiliency has been researched across many

disciplines such as psychology (Zimmerman, 2013), nursing (Jones, 1991; Zimmerman,

2013), and other social science (Zimmerman, 2013). An essential requirement of

resilience is the presence of risks and promotive factors that either help bring about a

positive outcome or reduce a negative outcome (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Tusaie

and Dyer (2004) and Ahern et al. (2006) described the roots of resiliency were

psychological aspects of coping and the physiological aspects of stressors. According to

Tusaie and Dyer, the groundwork was laid for resilience when studies revealed some

individuals improved due to hard times and were coping better than expected.

Tusaie and Dyer (2004) stated that resilience focuses on internal and

environmental factors and competencies that assist individuals in thriving from adversity.

Intrapersonal factors include cognitive factors such as optimism or confidence and

creativity (Simonton, 2000). Resilience is influenced by environmental factors such as a

sense of connectedness, perceived social support, or life events (Tusaie & Dyer, 2004).

Researchers have argued that resiliency may be a combination of traits that individuals

have instead of only one feature (Jacelon, 2008), may be defined as an outcome (Olsson

et al., 2003), or may be a process that individuals go through (Ahern et al., 2006; Olsson

et al., 2003). Resilience is more than social competence or positive mental health (Rutter,

2006) because if a risk exists, competence will be demonstrated, which results in

resilience (Shean, 2015). Luthar et al. (2000) stated that resilience is not a personal trait

but a product of the environmental circumstances.

The definition of what constitutes a protective factor for an individual may not always be clear and frequently depends on the individual and the adverse situation being experienced (Gardynik & McDonald, 2005). Resiliency cannot be identified at only one point or during a single outcome (Gardynik & McDonald, 2005). Some researchers have generated frameworks related to resiliency (Ahern et al., 2006; Rew & Horner, 2003). A concept of resiliency was viewed as a continuum of adaption or success (Ahern et al., 2006; Tusaie & Dyer, 2004). Haase et al. (1999) introduced the adolescent resilience model, which addressed protecting humans from harm by promoting individual protective factors such as coping, hope, spiritual perspective, family protective factors, and social protective factors. Werner (2004) and Gardynik and McDonald (2005) investigated the impact of a variety of biological and psychosocial risk factors as well as stressful life events of a multiethnic cohort of individuals. Masten (2001) described resiliency could result from the operation of the methods humans used to adapt to their environmental circumstances. If those adaptation methods used by individuals were functioning and thriving in a good direction, their development in the face of adversity could be substantial.

**Components of Resiliency Theory**

Resiliency theory supplies the theoretical support for studying and understanding why different individuals may obtain different outcomes when experiencing the same experiences (stressors; Masten et al., 2008; Rutter, 1987). The qualities (components) of resiliency can also be used to explain positive social and individual variables that interfere with or disrupt the potential for negative outcomes (Richardson & Waite, 2002).

Although some of the (components) qualities are external to the individual, many of the

(components) qualities related to resiliency are internal factors that are unique to each

individual (Richardson & Waite, 2002). There are some personality characteristics (traits)

that may reside with each college student, such as self-esteem (confidence), motivation,

optimism, and social factors (supports; Reynolds & Weigand, 2010). Previous

researchers have assessed factors related to resiliency while counseling individuals to

overcome adversity and have found that those with self-confidence and social skills are

inclined to have more positive outcomes when faced with stressors and/or barriers

(Zimmerman, 2013). Components of resiliency theory are shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Components of Resiliency Theory*
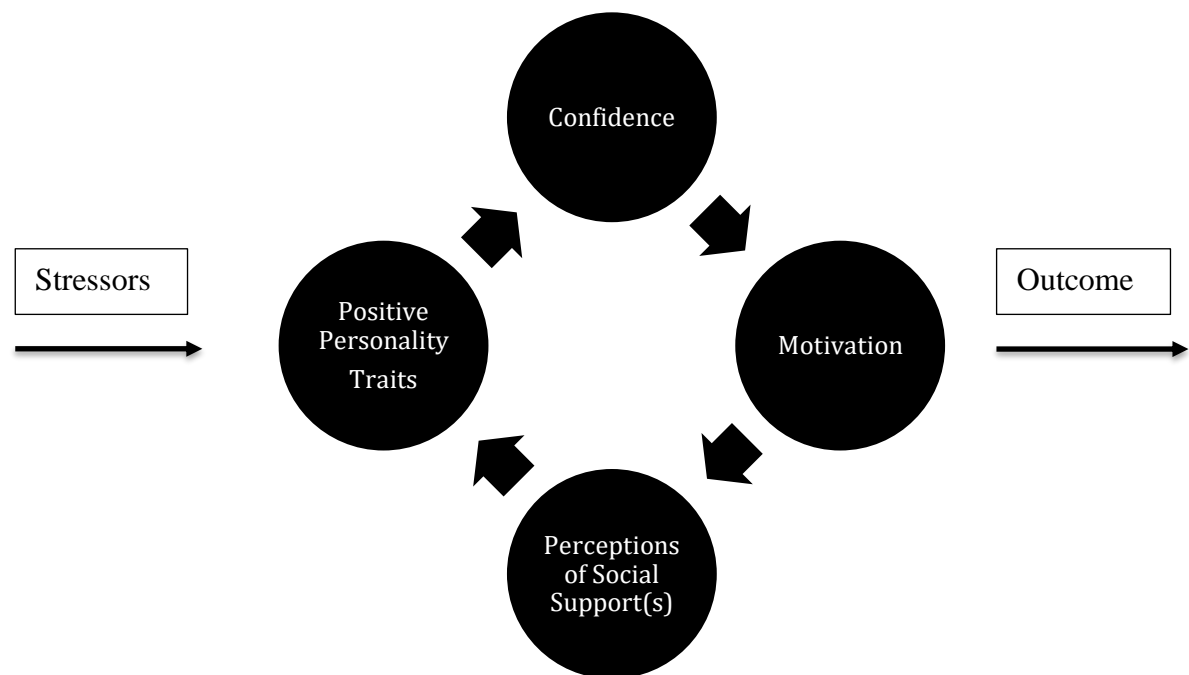
***Stressors***

A stressor among individuals is defined as an environmental event that takes the human system away from the prime attraction, resulting in lower effectiveness (Oken et al., 2015). According to Ross et al. (1999), the stressors of daily life among undergraduate students are reported more often than major life events, with interpersonal sources of stress being the most frequently reported. Some examples of stressors among college students are change in eating habits, new responsibilities, change in sleeping habits, increased workload, and vacations/breaks (Ross et al., 1999). According to D'Zurilla and Sheedy (1991), stress was a common characteristic, particularly for first-year college students. They may be adjusting to being away from home for the first time, maintaining a high level of academic achievement, and adjusting to a new social environment (Ross et al., 1999).

***Personality Traits***

Personality traits are defined as "the relatively enduring behaviors that reflect the tendency to respond to certain ways under certain circumstances" (Tellegen, 1991, as cited in Roberts, 2009, p. 140). Personality characteristics (traits), such as locus of control, motivation to achieve, hardiness, anxiety, and sensation seeking could influence how an individual reacts to stressors (Hanson et al., 1992). Furthermore, individuals demonstrate personality traits when they act on opportunities in the environment and bring about meaningful change (Bateman & Crant, 1993). According to Hanson et al. (1992), personality characteristics (traits) may be generated by the history of minor and major life events that could influence an individual's positive response to stressors.

*Confidence*

Stankov et al. (2012) found that confidence in an individual is a state of being assured concerning achieving a certain behavioral act. Moreover, if undergraduate students are confident in predicting their future success, they may also be likely to have confidence in evaluating other aspects of their lives (Lee & Durksen, 2018). Some examples of confidence for undergraduate students are perseverance, maintaining a healthy perception, believing in oneself, and a high level of self-efficacy (Sainthilaire, 2019). Pierceall and Keim (2007) found that individuals who had more confidence were less stressed with reaching their educational goals. The least confident students were the more stressed they were about obtaining their academic goals. However, some college students need to build their confidence when faced with stressors to embrace more challenging tasks (Sainthilaire, 2019). Stankov et al. (2014) described resilient individuals who had confidence may have reflected and evaluated past behavior.

*Motivation*

The definition of motivation is a collaboration of an individual's beliefs, personal goals, values, and emotions concerning a certain purpose (D'Lima et al., 2014). Debicki et al. (2016) spoke about how motivation could be related to goal orientation that may depend on a college student's perception of self. Ainley (2006) found that the core of motivation could involve general traits, particular beliefs, and ongoing goal setting, although an individual's current concerns may be affected by their response to a certain situation. Some researchers described motivation as directed to a feeling about oneself, satisfying one's psychological needs (Lee & Durksen, 2018), and how long they will be

able to sustain when confronted with adversity. Ainley (2006) explored the reaction to a newly learned task involving emotion of arousal, alertness, attention, and concentration that is the crucial variable of motivation. Motivation to achieve (Credé & Phillips, 2011) was found to have a role in the success of an undergraduate student. Debicki et al. (2016) described much of a college student's motivation and intrinsic satisfaction could determine whether they perceived themselves capable of successfully accomplishing a challenging task.

### Perceptions of Social Support/Outcomes

Hauken and Larsen (2019) defined social network support as the provision of various kinds of social support (emotional, information, economic and practical) that was given from a variety of sources to include (but not limited to) family members, friends, neighbors, community ties, and coworkers. The perception of social support buffered against the effects of stressors and may enhance well-being and coping (Calicchia & Graham, 2006). Undergraduate students who used effective coping strategies and their perception of social support available to them may have reported lower stressor levels and experienced more tremendous success (Calicchia & Graham, 2006). Perceived social support could limit the harmful impact of stress associated with undergraduate students from diverse populations (Alvan et al., 1996; Farrell & Langrehr, 2017). The outcomes for a college student were composed of a sense of personality traits, confidence in ability, motivation, and perceptions of social support.

**Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts**

I discussed several points during the literature review. The areas I examined were homelessness as defined, homelessness in higher education reasons that students who experience homelessness participate in college, factors related to academic success in college, negative effects of experiencing homelessness although attending college, and support for students in higher education experiencing homelessness. In conclusion, I disclosed the previously described subjects aimed at understanding the resiliency and success (graduation) of graduated undergraduates who experienced homelessness during their undergraduate years.

**Homelessness**

Homelessness is defined as lacking a regular, fixed, and adequate residency during nighttime hours, either temporary or long-term (National Center for Homeless Education, 2012). In the United States, on any given night, 549,928 people were homeless, and another 7 million were at risk because of unemployment and/or the increased housing costs (Henry et al., 2015; National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2016). Individuals experiencing homelessness have been found to have poorer health status compared to their housing counterparts (Baggett et al., 2010; Weber et al., 2018). They have been found to experience higher mortality rates and increased rates of communicable and non-communicable diseases (Schanzer et al., 2007). The rates of mental health disorders, including the use/abuse of drugs and alcohol, have also been higher amongst individuals experiencing homelessness when compared to the general population.

**Homelessness in Higher Education**

UGSEH are undergraduate students who have not had access to their residence at some point during their time attending a higher institution of education (Paden, 2012). The locations that the UGSEH may not had access to include having a place to reside during terms (such as residence halls) but not during academic breaks between terms and/or in the summer. Opsal and Eman (2018) found that there might be issues related to a lack of housing for undergraduate students in residence halls who were expected to vacate during breaks. Even this intermittent homelessness resulted in stressors (Opsal & Eman, 2018) that were negatively related to academic success.

A small number of educational researchers had focused on undergraduate students experiencing homelessness (Gupton, 2017), even though there had been increased media attention related to the issues facing these students academically (Gross, 2013; Gupton, 2017). In 2018, The Hope Center for College Community and Justice surveyed nearly 86,000 students who indicated homelessness affected 18% of respondents attending 2-year colleges and 14% of those attending four-year institutions (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019). However, these where only estimations as higher education institutions were not required to collect data on the housing status of students or report information to other agencies, so the true extent of the issue may be unknown (Gupton, 2017).

There were an estimated 58,000 youths reported experiencing homelessness while attending a higher education institution (Gupton, 2017; Henry et al., 2015). Approximately 9% of undergraduates who attend higher education institutions in the United States have experienced homelessness at some point during their undergraduate

years (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018). Researchers have found that 5.4% of students experience homelessness at the University of Massachusetts (Crutchfield, 2018; Silva et al., 2017), and at the City University of New York, 40% of students experience uncertainly concerning housing (Crutchfield, 2018; Tsui et al., 2011). In the California State University system, approximately 15% of students had experienced homelessness at some point since starting college (Crutchfield, 2018; Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018; Maguire et al., 2016).

There were three main reasons why some individuals experience homelessness although attending college: lack of sufficient income (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2017; Kena et al., 2015), lack of affordable housing (Tsui et al., 2011), and/or conflict with family or parents (Sainthilaire, 2019). Kena et al. (2015) reported the lack of sufficient income as 14% of undergraduate students in the lower socioeconomic status would complete a bachelor's or higher degree within eight-years of completing high school as compared to 29% of those from middle socioeconomic status and 60% of students from the most elevated socioeconomic status. One reason for the lack of sufficient income could be due to the increased price for college (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2017). For prospective students with the lowest annual income to attend college pay approximately 40% ($8,300) a year of their average income of $21,000 (Goldrick-Rab & Kendall, 2014). The middle-income families were also affected by the increased prices to attend higher learning that overextended their financial resources (Goldrick-Rab & Kendall, 2014). In addition, most college students will neglect meeting their basic needs first

although in school; these students will work, overextend their budgets, and rely on loans (Goldrick-Rab & Kendall, 2014).

Lack of affordable housing could also be an issue, according to Tsui et al. (2011), as 29% of undergraduate students reported that they did not have enough money to pay rent and/or utilities. According to Broton and Goldrick-Rab (2017), there were few resources for those in need of housing support, and rarely housing provided on-campus at community colleges. There were few college students (19%) who received public assistance with housing (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2017) and housing assistance programs that specifically restricted the eligibility for undergraduate students, which can be viewed as a nationwide problem for the lack of affordable housing (Sackett, 2015). Quaye and Harper (2015) indicated that undergraduate students who might have issues with family members might not ask their parents for the necessary information to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA). Some UGSEH became homeless due to family conflict. The instability of family homes may have caused some undergraduates to be forced out of their family homes, or they were willing to leave their family homes (Sainthilaire, 2019). Some UGSEH discovered a common theme was inadequate parental support and lack of a relationship with their parents (Sainthilaire, 2019).

**Reasons That Students Who Experience Homelessness Participate in College**

To youths experiencing homelessness, a college degree may seem impossible due to the numerous issues this population faces (Gupton, 2017). Researchers found that 85% of formerly homeless youths indicated they intended to enroll in college compared to 96% of undergraduates who never experienced homelessness (Gupton, 2017). Gupton

(2017) described when an individual experiencing homeless enters college, the opportunity for independent and stable living may be available. Many undergraduate students may enroll in postsecondary education due to the dependable structure and safety. Gupton (2017) described homelessness to be the experience of uncertainty concerning family structures and housing.

**Factors Related to Academic Success in College**

*Gender*

Male enrollments began to increase relative to female registrations in the 1930s. They soared directly following the end of World War II. A high point of gender imbalances in college attendance was reached in 1947 when undergraduate men outnumbered women 2.3 to 1 (Goldin et al., 2006). Female college enrollments began to pass male registration because, in the mid-1970s, young women took more courses that led to careers rather than jobs. Their elected majors were more invested than consumption-oriented (Goldin, 2005). In 2003 there were 1.35 females for every male who graduated from a four-year college and 1.30 females for every male undergraduate (Goldin et al., 2006).

Male students were less likely to persist in college, and those who did endure, earned fewer credits and lower grades than females who continued with their education (Conger & Long, 2008). Conger and Long (2008) reported disadvantages for males once they step on campus due to taking fewer credits and earning lower grades than females. Male students had lower high school grades upon college entry that explained why over 3-quarters of the gender differential in credits earned and GPA in the freshman year

(Conger & Long, 2008). During 2015-2017, males also graduated college at a lower rate than females; 1,643,558 males graduated with a bachelor's degree instead of 2,197,332 females (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

## *Race*

According to Light and Strayer (2002), when 100% of African Americans and Latin@s students attend college, there is a likelihood that only 1 quarter will graduate. Furthermore, when 1 quarter of Caucasian students attend college, there is a likelihood that 100% will graduate (Light & Strayer, 2002). As of 2014, 41% of Caucasians, 22% of African Americans, 63% of Asians, and 15% of Latin@ had a college degree (Goldsmith & Kurpius, 2018). Ninety percent of young Latin@s (16-25 years old) believed that a college education was important (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009), although Latin@s being less likely than Caucasians to attend a four-year college, attend on a full-time basis, and attend a university (Goldsmith & Kurpius, 2018; Pew Hispanic Center, 2013).

In postsecondary education, there are racial gaps in academic achievement (Kao & Thompson, 2003). Fletcher and Tienda (2010) reported that college students had some postsecondary achievement gaps for selected institutions with an admissions criterion and were designated to identify applicants who were most likely to succeed with their academics. There was a substantial race difference in GPA and college persistence for college students (Fletcher & Tienda, 2010). One explanation for race disparities in college performance declared that the benefits from distinct college environments were not equal for minority and nonminority students (Fletcher & Tienda, 2010). Kirby et al. (2007) described there were different predictors of GPA for other ethnic groups.

*Socioeconomic Status*

According to Olivérez and Tierney (2005), a lack of financial resources to pay for higher education and information about financial aid for undergraduate students resulted in low participation. College students who received scholarships may graduate with a higher GPA than those who do not receive scholarships (Murdock et al., 1995). Students from high income families were more likely than low-income students to be retained in college (Braunstein et al., 2000). For minority students' socioeconomic status may be significant (Kirby et al., 2007), thereby influencing their performance. Furr and Elling (2002) found that African American students who had fewer financial resources and worked longer hours were more likely to drop out of college. Although this may be interpreted as low-income students lacking the drive necessary to persist to graduate, Baum et al. (2013) reported that the reason these students were graduating at low rates was due to lack of funding. Fewer low-income families could pay for college independently without financial assistance in the modes of grants, work-study, loans, or scholarships (Olivérez & Tierney, 2005).

"The rising costs of a college education, the growing socioeconomic diversity of student population, student's escalating lifestyle expectations, perhaps shifting attitudes among parent about paying for their children's education has increased to college students working" (King, 1999, p.17). Several authors concluded that most college students would work while attending college (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003; Wood et al., 2016), which affected their academic success (McMillion, 2005). Some students would strive to balance their academic lives

with other commitments while acclimating to the campus environment (Wood et al., 2016). However, they found that employment was perceived as a negative factor in their academics when they had to work to pay for their educational expenses (Wood et al., 2016).

Crutchfield (2018) described a factor such as the cost of housing contributed to persistence in college for UGSEH. Some students have struggled to find affordable housing near their campus, and federal and states, along with higher institutional financial aid, may have fallen short with the cost of the entire higher education experience, including housing (Crutchfield, 2018). Sackett et al. (2016) pointed out that lower-income students might be at a higher risk for uncertainly concerning housing (Crutchfield, 2018). UGSEH and financial aid administrators negatively perceive access to higher education because the financial administrators require an extensive justification to prove homeless status and undergoing verification procedure, which creates barriers to financial aid and is not required by law (Crutchfield, 2018; Crutchfield et al., 2016).

### *Personality /Motivation/Resilience*

Personality traits are defined as behavior tendencies from individuals such as thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that were interdependent and overlapping, resulting in responding a certain way under particular circumstances (Roberts, 2009). This non-cognitive ability of an individual, according to Laidra et al. (2007), predicted positive academic success independent of their intellect. In student's achievement, personality traits explain a unique amount of variance in college (De Raad & Schouwenburg, 1996; Laidra et al., 2007) and have been shown to relate positively to academic success

(Caprara et al., 2011). According to Schweinle and Helming (2011), college students'
goals and ability levels for a challenging task may vary according to their experience and
motivation. When college students considered factors such as their environmental
circumstances and understand themselves, this may be the beginning of motivation,
which Petty (2014) described as a motivational factor.

However, Petty (2014) declared that not all college students were motivated by
their exact needs and desires, which was described as no remedy for motivating this
population. Nevertheless, Goldsmith and Kurpius (2018) described one factor of a
college student's motivation and improving their academic success might be linked to the
involvement of a parent. Resilience could be viewed as aspirations and academic success,
represented by meaningful accomplishments for UGSEH, who may rise above multiple
barriers to attain them, and these individuals may be considered academically resilient.
Approximately 186,000 youths were in shared housing at any time, while 1.6 million
young people experienced homelessness each year (The National Center on Family
Homelessness for Every Child a Chance, 2011; U. S. General Accounting Office, 1989).
The institutional stability and opportunities for UGSEH assisted in building resiliency
(Gupton, 2017). UGSEH furtherly extended their ability for resilience when they engaged
in curricular and co-curricular occasions (Gupton, 2017).

***First-Year Experience/Perceived Social Support***

Hsiao (1992) defined a first-generation student as the first individual in a family
that attended college. However, many authors described a first-generation student as
someone whose parents were unsuccessful in obtaining a college degree, which is the

definition most widely used (Petty, 2014), and whose parents have limited experience in higher education (McConnell, 2000). According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (1998b), nearly 30% of 1989-1990 first-generation students enrolled in postsecondary institutions left college before the beginning of their 2-year. Engle and Tinto (2008) described in postsecondary institutions compared to their peers; first-generation students were four times likewise inclined to exit without a degree. A first-generation student's academic success and college completion provided many advantages and disadvantages (Petty, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1998a).

Some challenges for first-generational students are when they are forced to function in multiple roles while attempting to attend college, and parents and/or close relatives may not be equipped to provide the information required for college, which could be a disadvantaged for the first-generational students' academic success and college completion (Petty, 2014; Thayer, 2000). In addition, other disadvantages for first-generation students included they were employed, had children, were less likely involved in college events, prone to be older, attended college part-time, and were married (Petty, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1998a). According to Gupton (2017), the factor of perceived social support is how the essential ties to social supports may be in operated and make it problematic for some undergraduates who experience homelessness to construct new trusting relationships with the departure from immediate family, whether by force or choice.

**Negative Effects of Experiencing Homelessness While Attending College**

***Retention/Graduation/Student Debt***

Numerous researchers have focused on the heightened levels of stress that UGSEH may encounter, including physical or mental trauma, family conflict, and developmental or other educational challenges (Gupton, 2017). These stressors were related to lowered retention for UGSEH (Crutchfield, 2018; Gupton, 2017). UGSEH when attending colleges are 13 times more likely to fail courses and 11 times more likely to withdraw from courses/college or not register for more classes than undergraduates who are not homeless (Silva et al., 2017). Student debt for the UGSEH population in the United States is largely tied to poverty and economic hardship (Gupton, 2017). The manifestation of poverty on college campuses and the limitations of financial aid programs reduces students' opportunities to attain a degree (Ringer, 2015). Similar issues were indicated by other UGSEH who stated having to work while attending college and their ability to earn an income were negatively related to success (Pinto & Mansfield, 2006).

***Invisibility***

Students who had experienced homelessness with attending college had reported feeling invisible while on campus (Gupton, 2017). Some students indicated that this level of invisibility had been beneficial because they blended in and avoided the feelings of stigmatization that occurred when others knew they were experiencing homelessness. A downside of this invisibility could be when these students need assistance, they may not know where to access support (Gupton, 2017). The lack of support from family members

and insufficient services provided by campuses resulted in the students who experience

homelessness were less inclined to view college as a viable option (Klitzman, 2018),

thereby contributing to invisibility. A mentoring component that focused on developing

relationships between students who have experienced homelessness with other adults in a

college setting (Huang et al., 2018) may address the invisibility. Having the support of an

adult related to the overall academic performance and independent living skills for a

student experiencing homelessness (Huang et al., 2018) may improve invisibility.

**Support for Higher Education Students Experiencing Homelessness**

Within college environments, students are not required to identify as homeless to

college faculty and staff (Crutchfield, 2018; Crutchfield et al., 2016; Hallett &

Crutchfield, 2018). Many UGSEH may hide their circumstances and be unwilling to

discuss their difficulties with those who can help them, which may be due to the stigma

associated with experiencing homelessness (Crutchfield, 2018; Gupton, 2017). UGSEH

may be unfamiliar with the university's support structures available to them. In addition,

they may be reluctant to ask a college advisor or instructor for help because they may not

know how the individual may react to them disclosing their homelessness or may believe

that they will experience repercussions (Gupton, 2017). An issue that can complicate the

pursuit of support is that although university staff members may be knowledgeable about

supports for UGSEH, some may not be (Gupton, 2017). This could result in UGSEH

disclosing their homelessness status to more individuals than they feel comfortable with

to get access to support services. This may be a risk that UGSEH may not take.

Some authors focused on institutions being aware and responding to the needs of students whose housing was uncertain; however, other researchers suggested that institutions may often had limited capacity to serve this population best (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2017; Crutchfield, 2018). These researchers found the need for campus programs development and services for some UGSEH; however, there may not be an exploration of the barriers or supports outside of college environments (Crutchfield, 2018). Gupton (2017) suggested that there could be a need for more work on institutional support for UGSEH. Hallett and Crutchfield (2018) indicated that postsecondary institutions might need to consider ways to provide a holistic approach that included counseling and year-round housing for this population. Some colleges may be able to create programs designed to support certain academic, psychosocial, and mental health needs of some UGSEH while conducting outreach to local nonprofits that worked with homeless individuals (Gupton, 2017).

### On- & Off-Campus Resources

More colleges now provide resources for UGSEH because more college campuses have recognized the growing problem (Affordable Colleges, 2020). Kennesaw State University's Campus Awareness Resource and Empowerment Services (CARES) provides year-round housing, one-to-one case management support, scholarships, and temporary housing to assist students who previously experienced homelessness (Kennesaw State University, n.d.). However, if a postsecondary institution does not provide year-round housing, the off-campus service support department could identify subsidized or affordable housing options near campus (Affordable Colleges, 2020). As

homelessness amongst individuals continues to expand, some cities have taken matters into their own hands and created resource centers such as the YMCA's Safe Place Services that offers a place for UGSEH at-risk of becoming homeless a place to stay when they are in crisis, and someone they can trust, or that will listen to them (YMCA Safe Places Services, n.d.). Some colleges offer school-sponsored trips that focus on community service during summer and winter breaks, and housing is provided on these trips (Affordable Colleges, 2020). Some colleges allowed housing to be used by fraternities and sororities to remain open for UGSEH during school breaks (Affordable Colleges, 2020).

### *Online Resources*

Sublet.com may be available to some UGSEH. UGSEH could search by prices, set a price cap, and respond to an apartment for lease ads to obtain cheap apartments; however, these services are only available in particular states, regions, and cities (Affordable Colleges, 2020). The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development offers important links, publications, and resources as an element of its Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAP) that could inform and assist some UGSEH with finding housing (HUD Exchange, n.d.). SNAP supports the nationwide commitment to ending homelessness by providing funding opportunities to nonprofit organizations and State and local governments to quickly rehouse individuals experiencing homelessness (HUD Exchange, n.d.).

**Summary and Conclusions**

Approximately 9% of undergraduates who attend higher education institutions have experienced homelessness at least once during their undergraduate years (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018). Approximately 1% of undergraduate students have found themselves living in shelters, 11% in public housing, and 6% in Section 8 housing (Silva et al., 2017; Tsui et al., 2011). UGSEH although attending higher education institutions have a wide range of unique barriers, needs, strengths, and aspirations that influence their participation in college (Crutchfield, 2018; Gupton, 2017; Hallett & Crutchfield, 2018; Hallett & Freas, 2018; Tierney et al., 2008). Previous researchers focused on the extent of the homelessness problem for students (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2017; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018) as well as the negative effects of homelessness on these students concerning their academic success (Hallett & Freas, 2018; Silva et al., 2017).

Although this research outlines the negative effect, some have been successful (graduated) and even attribute their success (graduation) to their resilience. The concept of resiliency was used in many different ways, and resiliency was defined as an individual's response to stressors and adversity that were generally seen to be positive in nature and related to the individual still experiencing success despite the negative experiences (Rutter, 1987). Although the aforementioned research regarding UGSEH at some point while attending college illuminated important findings, I did not find researchers who had studied with the experiences of what contributed to the success(es)

of those individuals who had graduated with a bachelor's degree even though they had

experienced homelessness when they were undergraduate students.

Given such, further research was warranted to explore the experiences that have

led to the success (graduation) of students who experience homelessness at some point

during their undergraduate education so that this information could be used by higher

education leaders to inform their policies, practices, and support programs to increase

positive outcomes for this group of current undergraduate students who are with similar

situations. Chapter 3, I discussed the methodology used to examine the experiences for

UGSEH, provided an outline of the procedures used to carry out this study, and included

the theoretical framework to support the design in the outlined details. Also, I illustrated

the challenges related to the validity and ethical procedures conducted in this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Undergraduate students may struggle to find affordable housing near their campus, and higher education federal and state aid awards may fall short in covering the cost of housing during undergraduate years (Crutchfield, 2018). Approximately 1% of undergraduate students have found themselves living in shelters, 11% in public housing, and 6% in Section 8 housing (Silva et al., 2017; Tsui et al., 2011). Furthermore, 4.3% of undergraduate students reported not knowing whether they could continue to sleep in the same place they slept the previous night for the next 2 weeks (Silva et al., 2017). Although it was essential to understand the barriers UGSEH faced when being homeless, it was also valuable to know how some could be academically successful (graduate) despite being homeless to inform higher education leadership regarding how to assist other undergraduate students in similar situations.

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to investigate the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency of graduated undergraduates who experienced homelessness while they were enrolled as undergraduates. In addition, I explored what support systems they believed helped them overcome barriers to become academically successful (graduated). The areas discussed in this chapter include the research design rationale, role of a researcher, methodology, and trustworthiness.

**Research Design and Rationale**

The nature of this study was qualitative, and it focused on exploring the experiences of graduated UGSEH. Two research questions guided this study: (a) What were the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency of college graduates who

experienced homelessness when they were undergraduates that they believed help them overcome barriers to academic success? (b) What supports did college graduates who experienced homelessness when they were undergraduates believe helped them overcome barriers to being academically successful?

In this study, I used a generic qualitative method. A generic qualitative method is not guided by an explicit or established set of philosophical assumptions in the form of one of the known qualitative methodologies such as phenomenology, grounded theory, or ethnography (Caelli et al., 2003). According to Percy et al. (2015), a generic qualitative method can be used to investigate participants' interpretation of events that they experienced when other qualitative designs are not appropriate. There are also a few limitations associated with the generic qualitative method. Kennedy (2016) described the generic qualitative method lacked academic literature due to not being considered a traditional qualitative approach and the lack of commitment to a particular methodology, which could leave a new researcher without a clear starting point.

There are several reasons why I selected a generic qualitative approach. The generic qualitative method provides flexibility to focus on the outward observations of participants (Kennedy, 2016). Moreover, this method offers the ability to investigate the interpretation of events that participants experienced (Percy et al., 2015). In the current study, participants explained why they were successful despite experiencing the negative events of homelessness. This method allowed me to explore the perspectives and experiences of graduated undergraduates through interviews and to investigate the internal goals and drives they perceived helped them overcome barriers to academic

success (graduation) when they experienced homelessness. Percy et al. (2015) found that a researcher should use a generic qualitative approach to investigate an individual's intuitive exploration of experiences and circumstances.

Although I considered other qualitative methods, they were not the best fit for the study. The phenomenological design was not appropriate because it is focused on the lived experiences of individuals related to the phenomenon rather than the opinion or physical description of the individual (see Patton, 2015; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). A limitation in the phenomenological design is that the central focus is on internal cognitive experiences (Kennedy, 2016) of the phenomenon, which was not the focus of the current study. A generic qualitative design was more appropriate for the current study because I intended to explore what individuals thought about an issue, what they experienced, and what happened based on their lived experience (see Percy et al., 2015).

Grounded theory was also considered for this study. However, this design was not appropriate because the grounded theory combines concepts and hypotheses that have emerged from the data (see Glaser, 2016). Glaser (2016) described the grounded theory design as the research process of discovering a theory through the rigors of social research. Researchers must pay special attention to the relevance of categories as they emerge from data comparisons (Glaser, 2016). Glaser claimed the grounded theory design may lead to prestructuring of methods, leading to a lack of flexibility with participants' perceptions, creating confusion in making sense of the data. A generic qualitative design was more appropriate for the current study because I intended to

examine the participants' subjective perceptions of the phenomenon, not create a theory

behind the experiences (see Percy et al., 2015).

## **Role of Researcher**

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument who collects data

(Creswell & Baez, 2021; Janesick, 2001; Pezalla et al., 2012). I served as the instrument

for data collection and analysis across all phases of this qualitative study (see Starks &

Trinidad, 2007). I carefully managed any potential researcher biases, and I did not have

any personal connections or professional relationships with participants in the current

study. There are many provisions to managing researcher biases and ensuring

trustworthiness (A. Rubin & Babbie, 2016; Shenton, 2004; Tracy, 2010), and I managed

my biases by bracketing my experiences. Bracketing is a method that involves identifying

and putting aside beliefs, values, thoughts, and hypotheses (Starks & Trinidad, 2007);

biases (Creswell & Miller, 2000); and knowledge or assumptions that may influence a

researcher's collection or interpretation of the data (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

Bracketing can facilitate the researcher reaching intense stages of reflections

while mitigating adverse influences of their work across all situations of qualitative

design (Tufford & Newman, 2010). As the primary instrument for the study, I used

bracketing to identify any personal biases I brought to the current study so that I could

put them aside (see Creswell & Miller, 2000). To achieve bracketing, I used a reflexive

journal in which I listed any biases I had during data collection, analyses, and

interpretation (see Lietz & Zayas, 2010). In the reflexive journal, I recorded my thoughts

and feelings, examined personal assumptions, and clarified my belief systems and

prejudices (see Ortlipp, 2008), which occurred when interviewing and reviewing data to

be aware of how these things may have influenced and skewed the lenses I was using to

filter the data (see Tufford & Newman, 2010). Identifying these feelings helped me focus

on the participants' interpretations and experiences of events and prevented my

assumptions from influencing how data were collected and analyzed (see Tufford &

Newman, 2010). Recognizing my preconceptions as they arose was a reflexive process

that kept me accountable and promoted objectivity in collecting and interpreting the data

(see Tufford & Newman, 2010).

## Methodology

**Participation Selection Logic**

*Population*

The population for this study was individuals who had graduated undergraduate

programs who experienced homelessness for one academic semester or quarter when they

were undergraduates. UGSEH are undergraduate students who have not had access to

their residence at some point during their time attending a higher institution education

(Paden, 2012). Approximately 5,160 undergraduates who attend higher education

institutions in the United States have experienced homelessness at least once during their

undergraduate academic career (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018).

*Sampling Method*

To recruit participants, I used a combination of snowball, convenience, and

purposeful sampling for this study. Purposeful sampling ensured the selection of only

participants who met the study's criteria (see Etikan et al., 2015; Robinson, 2014). A

strength of purposeful sampling is that the researcher decides what needs to be known

and sets out to find people who could provide the information by knowledge or

experience (Bernard, 2002). Convenience sampling allows for the recruitment of readily

available participants who share the same experience or expertise (Etikan et al., 2015;

Patton, 2015). Strengths of convenience sampling are the geographical proximity, easy

accessibility, and the willingness of participants to volunteer (Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-

Hamidabad, 2012). A primary limitation of a convenience sample is that it might be

homogeneous, which could lower the generalizability of the results to a broader

heterogeneous population (Oppong, 2013).

  Snowball sampling was used when I requested participants of the study (or those

who had seen the recruitment materials) to tell other potential participants about the study

if those individuals met the inclusion criteria (see Griffith et al., 2016; Patton, 2015). A

strength of the snowball sampling strategy is the opportunity to achieve a sufficient

sample of participants who may have been hesitant or unwilling to participate in the study

(Griffith et al., 2016). A limitation associated with snowball sampling is systematic errors

of participants and the possible biases due to network connections (Alvi, 2016). Although

I considered other sampling strategies, they were not the best fit for the study. Random

sampling is not the most successful way of acquiring an understanding of multifaceted

behavioral challenges (Marshall, 1996). However, random sampling offers the best

opportunity to generalize the results to a broader population (Palinkas et al., 2015).

  A strength of random sampling is the principle that every individual has the same

probability of being chosen to participate (Meng, 2013), but this was not possible in the

current study because I did not have a comprehensive list of those who experienced homelessness. Not all individuals have had this experience. A limitation of random sampling is its up-to-date list of all the members and the need for a complete list of the population (Sharma, 2017). This was a challenge because I looked for a certain group who met my inclusion criteria, and random sampling was inappropriate for this study. I also considered using quota sampling. Sharma (2017) described quota sampling is a method of gathering data from a tailored group with certain characteristics. A strength of quota sampling is that it ensures the presence of every subgroup of the population in the sample (Alvi, 2016). However, a limitation of quota sampling is that the sample will not ensure the population being studied is represented (Sharma, 2017), which was an issue because I was not able to find individuals who met my inclusion criteria because it was a very certain group that I looked for. Therefore, the combination of purposeful and snowball sampling strategies was appropriate because it increased the effectiveness and efficiency of recruiting participants who met my inclusion criteria for this study (see Patton, 2015).

### Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for an individual to participate in this study were the following:

- able to understand and answer questions in English,

- currently above the age of 18,

- experienced homelessness for a minimum of one academic semester or quarter when enrolled in their undergraduate program, and

- completed at least an undergraduate (bachelor's) degree.

The participants had to understand and answer questions in English because English is my primary language. Any other language would have created a barrier. I accepted only individuals over the age of 18 to ensure that the participant would not need the permission of a parent or guardian to participate. The potential participants provided their best contact information, including their name (optional), email address, and phone number (cell/home).

## Sample Size

According to Patton (2015), the sample size in qualitative design is not limited to a specific number and depends on what the researcher wants to know, what data are being collected, and when saturation is reached. When data are analyzed and no new themes or information are emerging, this point in research is known as saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Guest et al., 2006; Guetterman, 2015). If new themes continued to emerge as I analyzed the data, recruitment of participants would have continued, and the sample size would have increased until saturation occurred (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). I intended to recruit 10–15 participants for this study. I indicated the desired sample size of 10–15 on my institutional review board (IRB) application. If I reached saturation at 10 interviews, I intended to stop the interviews. If I did not reach saturation, I would have continued up to 15.

**Instrumentation**

The instruments I used for the study included a demographic form that I created (see Appendix B) and a list of semistructured questions that I developed and used during semistructured interviews with participants.

***Demographic Form***

The prospective participant obtained the link to the inclusion questions and contact information from the invitation to participate (see Appendix A). On SurveyMonkey, prospective participant were asked to answer the inclusion questions. However, I asked them the inclusion criteria questions via email if they emailed me directly. If they answered "yes" to all SurveyMonkey's inclusion questions, I emailed them the demographic items. If the prospective participants answered "yes" to all inclusion questions on SurveyMonkey, they were automatically directed to the demographic items and then to the end of the survey.

However, if the prospective participants answered "no" to any of the inclusion questions, they were automatically sent to the end of the survey. If they contacted me directly by email, I was made aware that the participant qualified to participate in the study. The demographic form was used to collect data about the participant's gender, ethnicity, age, family dynamics when they experienced homelessness, year of graduation from their undergraduate program, and highest level of education (see Table 1), and to request follow-up permission to send a transcript of the interview (see Appendix B). To collect data, I used semistructured interviews.

**Table 1**

*Demographic Information*

| Variable | Category and Coding |
|---|---|
| Gender | 0 = male<br>1 = female<br>99 = prefer not to answer |
| Ethnicity | 0 = White<br>1 = American Indian or Alaska Native<br>2 = Asian<br>3 = Black or African American<br>4 = Hispanic or Latin@<br>5 = Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander<br>6 = Two or more<br>99 = Prefer not to answer |
| Age | Actual age in years (18-100)<br>99 = Prefer not to answer |
| What were your family dynamics when you were experiencing homelessness? | 0 = With a family<br>1 = Without a family<br>2 = Single<br>3 = Married<br>99 = Prefer not to answer |
| What year did you graduate with your undergraduate degree? | The actual graduation year to calculate the number of years since graduation.<br>99=Prefer not to answer |
| Highest level of education | 0 = Bachelor's<br>1 = Bachelor's + some additional college<br>2 = Master's<br>3 = Doctoral/PhD |

***Interview Questions***

       The interview guide included the questions I asked during the semistructured interview related to the study's research questions. Semistructured interviews were chosen to give the participants a degree of freedom to explain their thoughts and highlight areas of particular interest and expertise they experienced (see Horton et al., 2004). I tested the content for validity which was verified by my interview questions for comprehension with an expert panel of six individuals who worked with homeless college students ages 18-25. I relied on their knowledge to make judgment about the interview questions covering the range of meanings within the concept being studied (see A. Rubin & Babbie, 2016). These individuals worked at agencies such as non-profits, colleges, universities, and Child Protective Services. I chose these individuals due to their extensive background and training in working with youths experienced homelessness. The interview questions pertained to each research question are listed in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Interview Questions*

| RQ | Interview question | Probe/follow-up question |
|---|---|---|
| RQ1 | How did you come up with your initial decision to attend college? | If the participant was unsure what I was looking for, tell me your motivations to attend college in general? |
| RQ1 | How did you come up with choosing to attend the college where you received your bachelor's degree? | If participant was not sure of what I was looking for, tell me why you chose to attend the specific college where you got your bachelor's degree? |
| RQ1 | Where were you living when working on your bachelor's degree? | |
| RQ1 | How were your plans for financing your education when you were working on your bachelor's degree? | If the participant was unsure what I was looking for, tell me how you paid for your education while working on your bachelor's degree? |

| RQ | Interview question | Probe/follow-up question |
| --- | --- | --- |
| RQ1 | What do you think happened that led you to experience homelessness when you were working on your bachelor's degree? | If the participant was unsure what I was looking for, tell me about reasons that led you to become homeless when working on your bachelor's degree? |
| RQ1 | What did you do for housing when experiencing homelessness while working on your bachelor's degree? | |
| RQ1 | How do you believe that being homeless when working on your bachelor's degree affected.? *Your academic performance (grades, attendance, etc.....)?* *Your ability to register and complete classes each term?* *How long did it take you to get your degree?* *Your social activities/relationships with others?* | |
| RQ1 | How do you believe that experiencing homelessness when working on your bachelor's degree made your college experience any different from other students who did not experience homelessness? | Suppose a participant was unsure of what I was looking for: when you were experiencing homelessness. How did you think your college experience was different from someone who did not experience homelessness? |
| RQ2 | What programs were available at your college that supported students experiencing homelessness? *Did you use any of these services?* *Why or why not?* | |
| RQ2 | Who were individuals that supported you when you were experiencing homelessness when working on your bachelor's degree, and how did they support you? *Who helped you financially/with housing during this time, and how did they do so?* *Who were the people that supported you emotionally during this time and how did they do so?* | |
| RQ1 | When you were experiencing homelessness when working on your undergraduate degree, what internal thoughts or drives motivated you to continue working on your degree? | If the participant was not sure of what I was looking for: while you were experiencing homelessness, what inner beliefs pushed you to continue working on your bachelor's degree? |
| RQ2 | When you were experiencing homelessness when working on your undergraduate degree, what did others do or say that motivated you to continue working on your degree? | |
| RQ2 | What do you think were the most important factors that motivated you to complete your bachelor's degree? | If the participant was unsure what I was looking for: what were the most important reasons that pushed, you to complete your bachelor's degree? |

**Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

*Recruitment*

Once I received Walden University IRB approval, I recruited individuals via multiple social media through Facebook and LinkedIn groups and the Walden University Participation Pool (see Table 3). I posted on these sites because I did not recruit those who were currently experiencing homelessness, but those graduated undergraduates who had a degree and experienced homelessness when enrolled as an undergraduate.

**Table 3**

*Recruitment Sites*

| Facebook group | LinkedIn | Walden Participant Pool |
|---|---|---|
| Covenant House | Opportunity Center for the | |
| Hope Housing for Students | Homeless | |
| Haven of Rest Ministries Akron Ohio | Center for Homeless | |
| Haven of Rest Ministries, Inc | Research, Inc. | |
| Anderson | Care for Homeless | |
| Homelessness Research & Action | Homeless Solutions, Inc. | |
| Volunteers of America | Homeless Empowerment | |
| Women in College Support Group | Program | |
| Homecoming: Matching Homeless | | |
| College Students with a Home | | |
| Foster Youth of America | | |
| BcFS Health and Human Services | | |
| Texas Education and Training Voucher | | |
| Youth Villages | | |
| Steven Tyler's Janie's Fund | | |
| Tennessee Department of Children Services | | |

| Facebook group | LinkedIn | Walden Participant Pool |
| --- | --- | --- |

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

Texas Women's University

UNTPUSH (Preserve Until Success Happens)-

University of N. Texas

UTEP Academic Advising Center-University of Texas

El Paso

Central Texas Youth Services

National Coalition for the Homeless

Central Texas Homeless Coalition

National Low Income Housing Coalition

Families in Crisis Texas

National Alliance to End Homelessness

Family Promise of East Bell County National

Homelessness Law Center

Salvation Army USA

United Way

The recruitment flyer (see Appendix A) also asked for anyone who had seen the

recruitment materials to feel free to share the information with others who may be

eligible to participate in the study (snowball sampling).

### *Participation*

The prospective participants went to the Survey Monkey survey link in the flyer

to get more information and sign up to participate. They contacted me directly via email

if they could not go to SurveyMonkey. On SurveyMonkey, the prospective participant

was asked to answer the inclusion questions. If they answered "yes" to all inclusion

questions, they were automatically directed to the demographic items and then to the end

of the survey. However, if prospective participants emailed me directly, I asked them the

inclusion criteria questions and contact information via email. If the prospective

participant answers "yes" to all inclusion questions, I emailed them the demographic

items, contacted them via email to schedule the interview, and included a copy of the

consent form for their review and records.

### *Data Collection*

During the time of the scheduled interview, I contacted the participant via phone.

I audio-recorded all interviews through an iPhone *Voice Memos* application

(https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT206775). Before starting to record the interview, I

informed the participant that the interview was going to be recorded and requested

permission to audio record the call. If the prospective participant did not consent to be

recorded, I thanked them for their time and I would not interview them because I needed

a recording for my records. If they consented to be recorded, I started the recording. After

the interview recording started, I reviewed the informed consent form with the participant

verbally. They were asked if they had any questions about the informed consent and

asked if they agreed. If the prospective participant agreed to continue participating, I

reviewed the demographic information they provided to ensure it was accurate and

complete. I thanked them for their time and ended the interview if they disagreed.

I began the interview questions and informed the participants through the

informed consent that their participation could take approximately 1 hour, depending on

how much information provided. If participants were ambiguous in responding, I would

prompt them for additional information to give enough information to answer the research questions using the predetermined prompts. I also used a reflexive journal throughout the process that I referred to during data analysis and interpretation. Reflexivity journaling is a way that the researcher can be aware of their thoughts, biases, decisions, and actions that may impact how they place meaning on the data (Lietz & Zayas, 2010; Oliphant & Bennett, 2020). In the reflexive journal, I recorded my thoughts, feelings, and any biases I had when interviewing, reviewing data, and interpreting data provided by the participants to be aware of how these things may be influenced and skewed the lenses I was using to filter the data.

Once the participants completed the interview, I informed them I might contact them for a follow-up to send them the transcript. During the debriefing process, I asked the participant if any additional information they would like to provide. I answered any questions, thanked participants for volunteering their time for participating in the current study. I also informed them that I would email them a transcript of their interview to ensure accuracy in my interpretation and a summary of the study's findings once complete.

I saved the recorded files to a password-protected flash drive and removed the data from my phone. I named the audio files using random numbers and pseudonyms to protect participants' identities. I placed the numbers and the participants' names on a master spreadsheet, and I saved it on my password protected computer that only the committee members and I had access. These de-identified files were transcribed by GMR Transcription Services, Inc. (see Appendix C) a professional transcriber if Microsoft

Office 365 automatic transcriber was not accurate. GMR Transcription Services, Inc. was a one-stop transcription service provider in the United States. The client's information was masked before I sent the documents to the transcribers. Furthermore, their certified transcribers were asked to sign confidentiality agreements upon hire; this forbad them from disclosing any information.

When I received the transcribed files, I reviewed the transcript for accuracy by verifying the content of the interview transcript with the audio recording. I conducted member checking by emailing the transcript of each participant's interview to them and asked them to review for accuracy in my interpretation and asked for a response within 7 days of sending them the email. I also let them know that if I did not hear from them within that timeframe, the lack of response indicated that the transcript was acceptable, and I continued analyzing the data in my study

**Data Analysis Plan**

I used Microsoft Excel to organize and analyze the data (see Meyer & Avery, 2009). I used the inductive analysis to analyze data; I examined the themes, patterns, and inferences as they emerged (see Percy et al., 2015). Data in an inductive analysis is independently analyzed, allowing the data to fit into categories or themes that emerge through the data analysis, and I would follow the steps outlined by Percy et al. (2015):

Step1: I familiarized myself with the data. I independently immersed myself with each participant's data by highlighting any statements or phrases that appeared meaningful.

Step 2: I reviewed the data for relevance to the research questions. I checked the highlighted statements and evaluated their relation to the research questions.

Step 3: The data analysis eliminated the highlighted statements and found them unrelated to the research questions. I noted this data in my reflexive journal as irrelevant to the research questions but kept them in a separate Microsoft Word document for possible future use.

Step 4: I used apriori codes the data into a simple alphabetical sequence (e.g., AA, BB, etc.) for easy identification.

Step 5: I clustered data that appeared related to one another into groups and described the group by a name or phrase that I quickly identified.

Step 6: As the patterns emerged during the data analysis, I clustered them into previously identified groups (see Step 5).

Step 7: I identified meaningful themes that emerged from the patterns I had placed in Step 5. As significant themes emerged, I assigned a new descriptor to the theme, which was more abstract. The new descriptor supported the themes identified in Step 5 and initially transcribed data.

Step 8: Once I analyzed all the data, I arranged the themes (identified in Step 7) into columns using Microsoft Excel with their supporting patterns (identified in Step 5). I included words from the data that were easy to identify with individual themes.

Step 9: I wrote a detailed abstract analysis of each theme that I identified in Step 7 to describe the meaning of each theme.

Step 10: I repeated Steps 1-9 for each participant's data.

Step 11: I combined all the data analyzed that included patterns and similar ones among the participants.

Step 12: I used emerged patterns and themes; I formed as I synthesized all the data collected.

## Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is defined by Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Amankwaa, 2016) as data analysis and results that accurately represent the research participants' perspectives. In the research process, steps should be taken to ensure that participants' views are accurately described and authentically gathered in the findings (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Amankwaa, 2016) suggested the value of a design is strengthened by four concepts that work together to achieve trustworthiness-credibility, transferability, auditability, and confirmability. Therefore, in this current study, I strived to enhance the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the data to ensure the trustworthiness of data collection and analysis.

### Credibility

Credibility refers to how findings represent the true meaning of what the study participants were attempting to share/convey (Lincoln & Guba as cited in Amankwaa, 2016). I ensured credibility during my transcription of the data, data analysis, and data interpretation by doing these accurately and reaching out to the participant if something was not evident during this process. I also used a reflexive journal throughout the process that I referred to during data analysis and interpretation to maintain credibility. Reflexivity journaling is a way that the researcher can be aware of their thoughts, biases,

decisions, and actions that may impact how they place meaning to the data analysis (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). In the reflexive journal, I recorded my thoughts, feelings, and any biases I had when interviewing, reviewing, and interpreting data to be aware of how these things may have influenced and skewed the lenses I was using to filter the data. I used member checking throughout the process of transcription of the data and data interpretation. Member checking is defined as involving the participants in analysis or returning a sample of participant information provided to ensure the material was accurately recorded and interpreted by the researcher, which would corroborate the findings (Shenton, 2004). I conducted member checking by emailing each participant's transcribed data to ensure that the data I collected accurately represented what the participant said during the interview.

**Transferability**

Transferability refers to the degree of which the findings are applicable or useful to theory, practice, and future research (Lincoln & Guba as cited in Amankwaa, 2016). Shenton (2004) described transferability as how findings fit situations outside the theory and were meaningful. I addressed transferability by providing a detailed description of the research process, including how I collected the data and a step-by-step guide of how I analyzed the data. I included a detailed description of the study results and a summary to compare the findings to existing or future studies on this topic. I also provided a thorough review of existing literature to establish I needed to conduct the study.

This study's context was described in detail and related to the context of other groups or settings (see Devers, 1999). Thick descriptions also allowed readers to

understand ways the findings may be applicable in different settings (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004). This study used purposive sampling, which enhanced transferability because it allowed for the recruitment of a certain group of participants who experienced the phenomenon being studied (see Patton, 2015). This ensured that a selection of only participants who met the study's inclusion criteria was interviewed (see Patton, 2015).

**Dependability**

Devers (1999) described the dependability criterion related to the consistency of findings. In a study, a trail used by an investigator can be tracked by another researcher (Devers, 1999). According to Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Amankwaa, 2016), a single research audit can enhance dependability. An audit trail is defined as a written account of the research process that includes an understanding of what occurred throughout the research project along with reflexivity (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). This was attempted to be accomplished when I recorded the study processes to enable future researchers to replicate and obtain similar results (see Shenton, 2004). I provided a detailed record of the sections that consisted of material concerning the research method of how the data was obtained, the research design, and its implementation (see Shenton, 2004).

**Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the ability of others to confirm or corroborate the findings (Drisko, 1997; Lincoln & Guba as cited in Amankwaa, 2016). Shenton (2004) described steps taken to ensure the findings were accurate that reflected the experiences and ideas of the participants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher. To

achieve confirmability, connections between the data and interpretation need to be clearly followed in the study (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). I addressed confirmability using a reflexive journal throughout each stage of the research process to reflect any biases, thoughts, and feelings I had as the research proceeded. By identifying these feelings that could arise, I immediately reflected on them and controlled any preconceived biases and emotions that may influence how I interpreted the data (see Tuffold & Newman, 2010). I also addressed confirmability with the usage of member checking. Member checking involved the participants returning a sample of their information to ensure the material was accurately recorded and interpreted by me, which corroborated the findings (see Shenton, 2004). I conducted member checking by emailing each participant's transcribed data to ensure that the data I collected accurately represented what the participant said during the interview.

## Ethical Procedures

I obtained Walden University's IRB approval before recruiting any participants or collecting data. Using the informed consent process, I informed participants their participation was entirely voluntary. The participants had the option to stop the interview process and withdraw from the study at any time. I did not recruit individuals who were currently experiencing homelessness but those who experienced homelessness when earning their undergraduate degrees. I also did not actively recruit individuals who belonged with other protected groups (pregnant women, those who were incarcerated, those with mental health issues, etc.), however, some individuals who belonged with a protected group may volunteer. There was minimal risk to any individuals who may have

belonged with one of these protected groups concerning the questions I asked as part of this study. However, I provided information in the informed consent form about where participants could access counseling for those in distress due to participating.

A $20 Wal-Mart gift card was used as a 'thank you' incentive to the participants who were chosen to be interviewed. They received the gift card if they met with me even if they started the interview and decided not to continue. The thank-you gift was modest and not anticipated to motivate research participation but intended to acknowledge and express gratitude for the time and effort required (see Hanson et al., 2012). Individual participant information (name, contact information) was kept confidential and not shared with anyone other than my committee members. Demographics of the sample were reported in aggregate, and I reviewed any quotations used from interviews and identifiable information masked (such as names of institutions or individuals).

Pseudonyms were also assigned for participants protecting the identities of participants. I saved the recorded interview files and the demographic data and contact information gathered through SurveyMonkey and my email to password-protected files on my computer. Records will be destroyed five-years after the conclusion of the study but may be kept longer if state or federal standards on the destruction of the data change ("Retention of research standards and destruction of data," 2018). Professional transcription was used by GMR Transcription Services, Inc. The client's information was masked before sending the documents to their transcribers. GMR Transcription Services, Inc.'s certified transcribers were asked to sign confidentiality agreements upon hire that forbade them from disclosing any information.

**Summary**

The purpose of this generic qualitative design allowed me to explore the

resiliency and success (graduation) for UGSEH. Chapter 3 includes several topics related

to the research methodology procedures, sampling strategy, and the inclusion criteria for

potential participants. A description of how I collected data includes the setup of

interview sessions with the potential participants, interview questions, plan to conduct the

45-60-minute interview sessions, and how I analyzed the data. Chapter 4 included the

methods I used to establish trustworthiness and the current study findings that included

the results of data analysis I collected during the semistructured interviews. I also

explored the results contained in the tables and charts that presented the themes emerged

through data analysis.

Chapter 4: Results

Although it is essential to understand the barriers UGSEH face when homeless, it is also valuable to know how some could be academically successful to assist current undergraduate students in similar situations (Morales, 2008). The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to investigate the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency of graduated undergraduates who experienced homelessness while they were enrolled as undergraduates. In addition, I explored what support systems they believed helped them overcome barriers to become academically successful (graduated). The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: What were the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency of college graduates who experienced homelessness when they were undergraduates that they believed helped them overcome barriers to academic success?

RQ2: What supports did college graduates who experienced homelessness when they were undergraduates believe helped them overcome barriers to being academically successful?

This chapter starts with an overview of the data collection setting and demographics of the sample. I provide a detailed description of the method I used in data collection and analysis processes and the results of the main themes that emerged according to the two research questions addressed. I also discuss how I managed evidence of trustworthiness and provide a summary of the research questions' results. The results from this study may be used to inform education stakeholders by providing research on the resilience, success, and supports UGSEH received or did not receive.

**Setting**

I posted the recruitment flyer (see Appendix A) to social media pages after obtaining approval from the Walden University IRB (approval number 02-24-21-0731352). There were difficulties with recruiting participants, which led to numerous requests for change in procedures to the IRB. The first request was to add two partnering organizations to post my recruitment flyer to their social media pages. This was needed because these organizations required permission to post my recruitment flyer. The request to change procedures was submitted on February 28, 2021, and approved on March 1, 2021. The option of emailing me if interested in participating allowed potential participants an easier way to volunteer. The request to change procedures was submitted on May 1, 2021, and approved on May 3, 2021. I also requested a change to call those who contacted me to participate via phone instead of email. This request to change procedures was submitted on June 10, 2021, and approved on June 14, 2021. Finally, I requested a change to add the definition of homelessness to my recruitment materials because some individuals may not have known that they were eligible to participate. This request for change procedures was submitted on June 27, 2021, and approved on July 6, 2021.

Despite these changes, difficulties in collecting data continued. On May 5, 2021, my SurveyMonkey account was compromised, resulting in 252 false entries. I contacted 167 potential participants and discovered that the information was falsified (spam). I also had a challenge with one participant who contacted me a few hours before their interview and asked whether I needed their PayPal information. During the interview appointment,

I asked how she found out about this study, and she said an advertisement came to her email that said if she wanted to participate in this study, she could receive $450. I apologized to her and told her this message did not come from me and that I was unsure how she received it. She said, "Yeah, I thought you were a big corporation." I was permitted to record the interview and reviewed the informed consent with the participant. I asked a few questions, and we got disconnected. I called back a few times and left a voicemail asking her to call me to resume the interview or reschedule. I heard nothing from this participant and was advised that this may have been a scam and that I should not use that interview. Due to the issues in recruitment, my committee chair and second committee member advised that I should stop recruitment and move on to data analysis. My committee decided that two complete interviews were not enough to satisfy a generic qualitative design, so I completed my data analysis with a case study research design using two cases.

<div align="center">

**Demographics**

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**Case 1: Participant 1**

Participant 1 was interviewed on July 11, 2021, telephonically. Case 1 was labeled as Participant 1 to maintain confidentiality. Before the interview, I requested the participant be in an area where she would have privacy (not in a public place or where others may be able to overhear). I interviewed in a room in my home where others were not present so I could not be overheard.

Participant 1 identified as a 49-year-old Latin@/Central American woman. Her family dynamics when she was experiencing homelessness as an undergraduate included

being single, and she graduated from the undergraduate program in 1998. Her highest

level of education obtained at the time of the interview was a master's degree. I

conducted one semistructured interview that lasted 23 minutes guided by a self-designed

interview script (see Appendix B). The participant was asked 13 open-ended questions

with probes and follow-up questions concerning her experience of homelessness while in

college. The topics in the interview aligned with the research questions of internal goals

and drives associated with the resiliency of a graduated UGSEH when they were

undergraduates that they believed helped them overcome barriers to academic success.

In addition, I explored what support systems they believed helped them overcome

barriers to become academically successful (graduated). I audio recorded the interview

using the Tape A Call app and had it immediately transcribed by Rev's professional

transcription agency. I verified the content of the interview transcript with the audio

recording. Participant 1 received a copy of the transcript via email to check for accuracy.

I also performed member checking within the context of the interview by repeating the

respondent's ideas or reframing concepts to ensure the accuracy of my interpretations.

Participant 1 stated that the information provided in the transcript was accurate.

**Case 2: Participant 2**

Participant 2 was interviewed on July 18, 2021, telephonically. Case 2 was

labeled as Participant 2 to maintain confidentiality. Before the interview, I requested the

participant be in an area where she would have privacy (not in a public place or where

others may overhear). I interviewed in a room in my home where others were not present

so they could not overhear the interview.

Participant 2 identified as a 35-year-old West Indian woman living in the United States. When she was experiencing homelessness, her family dynamics included being single with children, and she graduated from the undergraduate program in 2011. Her highest level of education obtained at the time of the interview was a master's degree. I conducted one semistructured interview that lasted 45 minutes guided by a self-designed interview script (see Appendix B). The participant was asked 13 open-ended questions with probes and follow-up questions concerning her experience of homelessness while in college. The topics in the study aligned with the research questions of internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency of a graduated UGSEH when they were undergraduates that they believed helped them overcome barriers to academic success.

In addition, I explored what support systems they believed helped them overcome barriers to become academically successful (graduated). I audio recorded the interview using the Tape A Call app and had it immediately transcribed by Rev's professional transcription agency. I verified the content of the interview transcript to the audio recording. Participant 2 received a copy of the transcript via email to check for accuracy. I also performed member checking within the context of the interview by repeating the respondent's ideas or reframing concepts to ensure the accuracy of my interpretations. Participant 2 did not respond to the transcript sent.

## Data Collection

The IRB approved the study on February 24, 2021, and recruitment began on February 24, 2021. In addition to the issues and related change of procedures outlined in a previous section, I requested other change of procedures from the IRB. I requested a

change in professional transcription services from GMR Transcription Services, Inc., to Rev due to the expensive cost. The request for change procedures was submitted on March 9, 2021, and approved on March 9, 2021. I also requested a change to the recording application from iPhone Voice Memos to Tape A Call because I could not use my approved recording application while speaking on the phone. The request to change procedures was submitted on March 11, 2021, and approved on March 11, 2021.

I obtained informed consent, reviewed the demographic information, and collected data from two participants who experienced homelessness while they were in their undergraduate program. I conducted one semistructured interview with each participant, lasting 23-45 minutes. The semistructured interviews were conducted over the phone. Participants were asked 13 open-ended questions with probes and follow-up questions concerning their experience of homelessness while in college. I audio recorded each interview using the Tape A Call app and had it immediately transcribed by Rev's professional transcription agency. I verified the content of the interview transcript to the audio recording. Each participant received a copy of the transcript via email to check accuracy. One participant stated that the information provided in the transcript was accurate, and the other participant did not respond.

## Change of Research Design and Analysis Process

Although I anticipated participant recruitment would be challenging because of the uniqueness of the population that experienced homelessness and graduated with a bachelor's degree, I expected to be able to find the anticipated number of participants. After almost 6 months of recruitment, I had interviewed only two participants. My

committee members discussed the issue and indicated that two participants would not be enough to conduct a generic qualitative study. However, they reviewed my interview transcripts and the information coded thus far and recommended that I proceed with data analyses and interpretation of results using a case study methodology (with multiple cases). There are differences between a generic qualitative study and a case study methodology (with multiple cases).

A generic qualitative research method is not guided by an explicit or established set of philosophical assumptions in the form of one of the known qualitative methodologies such as phenomenology, grounded theory, or ethnography (Caelli et al., 2003). According to Percy et al. (2015), a generic qualitative method can be used to investigate participants' interpretation of events that they experienced when other qualitative designs are not appropriate. A few limitations are associated with the generic qualitative method. Kennedy (2016) stated that the generic qualitative research method lacked academic literature due to not being considered traditional qualitative research and the lack of commitment to a particular methodology, which could leave a new researcher without a clear starting point. The generic qualitative design method provides flexibility to focus on the outward observations of participants (Kennedy, 2016). This method offers the ability to investigate the interpretation of events that participants experienced (Percy et al., 2015).

A qualitative case study research occurs when a researcher thoroughly examines an event, person, campaign, organization, program, activity, or process (Patton, 2015). A case study design can be used with one case or multiple cases (Patton, 2015). Several

strengths are associated with qualitative case study research, such as the level of flexibility that is not readily proposed by other qualitative approaches such as phenomenology and grounded theory (Hyett et al., 2014). Case study research can be considered a robust method, particularly when a holistic, in-depth investigation is required (Zainal, 2007). A weakness of case study research is that the quality of the in-depth analysis is dependent on the researcher's skills and abilities (Yin, 2009).

Case study design was appropriate for my study because I wanted to explore in-depth the complex issues (see Zainal, 2007) such as the stressors, perceptions of social support, and the outcome (graduation) of graduated UGSEH and how the participants were able to be successful. I did not examine the participants' subjective perceptions of the phenomenon, which is a generic qualitative design (see Percy et al., 2015). A multiple case study would allow me to analyze the data through cross-case analysis (see Kennedy, 2016) and not explore what individuals thought about an issue, what they experienced, and what happens with generic qualitative design (see Percy et al., 2015). Using two case studies allowed me to explore each case individually and then together to determine different and shared experiences related to the topic being studied (see Stake, 1995) compared to a generic qualitative approach of using people's subjective examination of external happenings and events (see Percy et al., 2015).

## Data Analysis

### Change in Data Analysis Process

I had planned on using a generic qualitative design for this study. The data analysis process for this design would have included reviewing the data using an

inductive analysis process to examine the themes, patterns, and inferences (see Percy et al., 2015). Data in an inductive analysis are independently analyzed, allowing the data to fit into categories or themes that emerge through the data analysis, and I would have followed the steps outlined by Percy et al. (2015).

Because I needed to switch my research design to a multiple case study design, I also needed to change the process used to analyze the data. I chose to use the case study data analysis process Yin (2003) described. According to Yin, there are three general analytic strategies for analyzing case study evidence: relying on the theoretical propositions, thinking about rival explanations, and developing a case description. I relied on the theoretical propositions with both cases because my objective and design of the case studies reflected the research questions and the views of the literature (see Yin, 2003). There are five techniques for analyzing case studies: pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis.

Due to the minimal number of cases, I chose a combination of cross-case synthesis and pattern matching to analyze the case studies. Cross-case synthesis probed the different groups of cases that appeared to share some similarities that led to exploring the categories of the individual cases (Yin, 2003). Pattern matching can be one of the most desirable techniques (Yin, 2003) and described by Trochim (1989) as an arrangement of objects or entities nonrandom. Pattern matching was appropriate for the current study because, as described by Yin (2003), if the pattern coincides, the results can strengthen a case study' internal validity and be used to further investigate certain phenomena in multivariate and complex cases (Zainal, 2007). The cross-case synthesis

and pattern matching were aligned with the research questions and framed within the context of the existing knowledge base, forming the critical basis for the study's findings.

**Five Phases of Case Study Data Analysis**

Yin (2011) identified a 5-phase cycle for conducting case study research that I implemented step-by-step: compiling, disassembling, reassembling and (arraying), interpreting, and concluding.

*Phase 1*

I began the analysis by compiling. I sorted the field notes and transcript information from the two case study interviews. I organized the data so that it was placed together with one another so that I could look across the data and start to see similarities and differences in the information. I used Microsoft Excel to organize and sort the data.

*Phase 2*

I disassembled the interviews and field notes into smaller fragments or pieces (quotes, individual messages above certain interview questions, etc.). The procedure consisted of assigning "codes" to components or parts. These items were highly contextualized: detailed time of day, the place, and the people involved in the item, which provided information about the environmental circumstances. The uniqueness of the original field items that were similar was assigned the same code. This higher conceptual level enabled me to later sort things from the different participants in different ways, such as into analogous and dissimilar groups. These codes stuck closely to the original items, even reusing the words in the article, sometimes referred to as "in vivo codes" (Saldana, 2009).

I repeated the disassembling procedure many times as part of a trial-and-error process of testing codes, accounting for the connection between the first two phases. I then followed the codes to the second phase to reorganize the disassembled fragments or pieces into different groupings and sequences in the original notes. As I progressed with the first level of coding, I thought of ways that some of the level 1 codes related to each other, and my next goal was to move incrementally to a higher conceptual level by recognizing the categories where the level 1 codes may fall that was referred to as level 2 or category codes. During *this* process, I strived to answer how the data analysis might inform the original study questions. The *initial* coding (level 1; see Table 4) consisted of undocumented U. S. residents, college financed by scholarships, having to work while attending college, how academics were affected because of working, hindered from finishing assignments, persistence, depression, loneliness, anxiety, and confusion, sleeping and eating disorder, no college resources, counselor, social worker, make a change, persevere, drive and ability to move forward, and focus was to finish degree.

**Table 4**

*Initial (Level 1) Coding*

| Participant | Quote | Initial code (level 1) |
|---|---|---|
| 2. | So, once she (the mother) sent for him, I didn't want to be in the house anymore, and I didn't have a place to go. So, I then went to the shelter system in New York City. | Homelessness |
| 2. | I received a Pell Grant because I had a child. So, I was considered an independent student, so I was able to receive a Pell Grant and financial aid with zero out-of-pocket expense. | College financed by scholarships |
| 2. | So, in New York City, first, when you're 18, I think if you're under 21, there is Covenant House. So, covenant house had a program where you would initially go there for 30 days, and if you had one child, they had like a long-term program where you would work or go to school. | Having to work while attending college |
| 1. | I'd be seeing that I would get dressed to go to school and it would feel like I would stand there not knowing what to do with myself, just confused, and that hindered me from finishing up my assignment, going to classes. | Hindered from finishing assignments |
| 1. | It affected me. I think it created a impact in my life, my entire life because I do certain things now because I was homeless. I work harder. I pay my rent before in the middle of the month. | Persistence |
| 2. | Then there was just times where my anxiety would not allow me to get up and go to school. I was depressed. I was confused all the time. | Depression, loneliness, anxiety, and confusion |
| 2. | I just knew I couldn't sleep. I couldn't eat. | Sleeping and eating disorder |
| 1.<br>2. | There wasn't anything.<br>I couldn't tell you; because you were informed that it was available. | No college resources available |
| 1. | I had a counselor; I had a boyfriend at that time who would ask his parents if I could spend the night. | Counselor |
| 2. | My boyfriend and his family. | Boyfriend and his family |

*Phase 3*

I reassembled the data by rearranging and recombining the information. I completed Phase 2 using a formal coding process by initially transitioning level 1 and level 2 codes (see Table 5) into a higher theoretical point (level 3 codes). The category coding (level 2) included: socioeconomics (homeless and financial), educational challenges, resilience, negative mental and physical health outcome, lack of college support, positive adult support, confidence (perseverance), and motivation.

**Table 5**

*Initial Coding (Level 1) to Category (Level 2) Coding*

| Initial code (level 1) | Category code (level 2) |
| --- | --- |
| Undocumented U. S. resident | Socioeconomics (homeless and financial) |
| College financed by scholarships | Socioeconomics (financial) |
| Having to work while attending college | Socioeconomics (financial) |
| How academics were affected because of working | Educational challenges |
| Grades dropped | Educational challenges |
| Hindered from finishing assignments | Educational challenges |
| Persistence | Resilience |
| Depression, loneliness, anxiety, and confusion | Negative mental health outcome |
| Sleeping and eating disorder | Negative physical health outcome |
| No college resources available | Lack college support |
| Counselor | Positive adult support |
| Social worker | Positive adult support |
| Make a change | Confidence (perseverance) |
| Persevere | Confidence (perseverance) |
| Drive and ability to move forward | Motivation |
| Focus | Motivation |

The conclusion of the formal coding process (see Table 6) annotated the transition from *category* coding (level 2) to *theme* coding (level 3). The *theme*s (level 3) consisted of stressors, perceptions of social support, and positive outcomes. During the reassembling process, I consistently questioned myself and the data. The questioning process was crucial for doing analysis (Yin, 2011). More important than the specific answers to the questions was that I was proactively sifting and sorting my ideas and searching for patterns. To prevent biases from being applied to the emerging data and categories, I compared similarities and dissimilarities among the items in the data and watched for negative cases. An example had uncovered items that on the surface might had seemed similar but, on closer examination, appeared to be outliers. This involved my engagement of rival thinking, such as searching for alternative explanations for my initial observations. The assembling and disassembling phases repeated over and over as I dug deeper into the data and emerged categories and themes.

**Table 6**

*Formal Coding Process*

| Participant | Quote | Initial code (level 1) | Category code (level 2) | Theme (level 3) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. | So, once she (her mother) sent for him, I didn't want to be in the house anymore, and I didn't have a place to go. So, I then went to the shelter system in New York City. | Undocumented U. S. resident | Socioeconomics (homeless and financial) | Stressors |
| 2. | I received a Pell Grant because I had a child. So, I was considered an independent student, so I was able to receive a Pell Grant and financial aid with zero out-of-pocket expense. | College financed by scholarships | Socioeconomics (financial) | Stressors |

| Participant | Quote | Initial code (level 1) | Category code (level 2) | Theme (level 3) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. | So, in New York City, first, when you're 18, I think if you're under 21, there is Covenant House. So, covenant house had a program where you would initially go there for 30 days, and if you had one child, they had like a long-term program where you would work or go to school. | Having to work while attending college | Socioeconomics (financial) | Stressors |
| 1. | My academics definitely suffered because I was working 40-hours and I was taking 18 units. | Hindered from finishing assignments | Educational challenges | Stressors |
| 1. | It affected me. I think it created an impact in my life, my entire life, because I do certain things now because I was homeless. I work harder. I pay my rent before in the middle of the month. | Persistence | Resilience | Stressors |
| 2. | Then there was just times where my anxiety would not allow me to get up and go to school. I was depressed. I was confused all the time. | Depression, loneliness, anxiety, and confusion | Negative mental health outcome | Stressors |
| 2. | I just knew I couldn't sleep. I couldn't eat. | Sleeping and eating disorder | Negative physical health outcome | Stressors |
| 1. | There wasn't anything. | No college resources available | Lack college support | Perceptions of social support |
| 2. | A social worker that was a part of the program. | Social worker | Positive adult support | Perception of social support |

## *Phase 4*

I used the reassembled material to create a new narrative with relevant tables that became the critical analytic portion of my analyses. The fourth phase was considered interpreting the reassembled data. The goal was to develop a comprehensive interpretation encompassing certain data analysis whose main themes became the basis for understanding the entirety of the data concerning my research questions. This phase was annotated in Chapter 5.

*Phase 5*

I concluded the final phase by completing the data analysis concerning my research questions. The conclusion of Phase 5 was related to the interpretation of the fourth phase and through all the other phases of the cycle. My findings needed to be formulated to answer the research questions, but that could be supported and confirmed by certain pieces of data that I analyzed. The conclusion was the series of statements that raised the study's findings to a higher conceptual level. The phases did not fall into a linear sequence, but recursive and iterative relationships and explained in Chapter 5.

## Evidence of Trustworthiness

I attempted to establish trustworthiness in the findings from this current study that includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

### Credibility

Credibility was established during my transcription of the data, data interpretation, and data analysis by doing those accurately. I used a reflexive journal to maintain credibility throughout the process that I referred to during data analysis and interpretation. In the reflexive journal, I recorded my thoughts and feelings and any biases I had when interviewing multiple sources, reviewing data, and interpreting data to be aware of how these things influenced and skewed the lenses I was using to filter the data. I used member checking throughout the transcription of the data and data interpretation. Member checking were conducted when I emailed each participant the transcribed data to ensure that I collected accurately represented what the participant said

during the interview. Both participants confirmed that the transcripts accurately reflected

their responses during the interview.

**Transferability**

I addressed transferability by providing a detailed description of the research

process, including how I collected the data and a step-by-step guide of how I analyzed the

data. I also included a thorough explanation of the study results and a summary to

compare the finding to existing or future studies on this topic. These descriptions

provided rich and detailed information to emerge from the data that transferred or applied

to populations and similar environmental circumstances. I also provided a thorough

review of existing literature to establish I needed to conduct the study.

The context of the study was described in detail and related to the context of other

groups or settings (see Devers, 1999). Thick descriptions also should allow readers to

understand ways the findings may be applicable to different environmental circumstances

(Shenton, 2004). I used purposive sampling, which enhanced transferability because it

allowed for the recruitment of a certain group of participants who had experienced the

phenomenon or experience being studied (see Patton, 2015). This ensured that a selection

of only participants who met the study's inclusion criteria were interviewed (see Patton,

2015).

**Dependability**

I established dependability through an audit trail, where I carefully recorded in

detail the research processes of the study and the collection, analysis, and interpretation

of the data to enable future researchers the ability to replicate the research and obtain

similar results with similar populations (see Shenton, 2004). I provided a detailed record of material concerning the research method, consisting of sections of how the data was obtained and the research design and its implementation (see Shenton, 2004).

**Confirmability**

I addressed confirmability using a reflexive journal throughout each stage of the research process to reflect on any biases, thoughts, and feelings I had as the research proceeded. By identifying these feelings that arose, I immediately reflected on them and controlled any preconceived biases and emotions that may influence how I interpreted the data (see Tuffold & Newman, 2010). I also addressed confirmability with the usage of member checking. Member checking involved the participants returning a sample of their information to ensure the material was accurately recorded and interpreted by me, which corroborated the findings (see Shenton, 2004). I conducted member checking by emailing each participant's transcribed data to ensure that the data I collected accurately represented what the participant said during the interview. Neither participant added new information nor stated that I misrepresented any information provided.

## Results

RQ1: What were the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency for college graduates who experienced homelessness when they were undergraduates that they believed helped them overcome barriers to academic success?

Responses from the following interview questions were used to determine the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency:

1. Can you share with me where you were actually living when you were working on your bachelor's degree? Primary themes for research question 1 are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7**

*Primary Themes for Research Question 1*

| Theme (level 3) | Category code (level 2) | Keywords/phrases |
|---|---|---|
| Stressors | Socioeconomics (homeless and financial) | *I didn't have a place to go. So, I then went to the shelter system then went to the shelter system.* |

I used another response (see Table 8) to an interview question to determine the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency:

2. How did you pay for your education while working on your bachelor's degree?

Financial assistance was provided for both participants for college because of their identity.

**Table 8**

*Primary Themes for Research Question 1*

| Theme (level 3) | Category code (level 2) | Keyword/phrase |
|---|---|---|
| Stressors | Socioeconomics (financial) | *I received a Pell Grant because I had a child. So, I was considered an independent student, so I was able to receive a Pell Grant and financial aid with zero out-of-pocket expense.* |

I used another response (see Table 9) to an interview question to determine the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency:

3. Was there a time you could describe what you did for housing when experiencing homelessness while working on your bachelor's degree?

Both participants were working while they attended college.

**Table 9**

*Primary Themes for Research Question 1*

| Theme (level 3) | Category code (level 2) | Keyword/phrase |
|---|---|---|
| Stressors | Socioeconomics (financial) | *So, in New York City, first, when you're 18, I think if you're under 21, there is Covenant House. So, covenant house had a program where you would initially go there for 30 days, and if you had one child, they had like a long-term program where you would work or go to school.* |

I used another response (see Table 10) to an interview question to determine the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency:

4. When asked multiple part questions about them sharing with me how they believed that being homeless when working on your bachelor's degree affected (their academic performance/ grades/attendance, etc.; ability to register and complete classes each term; and social activities/relationships with others)?

**Table 10**

*Primary Themes for Research Question 1*

| Theme (level 3) | Category code (level 2) | Keyword/phrase |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Stressors | Educational challenges | *My academics definitely suffered because I was working 40-hours, and I was taking 18 units in order for me to stay busy and not think about it because I was working so much it affected my academics.*<br><br>*And even when I look back on my transcript, my undergrad transcript, I can tell the story of what I was going through based on my grades each semester. Because you can see that from the first year when I started you saw strong grades.* |
| Stressors | Resilience | *So, I would go, and I would try my best.* |
| Stressors | Negative mental health outcome | *Then there was just times where my anxiety would not allow me to get up and go to school. I was depressed. I was confused all the time, I started experiencing anxiety.* |
| Stressors | Negative physical health outcome | *I just knew I couldn't sleep. I couldn't eat.* |

Responses from the following interview prompts (see Table 11) were used to determine

the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency:

5. Tell me, although you were experiencing homelessness, what inner beliefs pushed (motivation) you to continue working on your bachelor's degree?

**Table 11**

*Primary Themes for Research Question 2*

| Theme (level 3) | Category code (level 2) | Keyword/phrase |
|---|---|---|
| Positive outcomes (graduation) | Confidence (perseverance) | *No matter how hard things get I'm going to always persevere.* |

RQ 2: What supports did college graduates who experienced homelessness when they were undergraduates believe helped them overcome barriers to being academically successful?

The responses from the following interview questions were used to determine what supports the college students believed helped them overcome barriers to academic success:

1. Can you share with me what programs were available at your college that supported students experiencing homelessness? Primary themes for research question 2 are shown in Table 12.

**Table 12**

*Primary Themes for Research Question 2*

| Theme (level 3) | Category code (level 2) | Keyword/phrase |
|---|---|---|
| Perceptions of social supports | Lack of college support | *There wasn't anything.* |

Each participant described what supports they believed helped them overcome barriers to academic success (see Table 13).

    2.  Can you tell me who supported you when you were experiencing homelessness when working on your bachelor's degree and how they supported you (financially/housing/emotionally)?

**Table 13**

*Primary Themes for Research Question 2*

| Theme (level 3) | Category code (level 2) | Keyword/phrase |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Perceptions of social supports | Positive adult support | *A social worker that was a part of the program.* |

Based on the responses (see Table 14) from the following interview questions were used to determine what social supports they believed helped them overcome barriers to being academically successful:

    3.  Was there a time you could describe what others did or said that motivated you to continue working on your undergraduate degree when experiencing homelessness?

**Table 14**

*Primary Themes for Research Question 2*

| Theme (level 3) | Category code (level 2) | Keyword/phrase |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Positive outcomes (graduation) | Motivation | *All I know is I just have to finish this degree so I can this job so I can get the money so I can take care of them and that was it.* |

## Composite Summary of Results

In the current study, the major findings indicated that stressors, perception of social supports, and the positive outcome (graduation) were the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency, and social supports that undergraduates believed helped them overcome barriers to being academically successful (see Figure 2). The participants had indicated that the stressors they experienced were socioeconomic (homeless and financial), educational challenges, resilience, and negative mental and physical health outcomes. Participants' perception of social supports included a lack of support from the institutions they attended but positive adult support from others. The current study also found that the participants obtained the outcome (graduation) through confidence (perseverance) and motivation.

**Figure 2**

*Success Process*
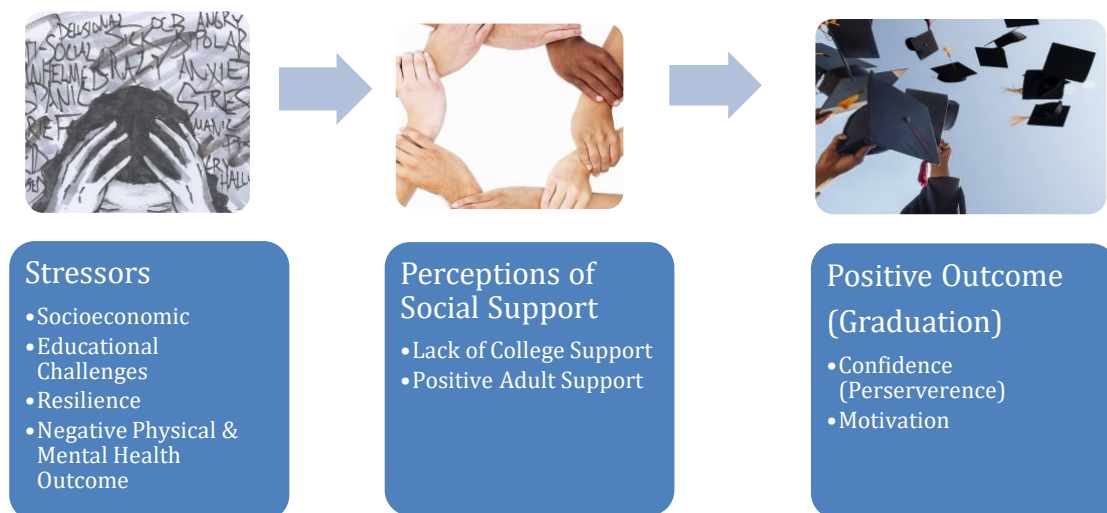
**Summary**

Chapter 4 presents the setting, demographics, data collection, and critical findings from the current study. I highlight the change in research design and data analysis process due to the recruitment challenges. I used the formal coding process by applying the phrases from the participant's responses, which progressed to the *initial* codes (level 1), and I moved incrementally to *category* codes (level 2). This movement brought level 1 and level 2 codes onto an even higher theoretical point, whereby *themes* (level 3) emerged. The findings from the current study support the internal goal and drives associated with the resiliency and the positive social support from others who helped the undergraduates believed helped them overcome barriers such as stressors to being academically successful. In Chapter 5, I discussed my interpretation of the findings, the study's limitations, and the recommendation for further research. I also discussed the implications of the study and how they can influence social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency of graduated undergraduates who experienced homelessness while they were enrolled as undergraduates. In addition, I explored what support systems they believed helped them overcome barriers to become academically successful (graduated). A case study design was used for this study to examine the complex, in-depth issues (see Zainal, 2007). I used a cross-case analysis, which allowed me to probe the different groups of the cases and how they shared similarities, as well as allowed me to explore complex issues previously correlated with barriers of academic success (see Yin, 2000). Some of these barriers included internal and external stressors, perceptions of social support, and the outcome (graduation) of college graduates who experienced homelessness when they were undergraduates and how the participants were successful. Including two case studies allowed me to explore each case individually and then together to determine different and shared experiences related to the topic being studied (see Stake, 1995).

I found that the participants experienced stressors of socioeconomics (homelessness and finances), educational challenges, resilience, and negative mental and physical health outcomes when experiencing homelessness during their undergraduate years. Participants' perception of social support included a lack of support from the institutions they attended but positive adult support from others. The findings supported findings from previous studies that suggested the presence of positive internal goals and drives is associated with perseverance during undergraduate years for those who graduate

(see Hanson et al., 1992; Reynolds & Weigand, 2010; Richardson & Waite, 2002; Zimmerman, 2013). My participants reported the ability to overcome barriers such as stressors and lack of college support from traditional sources, which could have prevented their academic success (graduation). These findings may inform more effective programs and supports for current undergraduates experiencing homelessness by facilitating dialogue between professionals and the problem of undergraduates experiencing homelessness. Understanding and contemplating the incorporation of supports and programs by universities and other nontraditional postsecondary institutions could reduce the barriers to academic success (graduation) for UGSEH.

## Interpretation of the Findings

The two research questions that I attempted to answer in this study were the following: (a) What were the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency of college graduates who experienced homelessness when they were undergraduates that they believed helped them overcome barriers to academic success? (b) What supports did college graduates who experienced homelessness when they were undergraduates believe helped them overcome barriers to being academically successful?

### Interpretation in Relation to Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used for the current study was resiliency theory (see Garmezy, 1991a; Masten et al., 2008; Rutter, 1987). The components of resilience theory are stressors, positive personality traits, confidence, motivation, perceptions of social supports, and outcome (Reynolds & Weigand, 2010; Richardson & Waite, 2002; Zimmerman, 2013). I used these components to organize my connections between the

information given by the participants in their interviews and what those connections meant concerning the theoretical framework.

*Stressors*

**Socioeconomic Stressors.** The information gathered from my participants indicated that they were able to demonstrate resiliency when faced with a variety of stressors while experiencing homelessness. Despite my participants being exposed to risk and stressors, they still reach their goals (see Garmezy, 1991a; Masten et al., 2008; Rutter, 1987). The stressor that was unique from any previous research was that each participant reported being undocumented U.S. residents.

- "I was staying in different places. My second semester, I was still undocumented. I didn't have a place to live, so I stayed with different friends from the university stayed with my boyfriend at times. I carried two backpacks, my books, and my clothes." (Participant 1)

- "I lived at home with my mother initially. And then my family are immigrants." (Participant 2)

Though undocumented residents of the United States have access to K–12 education, undocumented youths have no similar federal law that informs how they have access to higher education (Olivas, 2012). This results in individual states deciding how and what access and supports undocumented residents will have related to postsecondary education. This has caused significant gaps in access and degree attainment due to the inconsistency of how each state functions concerning admissions, financial aid resources, and tuition assistance (Shelton, 2014). The socioeconomic stressors associated with being

an undocumented U.S. resident forced each participant to find alternate means of housing, such as when Participant 1 aged out of foster care, which left her experiencing homelessness. However, she knew the benefits of enrolling in college, which allowed her to obtain campus residency and pursue her undergraduate degree. Participant 2 was in a toxic home environment, which caused her and her child to leave, thereby causing them to experience homelessness. However, because of the support of a social worker, she was able to acquire information about the shelter system and obtained residency for her and her child at a shelter.

- "I was leaving foster care. I was being emancipated from foster care in the LA County, and I felt that I needed to pursue a higher education. So, moving into the dorms was my only option because I didn't have another place to move into after emancipating from foster care." (Participant 1)

- "And the social worker in that building, she's the one, when I told her what I was going through, she told me about the shelter system. That I can go to the shelter system. So, I left, and I then went to the shelter system in New York City." (Participant 2)

**Educational Challenges.** There were numerous risk factors associated with being undocumented that both participants expressed. Additional economic pressures and work constraints limit undocumented students' ability to focus their time and energy on academics (Shelton, 2014). Each participant reported that their academics were negatively affected because of having to work while pursuing their undergraduate degrees; however, their employment allowed them to subsidize their daily living

expenses. A similar issue was reported by other undergraduates who experienced

homelessness (Pinto & Mansfield, 2006). Being undocumented did not deter current

participants from obtaining their degree. Educational challenges were also identified

concerning transportation; however, even though Participant 1 lived 1 hour away, she

could use the train system to get to school via a metro card that was purchased with

public assistance. Both participants could still move forward academically despite being

limited by personal and environmental circumstances caused by being undocumented

U.S. residents.

**Negative Health Outcomes.** Some reactions to stressors include a change in

eating habits, new responsibilities, change in sleeping habits, and increased workload

(Ross et al., 1999), which were identified as the negative health outcomes experienced by

each participant as an undocumented U.S. residence. However, Participant 1 used her

increased number of hours at work as a positive coping mechanism as she was

experiencing homelessness.

- "And the only way I was able to cope with it was to continue to work, work

  long hours." (Participant 1)

- "I couldn't concentrate. Depression was very high; suicidal ideation was very

  high. Loneliness was very high. The level of anxiety is very high."

  (Participant 1)

The responses given by the participants supported previous research related to

negative health outcomes related to stressors presented (see Ross et al., 1999), and their

being homeless resulted in negative mental and physical manifestations. Despite the

negative long-term impact of this experience on their lives, the participants were resilient and relearned the proper health postures. For example, Participant 1 established healthy eating habits and got the appropriate hours of sleep throughout the night.

- "I had a lot of the sleeping disorders eating habits where I would skip meals at times. I used to eat fast, and those are things that I had to relearn. Not to eat too fast because I had a real high .... I was drinking a lot, as well. And that alcohol became part of my coping mechanism. I believe that not until later on in life I was able to sleep at night, eight hours." (Participant 1)

- "I would just end up failing because I didn't realize I was I attributed it to me being lazy. And it was just so difficult for me to like manage that. Those were the days that I just kind of gave up. It wasn't until, I want to say, once I obtained stable housing my junior year that I was really able to do the work and sit down and produce." (Participant 2)

### *Positive Personality Traits*

Each participant revealed that while they were undergraduates, their positive personality traits assisted them in responding in specific ways despite being undocumented. Hanson et al. (1992) indicated that personality characteristics (traits), such as locus of control, motivation to achieve, hardiness, anxiety, and sensation seeking influenced how an individual reacts to stressors. These personality traits were evident in the current participants, and the motivation to achieve was demonstrated by Participant 2 because she had children who were counting on her to succeed. Participant 2 also used

the disappointment she felt for her mother as positive fuel igniting a mindset of not wanting to fail her children.

> So, I believe that when you bring children into the world, you are responsible for them. And because at that time, I had so much blame from my mother for everything bad that ever happened to me in my childhood due to her inadequate supervision, I took that so seriously. I took responsibility for anything that would possibly damage or harm my children. (Participant 2)

### *Confidence*

Confidence (perseverance) was found to have a role in the success of an undocumented student and was recognized by each participant during the interviews. The participants' success was seen through the lens of being unafraid to take ownership of their story and redefine expectations through their achievements (see Muñoz & Alleman, 2017). Each participant demonstrated confidence (perseverance) as they discussed their ability to move forward, their drive, and their ability to make a change that was a challenge as they pursued their undergraduate degree. Participant 1 was determined to be a social worker to institute change in the system that she experienced firsthand. She had the support of three instrumental mentors who provided her with the emotional support to gain the confidence to pursue and achieve her educational goal.

> I'm going to be a social worker I will change the way things are happening in LA County Foster Care System. To make that change, that was my drive. They believed in my drive. They believed in my drive. They saw potential in me. So, they encouraged me. They taught me to believe in myself and have hope and

change was coming, and I just needed to move forward. So, I had three mentors

that helped me along through the process. (Participant 1)

Some examples of confidence for undergraduate students were perseverance,

believing in oneself, and a high level of self-efficacy (Sainthilaire, 2019), which

Participant 1 reported in the study. However, some college students need to build their

confidence when faced with stressors to embrace more challenging tasks (Sainthilaire,

2019), which I concluded was evident with current participants and their willingness to

graduate.

### *Motivation*

Motivation (Credé & Phillips, 2011) was found to have a role in the success of an

undocumented student and was recognized by each participant during the interviews.

Throughout the interviews, it was clear that a positive outcome (graduation) influenced

participants while experiencing homelessness when they were working on their

undergraduate degree. Motivation was manifested through the drive and ability to move

forward as they focused on finishing their degree. Both participants were determined to

graduate despite the obstacles they faced and the number of years it took them to

graduate. It took Participant 1 8 years to graduate with a double bachelor's, and

Participant 2 5 and half years to obtain her bachelor's.

- "Because I had a double degree, a double BA, it took me eight years to

  graduate. I started in 1991, and I finished in 1998." (Participant 1)

- "I'll always keep on going. It may take me longer than other people, but I'm

  going to finish. So, I just kept ongoing. Even when it was tough, I just kept on

going because I just couldn't give up on myself. Instead of graduating in four-

years, it took me five and a half to get my bachelor's." (Participant 2)

Debicki et al. (2016) stated that much of a college student's motivation and intrinsic

satisfaction resulted from whether they perceived themselves as capable of successfully

accomplishing the challenging task, which ended up producing the positive outcome of

graduation in the current study. Both participants pushed their education to another level

when they graduated with their masters degrees.

### *Perceptions of Social Support*

Undergraduate students who used effective coping strategies and their perception

of social support available to them reported lower stressor levels and experienced greater

success (Calicchia & Graham, 2006); however, because the participants in the current

study were undocumented U.S. residents, they did not report lower levels of stress but

were able to experience greater success, which was obtaining their bachelor's degree.

Perceived social support was found to limit the harmful impact of stress associated with

undergraduate students (Alvan et al., 1996; Farrell & Langrehr, 2017). The lack of

college support was evident in the current participants' interviews. The lack of

accessibility and knowledge concerning the programs available to the participants in this

study at their colleges was a disadvantage toward their academic success. "I couldn't tell

you "(Participant 2).

Through their positive social supports, each participant indicated they could rely

on themselves during stressful or difficult times, which assisted in their academic success

(see Perez, 2009). Their social support was limited due to their being undocumented;

however, they had the support of an adult through a counselor, a boyfriend and his families, and a social worker, which played an integral part in the success of their graduation. Also, both participants were women, who aligned with the research by Werner (1989) who stated that women are generally more skilled in accessing and using social supports and resources.

- "I had a counselor; I had a boyfriend at that time who would ask his parents if I could spend the night." (Participant 1)

- "My boyfriend and his family." (Participant 2)

### *Outcomes*

Findings from this study showed how each participant when faced with stressors, demonstrated positive personality traits, confidence, motivation, and perceptions of social support despite being undocumented. The combination of these components of resiliency (positive personality traits, confidence, motivation, and perceptions of social support) produced the ability to achieve the positive outcome (graduation) during their time of experiencing homelessness. Though each participant was faced with stressors, each component of resilience allowed them to overcome multiple barriers. The social support of an adult and their drive to make a change were the main things that led each participant. The current participants expressed their resilience as they pondered past behaviors and how that influenced their positive graduation outcome.

- "I wanted to impact others, change, improve the way foster care system was for foster youth in LA County. So that was the main reason. I was abused in

foster care, so I wanted to make sure that I became a social worker so I could

decertify those people that abused me." (Participant 1)

- "Yeah, just my mother's voice. My mother was a home health aide, and she

  worked real hard. She used to have to work 12-hour shifts. Sometimes she

  would have to just .... She would come home, sleep for 2 hours, and go back.

  And her recipe for success was a degree. At the time, she was convinced that

  in order for you to be successful, you have to have a college degree. She

  didn't have a degree, and a lady who had a degree was more successful than

  she was. So, it was set into me that you have to have a degree to be successful.

  And because I really, really wanted to be able to provide my children with a

  certain lifestyle, I just knew I had to finish in order for me to be able to give

  them that life that I envisioned for them." (Participant 2)

Individuals demonstrate personality traits when they act on opportunities in the

environment and bring about meaningful change (Bateman & Crant, 1993). The current

study supported what each participant experienced that produced a positive graduation

outcome. Participant 2 had the personality traits (confidence and motivation), and her

goal to succeed was connected to her determination to provide more for her children. "So,

for the sake of my kids, I just kept ongoing. And once I get the job, I'm going to have

enough money for me to be able to take care of them; and that was just my focus"

(Participant 2).

**Interpretation in Relation to Literature Review**

During the literature review, I addressed multiple areas: homelessness in higher education, reasons that students who experienced homelessness with participating in college, factors related to academic success in college, negative effects of experiencing homelessness while attending college, and support for students in higher education experiencing homelessness. The subjects previously described aimed to obtain an understanding of the resiliency and success (graduation) of graduated UGSEH. during their undergraduate years. Brené Brown (2010) claimed that undocumented students demonstrated resilience in navigating higher education, which aligns with both participants' claims of being undocumented U. S. residences and displaying resilience.

*Homelessness in Higher Education/Reasons Students Experienced Homelessness*

Due to homelessness, many undergraduate students enroll in postsecondary education for the dependable structure and safety (Gupton, 2017); however, this was difficult for the participants because they were undocumented. One participant was homeless due to family conflict and the other because of aging out of foster care; however, this did not prevent them from working on their degrees. Due to the challenging issues undocumented youths experience, a college degree may seem impossible (Gupton, 2017). However, 85% of formerly homeless youths indicated they intended to enroll in college compared to 96% of undergraduates who never experienced homelessness (Gupton, 2017). Being undocumented did not deter current participants from obtaining their degree despite the obstacles.

I didn't get the luxury to be carefree. I didn't have the same worries like most people were worried about. I remember people being like anal about the type of grade they were getting. So, they would be arguing with professors over certain grades and deadlines. And at the time, that was never my concern. I was there and I was attempting to get the work done, but just overall I was just consumed with my present situation. (Participant 1)

In conclusion, one implication for the current study was that both participants were undocumented U. S. residences experiencing homelessness and had to find alternative methods because to barriers but were able to remain resilient and graduate.

### *Socioeconomics and Academic Success in College*

Both participants in the current study expressed socioeconomic issues, which aligned with the research by Abrego and Gonzales (2010) who stated that high levels of economic mobility for immigrant students set them on a path of poverty, disenfranchisement, and frustration. Although the participants experienced socioeconomic issues this may be a concern for administrators to ensure that UGSEH and immigrant students needs being met so that they can be successful academically. Other authors concluded that most college students worked while attending college (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003; Wood et al., 2016), which affected their academic success (McMillion, 2005). Employment by UGSEH may be perceived as a negative factor related to academics because when they must work, which can take time and focus away from completing academic activities (Wood et al., 2016).

After receiving my Green Card in 1992, the end of June, I was able to move into a

unit a place, and I was able to find a part-time job. So, I was able to pay for a

place to stay while I was going to school and working. (Participant 1)

The findings of both study participants agreed with some authors who concluded

that a vast majority of college students would work while attending college (see U.S.

Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003; Wood et al.,

2016), which affected their academic success (see McMillion, 2005). Even though both

study participants had experienced homelessness, were undocumented U. S. residents,

and took longer to graduate because of socioeconomic challenges and working while

attending college. The participants who possessed the resiliency components (positive

personality traits, confidence, motivation, and perception of social support) may had a

greater chance of obtaining their undergraduate degree.

### *Negative Effects of Experiencing Homelessness*

Many negative factors were explored concerning immigrant students, which

compounded their experiences associated with pursuing their undergraduate degrees.

Exploring undocumented participants' negative effects on their academics and working

while attending college. This may have attributed to the participant's lack of interaction

with higher education, which may have caused them to gravitate towards their feelings of

being invisible on campus. This information may be essential in identifying future

barriers that may hinder or halt the pursuance of their undergraduate degree.

In summary, the lack of support from higher education for students experiencing

homelessness and the perception of social support stood against the effects of stressors

(Calicchia & Graham, 2006), which each participant indicated through their positive

social supports of others. Having the support of an adult was related to the overall

academic performance (Huang et al., 2018) and a mentoring component that focused on

developing relationships between some students who have experienced homelessness and

with other adults in a college setting (Huang et al., 2018) however, this could be difficult

for immigrant students. Nevertheless, both study participants had the positive social

support of adults while pursuing their undergraduate degree, however, the negative

effects of homelessness did not consume them.

**Retention/Graduation/Student Debt**. The stressors UGSEH may encounter,

including physical or mental trauma, family conflict, and developmental or other

educational challenges, were related to lowered retention (Crutchfield, 2018; Gupton,

2017) for undocumented immigrants who was supported during the interviews of this

study. UGSEH when attending colleges are 13 times more likely to fail courses and 11

times more likely to withdraw from courses/college or not register for more classes than

undergraduates who are not homeless (Silva et al., 2017); each current undocumented U.

S. participant experienced these educational challenges while pursuing their

undergraduate degree. This could be important for administrators to identify any warning

signs to better assist current and upcoming undergraduates experiencing homelessness.

Then to the 2-year (her grades) kinda dwindled and over the years in between me

trying to catch up. And then, in the last year, each semester, it was like a 4.0 or a

3.0 as opposed to a 2.0 or 1.9. (Participant 2)

Student debt for the UGSEH population in the United States could be largely tied to poverty and economic hardship (Gupton, 2017) that each undocumented participant expressed during this study. Although the National Conference of State Legislatures reported in February 2014 that many states were charging immigrant students out-of-state tuition costs (2014). The addition to the manifestation of poverty on college campuses and the limitations of financial aid programs reduces opportunities for students to attend college and obtain a degree (Ringer, 2015), which both participants indicated as scholarships financed their college degrees. "Because I was a California resident, there were partial scholarships for California residents, and I had another scholarship from LA County, Los Angeles County, a private nonprofit that paid for my books" (Participant 1).

In closing, another implication that can be drawn for both undocumented participants found that the stressors included physical or mental trauma, family conflict, and developmental or other educational challenges affected lowered retention for UGSEH (see Crutchfield, 2018; Gupton, 2017). Some colleges may create programs designed to support the specific academic, psychosocial, and mental health needs for some UGSEH (Gupton, 2017). However, none of these programs were available to either of the undocumented study participants. Nevertheless, the current study's' findings may be essential for higher education leadership to identify any warning signs to better assist the current and upcoming undergraduates who are experiencing homelessness.

**Invisibility.** Students who had experienced homelessness and were undocumented while attending college have reported feeling invisible while on campus (Gupton, 2017). Some students indicated this level of invisibility was beneficial because

they could blend in and avoid the feelings of stigmatization that occurred when others

knew they were experiencing homelessness. A downside of this invisibility could be that

when these students need assistance, they may not know where to access support

(Gupton, 2017), which was annotated in the perception of social support and the on-

campus resources sections of the current study. Both participants in my study expressed

that they felt invisible and disconnected from others because they were undocumented

and experienced homelessness. This information may be valuable in assisting those

experiencing homelessness and contemplating pursuing an education. Also, this data

could improve the higher education experience of the college student currently

experiencing homelessness.

- "I felt like I couldn't relate to my friends. A lot of my experience of
  homelessness to .... Kept it very private. My friends felt like I wanted to hang
  out, but, in fact, I didn't have a place to go. So not until later on in life they
  found out that the reason I was so much in their units in their apartments was
  because I was homeless, but I was too embarrassed. I didn't participate too
  much into groups. Although I was involved in just one organization, they still
  didn't know I was homeless. I couldn't fit in. I met great people, but they
  didn't know that the beginnings of it was very difficult. And the only way I
  was able to cope with it was to continue to work, work long hours."
  (Participant 1)
- "As it pertained to my friendships, I withdrew. So, for what a young 20
  something-year-old, a 19, 20 something year old usually are doing, I didn't

have the luxury of that experience. At the time, I really wasn't socializing

with my friends. I guess I kinda just disappeared from everyone. I kind of like

would withdraw." (Participant 2)

Many UGSEH and undocumented students may be unwilling to talk about their

challenges and hide their circumstances with those who can help them, which may be due

to the stigma (Crutchfield, 2018; Gupton, 2017); the findings of the current study have

supported. However, higher education may appoint a director of student wellness and

basic needs that was reported by Goldrick-Rab et al. (2019). This team could perform

case management and be the point of contact for UGSEH (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019).

### *Support for Higher Education Students Experiencing Homelessness*

On-campus, resources are assets that may not be available to undocumented

students and those experiencing homelessness. The on-campus resources may be

essential for the students currently experiencing homelessness and for the betterment of

colleges and universities to meet the needs of their entire population. The findings in the

current study and the need for support for higher education may reflect the conclusions of

Gupton (2017), who suggested that there could be a need for more work on institutional

support for UGSEH and undocumented students.

Students were not required to identify as homeless to college faculty and staff

within college environments (Crutchfield, 2018; Crutchfield et al., 2016; Hallett &

Crutchfield, 2018) that was also reported by each of the undocumented participants. As

described in the lack of college support, UGSEH and undocumented students were often

unfamiliar with the support structures available to them through the university. This was

also the case for my participants. On-campus resources could be important for undocumented students and UGSEH to know and have access because this may equip and assist them in their success in obtaining their undergraduate degrees. This allows everyone to have unfettered access to the same on-campus resources while giving everyone a sense of being a part of the campus family.

> I guess I wasn't very well educated about the college experience or .... You know how Walden has like the get started kinda class where they walk you through, and they go, this is where you go for this, this is where you go for that? And you may not need it at the time they're telling it to you, but eventually, when it comes across you, you're like, "Oh, I can go here and ask them for this," because you were informed that it was available. I never had that. I remember going to student orientation, but did I obtain that information? No. (Participant 2)

The current study findings align with the literature and affirmed the body of knowledge regarding the lack of on-campus resources attributed to stressors experienced by undocumented students experiencing homelessness. However, many tools may help undocumented UGSEH in overcoming their stressors. One stressor for UGSEH can be housing. Because lack of affordable housing was an issue, according to Tsui et al. (2011), 29% of undergraduate students reported not having enough money to pay rent and utilities. According to Broton and Goldrick-Rab (2017), there were few resources, and rarely housing provided on-campus at community colleges for those in need of housing support. There were few college students (19%) who received public assistance related to housing (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2017) and some housing assistance programs that

specifically restrict the eligibility for undergraduate students that can be viewed as a nationwide problem for the lack of affordable housing (Sackett, 2015).

The housing assistance programs can be implemented like the examples I outlined in a previous chapter. This university had taken a holistic approach by providing year-round housing, one-to-one case management, scholarships, and temporary housing to those previously experiencing homelessness. Another holistic approach was indicated by Hallett and Crutchfield (2018) that postsecondary institutions might need to consider ways to include counseling and year-round housing for this population. Some colleges allowed housing to be used by fraternities and sororities to remain open for UGSEH during school breaks (Affordable Colleges, 2020). However, if the postsecondary institutions cannot provide year-round housing, subsidized or affordable housing options near campus should be an option (Affordable Colleges, 2020). On-campus resources could be important for UGSEH to know and have access because this may equip and assist them in their success in obtaining their undergraduate degree. This allows everyone to have unfettered access to the same on-campus resources while giving UGSEH a sense of being a part of the campus family.

## Limitations of the Study

Given that this was a qualitative case study, I assumed that multiple realities existed within the study, including me as the researcher, the participants being studied, and the reader of the study (see Hathaway, 1995). Qualitative researchers assume that participants' reflections of a lived experienced uniquely and accurately conveyed (Hathaway, 1995). Due to the interview being in a private setting, I assumed that the

participants would answer all interview questions openly and were honestly (see Guest et al., 2006; Patton, 2015). I asked the participants to provide personal information on a sensitive topic; therefore, the data the participants chose to disclose may have been limited.

Participants seemed to be comfortable providing insight into their experiences (see Sheparis et al., 2010) related to homelessness while they were undergraduate students. However, participants may have held back details they were uncomfortable discussing and may have chosen to divulge only the information they were comfortable sharing. Lastly, I assumed that the participants sharply recalled their experiences (see Hathaway, 1995) of being homeless as an undergraduate. I addressed these limitations by using probing questions during the interviews, which allowed the participants to clarify any information they provided (see Price, 2003).

I ensured credibility during my transcription of the data, data analysis, and interpretation by doing these accurately and reaching out to the participants if something was not evident during this process. I also used a reflexive journal throughout the process that I referred to during data analysis and interpretation to maintain credibility. In the reflexive journal, I recorded my thoughts, feelings, and any biases I had when interviewing, reviewing, and interpreting data to be aware of how these things may have influenced and skewed the lenses I was using to filter the data. I addressed confirmability using a reflexive journal throughout each stage of the research process to reflect on any biases, thoughts, and feelings I had as the research proceeded. By identifying these feelings that could arise, I immediately reflected on them and controlled any

preconceived biases and emotions that may influence how I interpreted the data (see Tuffold & Newman, 2010). I also addressed confirmability with member checking that was used throughout the transcription of the data and data interpretation. I conducted member checking by emailing each participant's transcribed data to ensure that the data I collected accurately represented what the participant said during the interview.

Also, locating willing participants and potentially not obtaining an adequate response rate within the sample size or recruiting an appropriate sample size (Simon & Goes, 2013). To address this limitation, I recruited participants using purposeful, convenience, and snowball sampling methods to widen the possibilities of recruiting as many eligible individuals as possible (see Patton, 2015). I used multiple social media through Facebook and LinkedIn groups and the Walden University Participation Pool, which produced only two participants. This small sample identified both participants as women and limited the results of the study ability to generalize. Another limitation was the narrowness of my inclusion. The parameters of the current study included individuals who were over the age of 18 that had graduated from their undergraduate institution, experienced homelessness for a minimum of one academic semester or quarter when enrolled in their undergraduate program, and individuals who have graduated with a bachelor's degree. A challenge was finding individuals who graduated from their undergraduate program that experienced homelessness when they were undergraduate students because they may not want to self-identify. Although I obtained advice from colleagues during the recruitment process, I was often asked why they had to be a

graduate with a bachelor's degree. One individual informed me that the field for recruitment would have been wider if my inclusion had been an associate degree.

## Recommendations

The sample size was small and both participants identified as women. Although I anticipated participation recruitment to be challenging because of the uniqueness of a population that had experienced homelessness and graduated with a bachelor's degree, I expected to find the anticipated number of participants. Although I obtained advice from colleagues during the recruitment process, I was often asked why they had to have a bachelor's degree. One individual informed me the field for recruitment would have been wider if my inclusion had been an associate degree. I anticipated that 10-12 participants would be enough to reach data saturation and answer the research questions. However, after almost 6 months of recruitment and the issues described in Chapter 4, I only interviewed two participants successfully. Suggestions for future researchers include to apply a range of different platforms (such as various online outlets and in person) to recruit more potential participants who would meet the inclusion criteria. In addition, having a broader inclusion criterion for current students enrolled in college who are experiencing homelessness and the graduated undergraduates with an associate degree could have assisted with reaching additional prospective individuals.

Although the research questions were designed to identify the internal goal and drives associated with the resiliency while exploring what supports college graduates believed helped them overcome barriers to being academically successful. None of the participants mentioned any college supports, which may have been due to not having the

anticipated number of participants in the current study. This could be valuable information that supports or rejects the increased number of colleges now providing resources to assist UGSEH (see Affordable Colleges, 2020). Therefore, future researchers could conduct program reviews of support programs to investigate campus resources available to UGSEH and their accessibility to these resources.

This may include researching the campus process by the administration towards the UGSEH. These researchers found the need for the development of campus programs and services for some UGSEH; however, there may not be an exploration of the barriers or supports outside of college environments (see Crutchfield, 2018). Due to the small number of educational researchers who have focused on students experiencing homelessness while undergraduates (see Gupton, 2017); future researchers could continue studying UGSEH to continue to advance the literature and lessen the gap.

## Implications

The potential for social change of this study may be to help identify the positive and protective factors among UGSEH and provide an understanding of how they were able to be academically successful (graduated) despite being homeless. The information gathered from this study may facilitate dialogue between professionals to identify ways to develop more effective programs and supports for current UGSEH. The results may allow undocumented students and UGSEH unfettered access to the same resources as those not experiencing homelessness, while giving them a sense of being a part of the campus family. Thereby, UGSEH who have difficulty with quitting may be igniting positive personality traits such as confidence, motivation, and perseverance. Higher

education leaders could use this information from this study to inform their policies, practices, and support programs to increase positive outcomes to assist current undergraduate students who are in similar situations.

This information could be essential in identifying future barriers that may hinder or halt UGSEH from pursuing their undergraduate degree. The lack of support from the colleges has improved over the years; however, more may be done. The information from the current study may assist those experiencing homelessness, those contemplating pursuing an education, while improving the higher education experience of the college students currently experiencing homelessness. The results from this study could be essential for the students currently experiencing homelessness and for the betterment of colleges and universities to meet the needs of their entire population.

## Conclusion

I used a general qualitative approach for the current study to investigate the internal goals and drives associated with the resiliency of graduated undergraduates who experienced homelessness while they were enrolled as undergraduates. In addition, I explored what support systems they believed helped them overcome barriers to become academically successful (graduated). Results of the study indicated the undocumented participants experienced the stressors of socioeconomics (homelessness and finances), educational challenges, resilience, and negative mental and physical health outcomes. The information discovered in the current study highlighted that when stressors arise, each participant demonstrated the components of resiliency (positive personality traits, confidence, motivation, and perception of social supports), which assisted them in

becoming successful (graduation). Both participants went on to obtain their master's

degrees. The findings from the current study may contribute to the literature through the

positive outcome of the internal goals and drives associated with the participant's

perseverance. The participants believed the positive adult supports of others helped them

overcome barriers such as the stressors and lack of support from the institutions they

attended, which could have prevented their academic success (graduation).

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Appendix A: Recruitment Posting

Research participants needed!!

You may qualify to participate for this study if:

- able to understand and answer questions in English,
- currently above the age of 18,
- experienced homelessness for a minimum of one academic semester or quarter when enrolled in their undergraduate program, and
- completed at least an undergraduate (bachelor's degree).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the internal goals and drives of graduates who experienced homelessness when they were undergraduates that they believed helped them overcome barriers to academic success (graduation). In addition, I also want to investigate which support systems that you believed helped you overcome barriers to being academically successful (graduated). The information you provide may be helpful in understanding how best to support the needs of current undergraduate students who are in similar situations.

The information you provide in this study will be strictly confidential and only used for the purpose of the study. The research project is part of a dissertation study conducted by a Walden University doctoral candidate.

**The interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes of your time and will be conducted over the phone.**

**To volunteer to participate, please provide your contact information.**

**If you know anyone who you think may be eligible to participate in this project, please feel free to share this information.**

**If you are chosen to be interviewed you will receive a $20 Wal-Mart 'thank-you' gift card as a token of appreciation for your time and effort. **

Appendix B: Demographic Item

1. What is your gender?

2. What is your ethnicity?

3. What is your age?

4. What was your family dynamics when you were experiencing homelessness (i.e. I was single when I experienced homelessness in college)?

5. What year did you graduate from your undergraduate program?

6. What is your highest level of education?

7. Can I contact you for a follow-up to send you a transcript of the interview?

## Interview Script

**Introduction**

- Permission to audio-record interview

- Thank you for your participation

- Review formal consent

**Opening Statement**

- Voluntary nature of the interview

- Confidentiality of responses is guaranteed

- Approximate length of interview: 45-60 minutes

**Participant Interview Questions**

**Conclusion/Closing Statement**

- Thank you to interviewee/reassure confidentiality

- Contacts and Questions/ask permission to follow-up

Appendix C: Professional Transcription Services

GMR Transcription Services, Inc., strives to provide great transcription for all projects. Athough their company was developed in 2004, accuracy, great service, and transparency are their company values.
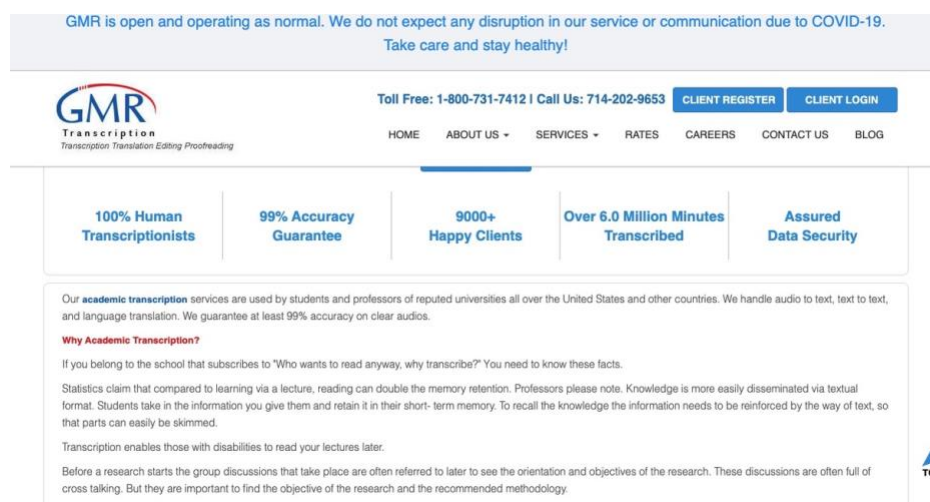
GMR Transcription is a one stop transcription service provider in the United States. With over 6.0 million minutes of audio recorded, 9000+ clients, and guaranteeing 99% accuracy for good audio. GMR is a trusted source for accurate and quick transcription service. Their United States only transcribers come from a multitude of backgrounds to ensure that the transcript expectations are met.

All academic transcriptions are confidential. The client information is masked before the document is sent to their transcribers. Furthermore, their certified transcribers are requested to sign confidentiality agreements upon hire; this forbids them from disclosing any information to an outside party.

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