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# Minority Student Food Insecurity in Higher Education

Joe Sevillano
*University of San Francisco*, jsevi006@gmail.com

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# ABSTRACT

The minority student population in higher education has been affected by food insecurity at a disproportionate rate. Several studies have captured some of the issues associated with the material deficit but fail to identify more in-depth contributing factors. Using the theoretical framework of intersectionality, the researcher examines the experience, interpretation, and navigation of food insecurity in a medium-sized university located in a major city on the west coast. The researcher interviewed three students that self-identified as having multiple minority identities and experiencing some level of food insecurity while pursuing a degree. Findings from three rounds of interviews gave further context to participant's decision-making and their journey toward seeking a degree through the creation of a narrative. Through these interviews, the following themes are explored: the university as a racial structure, identity as a barrier to resource use, and how to best tailor adequate interventions for student use.

# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

For many years, the United States has branded itself as the land of opportunity where one can go and through hard work make a name for themselves. Hard work in this context is somewhat hard to define, but there seems to be a consensus that this often includes the path of higher education to attain upward mobility (Willis, 2019, p. 167). While being a great way to attain skills and get into the job market, a quality education can sometimes be hard to come by for those who enter without many resources. Some face the harsh reality that this is a country still plagued by systemic oppression. The path to success often includes having the right resources. Higher education costs have risen but family incomes, financial aid, and government support have plateaued or even decreased in recent years (Frank, 2020). According to some estimates, at least 20% of annual income is paid by 75% of families with students pursuing a higher education. This is after accounting for all financial aid (Frank, 2020, p. 32). The culmination of these things has left some students vulnerable and led to material hardships on college campuses throughout the nation.

## Statement of the Problem

While many students pour into the university system every year, the struggle of being a first time college student is something that has only recently started to be documented (Willis, 2019; Ilieva, 2018). For some, coming into a very different setting brings with it a new set of challenges due to living expenses, rising tuition costs, or gaps in the social safety net (Willis, 2019, p. 168). One challenge that is explored is that of food insecurity. Prevailing myths about college students leave the perception that food insecurity is not an issue for entitled millennials (Willis, 2019, p. 167). However, food insecurity rates are higher for college students than those

found nationally in the United States (Cady, 2014, p. 266). Several studies have adequately

captured the issues associated with this material deficit and try to pinpoint contributing factors

(Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Gaines et al., 2014; Knol et al., 2018; Willis, 2019).

The strategies that students use to cope with food insecurity have been studied in recent

years. These include a range of approaches such as buying cheap fast food, sharing with

roommates, and suppressing hunger amongst others (Henry, 2017, p. 14). Some of these

techniques can become hazardous to the student's health and wellbeing and many food-insecure

students will have trouble in school as it becomes harder to concentrate; grades may begin to

suffer if other solutions are not found (Maynard et al., 2018). The stigma associated with food

insecurity has only made it harder to find such solutions (Henry, 2017, p. 6). The strategies that

students have used to navigate through their education have had consequences of their own.

Students of color are disproportionately represented among food-insecure students

(Willis, 2019, p. 168). One 2017 study noted that nearly 32% of undergraduate students at a four-

year university experienced food insecurity (Willis, p. 167). To think of how minority

populations are faring in this is what is most alarming. These students must now deal with the

daily stresses related to not having enough resources and managing many obligations such as

academics, work, family, and balancing time pressures (Khosla et al., 2019). The statistical

differences in how Latino/a American, African American, Asian American, and other mixed

ethnicities experience these pressures means that they must also navigate their colleges in a

different way that is conducive to their success (Ileiva et al., 2018). For example, these students

would frequently focus on the cost and convenience of the food, which made bodegas and

vending machines some of the most popular ways to get food (Ilieva et al. 2018, p. 7). In

addition to this, research demonstrates that students from certain minority groups are more likely

to have experienced inequalities prior to attending college, such as a lower socioeconomic status (Willis, 2019, p.174). Because of this, interventions geared towards these minority students should be designed with these risks in mind (Willis, 2019).

Financial factors are also part of this equation. While material hardships are the product of a myriad of decisions and conditions, none is more prominent than the deficit related to the cost of obtaining food (Broton & Goldrick, 2016, p. 18). For example, the University of Alabama reported food insecurity in 38.4% of its surveyed population (Knol et al., 2018, p. 39). Students who experience material deficits are often not equipped to make the best decisions for their health and wellbeing (Frank, 2020). In addition to this, low-income students may find themselves in danger of failing to complete their degree program, as they may be unable to pay for college without incurring other hardships (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016). The way students work through their finances is directly related to the material deficits they encounter in school.

Food insecurity is a student issue. The problems faced by college students are often associated with societal and institutional issues that should be addressed. Current research is still lacking but has pointed to inequalities in the way that students are served. It also finds that risk factors can stem from financial, food, and resource management skills amongst other variables (Gaines et al., 2014). Specifically, higher education institutions are missing the mark on finding useful and adequate solutions to students who have experienced food insecurity and are at the cross section of multiple minority identities.

**Background and Need**

The research surrounding food insecurity on college campuses has expanded in the last twenty years as schools have realized the negative effect on student success. One of the ways in which vulnerable students can be helped is for institutions to tap into their resources and change

policies that are harming those that are economically insecure (Broton & Goldrick Rab, 2016).

For example, universities can conduct a cost/benefit analysis on mandatory fees for resources

that a student may not necessarily need. Research also suggests that administrators interested in

diminishing food insecurity should focus on investigating student perceptions so they offer

solutions that will be used (Illieva et al., 2018). This social safety net is needed as federal and

state policies stagger to get caught up (Broton & Goldrick Rab, 2016). In the absence of this

institutional response, research on the topic of student food insecurity suggests that the growing

cost of higher education will continue to increase food insecurity in college students, as they

continue to borrow through financial aid and other means (Gaines et al., 2014, pp. 383-384).

Minority students can stand to benefit the most from interventions as they often arrive at

college without the necessary resources to succeed (Willis, 2019). However, not all demographic

metrics have been taken into account when prescribing solutions. If understanding of these

groups is to be maximized, there is a need to explore the experiences of those with various

intersecting social identities (Museus & Griffin, 2011, p. 9). This may aid in reimagining

solutions, and revising existing policies and practices that have previously ignored the

complexities of students with multiple identities.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this thesis is to conduct a narrative study in order to understand the

experiences of food-insecure students who identify as members of two or more minoritized

groups. The knowledge gained from this study should be used to inform administrators and

policy makers in an effort to support knowledge surrounding existing institutional inequities and

access to resources. It may also aid in the process of designing and implementing interventions.

This study included three people over 18 years of age that self-identified across two or more minoritized identities, and attend a medium sized private university in Northern California.

## Research Question

The question that guided this research comes from Ilieva et al. who recommended that college administrators looking for ways to alleviate food insecurity on campus investigate student perceptions and experience. This would lead to better understanding the scope of the problem and providing more effective offerings (2018, p. 10). Specifically, this thesis attempts to answer the following:

- How might the narrative of a student, who identifies as a member of two or more minoritized groups, and who experiences, navigates, and interprets food insecurity on campus help to inform college administrators who are interested in alleviating students' food insecurity?

## Theoretical Framework/Rationale

The intersectional identity framework was used as a theoretical framework for this thesis. Intersectionality claims that minority groups simultaneously experience multiple forces of oppression and are often subjected to misguided or mismanaged solutions by those who do not understand the complexities of the intersections formed from those multiple identities. Intersectionality was used in this thesis because it gave insight into how personalized and unique potential interventions should be. Some of the foundational authors who have contributed to the intersectional identity framework include (a) Crenshaw (1991) who made the initial claim that traditional boundaries of discrimination cannot completely explain the intersection of societal factors that Black women experience; (b) Museus and Griffin (2011) expanding this to include

the unique experience created by inhabiting multiple identities; (c) Carey et al. (2017) adding how forces of oppression can intersect and impact the lives of individuals simultaneously. Taken together, these authors provide a framework for comprehending the unique experiences of food-insecure students who identify as members of two or more minoritized groups. This claim is supported by Museus and Griffin noting, "If higher education researchers are to maximize understanding of their students, they must explore the experiences of these groups situated at the intersections of various social identities and groupings" (2011, p. 9).

## Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations including: (a) the timeframe of the study; (b) the sampling procedure and sample size; (c) methods/data collection process; (d) quality and quantity of the data collected/used in the study; (e) researcher bias/subjectivity; (f) positionality. The COVID-19 global pandemic also added limitations to this study as much of the work was done remotely due to citywide restrictions on the use of public and private spaces. The timeframe of this included a limitation because the study was conducted in one semester. Another limitation can be found in the convenience sample used for this study because not all members of the larger population of the university were given an opportunity to participate in this study. This may influence the results because the value of a narrative study does not lie in its ability to be replicated or generalized. Capturing what participants' stories speak will not be captured through generalizations (deMarrais & Lapan, 2004, p. 113). Related to this, the small size of the sample means that the results of this study cannot be used to define food insecurity experiences about the population of the university as a whole. The methods and data collection procedures for this study also include limitations. Data was collected through web conferencing software, which influenced the length of meetings and the student's comfort level. The quality of the data

collected for this study may include limitations such as the online delivery method that may influence the way stories were communicated and were subject to technical issues. In addition, I as the researcher hold a positive bias toward my own identities, which include being Black, Latino, queer, middle class, a first generation college student, and an immigrant. This may limit the data collection and interpretations process by influencing my analysis. Finally, my positionality as the researcher and staff member of the university also has an impact.

## Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is in filling a gap in the existing research around the experience of food insecurity (Henry, 2017, p. 17). This thesis may be of interest to students, teachers, professors, administrators, authors of policy/law/legislation, student affairs professionals, and researchers in the field of higher education. It may hold significance for students because of the benefits that they can obtain for themselves. It may serve teachers and professors as a tool to inform classroom and school practice. In addition, this thesis may also interest administrators and authors of policy and legislation because many of the inequalities tied to food insecurity are part of systemic issues that existed prior to college attendance. These issues may be changed through proper implementation of solutions and strategies aimed at vulnerable populations (Willis, 2019). It may also help "shape advocacy strategies into concrete agendas that transcend traditional single-axis horizons" (Cho et al. 2013, p. 785). Finally, this thesis may be important to student affairs professionals and researchers in the field because this research gives a holistic view of how students at the intersection of multiple identities should be served.

**Definition of Terms**

- Food Insecurity: A household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food found in a range from low food security (reduced quality and desirability of diet) to very low food insecurity (multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns). (USDA, 2019)

- Intersectionality: Describes the ways interlocking systems of oppression through forces such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, age, nation of origin, etc. frame an individual's social world. (Carey et al. 2017)

- Minority: People coming from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and those from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups (Khosla et al., 2019, p. 5)

- Narrative: A way of knowing that organizes the human experience expressed through stories (deMarrais & Lapan, 2004)

# CHAPTER II

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The claim of worth for this literature review is that students located at the intersections of various marginalized and discriminated groups are more vulnerable to food insecurity, a reality which has a negative impact on retention rate, graduation rates, and well-being. The body of scholarship that justifies this claim includes three sets of evidence that demonstrate: (a) who is food insecure and what are impacts of food insecurity on academics; (b) how students cope with food insecurity; and (c) institutional responses. The intersectionality theory is used to frame this body of scholarship.

### Theoretical Framework: Intersectionality

Intersectionality theory claims that minority groups simultaneously experience multiple forces of oppression and are often subjected to misguided or mismanaged solutions by those who do not understand the complexities of their intersectionality. This section includes a brief history of the intersectionality identity framework which includes (a) Crenshaw's (1991) original scholarship claiming that traditional boundaries of discrimination cannot completely explain the intersection of societal factors that Black women experience; (b) the work of Museus and Griffin (2011) that articulates the unique experience created by inhabiting multiple identities; and (c) the ideas developed by Carey, Yee, and Dematthews (2017) that illustrate how forces of oppression can intersect and impact the lives of individuals simultaneously. This progression of thought is important because it started with the acknowledgement of the cross section between race and gender but has now grown to include many other forces of oppression. It is used to frame the literature in this chapter because maximizing the way in which we understand student

populations can be best done through research that explores the experiences of those that find themselves in the intersections of multiple identities (Museus & Griffin, 2011).

The foundational work that defines intersectionality includes the work of Crenshaw (1991). Crenshaw claims that traditional boundaries of discrimination cannot completely explain the intersection of societal factors that Black women experience. The need for this theory arose because the act of isolating minority women into race or gender groups failed to speak to their full-lived experience and limited the opportunities available to help them. Limiting their experience to race often overlooked how women of color were burdened by issues stemming from gender and class oppression such as childcare, poverty, and lack of job skills (Crenshaw, 1991, pp. 1245-1246). This theory responds to "the multilayered and routinized forms of dominance that often converge" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1245) in the lives of women of color. This theory challenges the thinking that we should only be focusing on one part of a person's identity, as interventions geared towards women only based on their shared experience will only provide limited help in the presence of different obstacles. Around the late 1980s, Crenshaw noticed that feminist efforts and antiracist efforts had "frequently proceeded as though the issues and experiences they each detail occur on mutually exclusive terrains" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242). In instances where both race and gender were present in issues, the position as a woman of color was often dismissed to allow sexism to have higher rank (Crenshaw, 1991). This original scholarship is important because it articulates how women of color are failed by a system that only tries to find solutions to oppression within the confines of one of these identities.

Another progression in this field of thought is represented by Carey, Yee, and Dematthews (2017), who advocate for the use of critical consciousness in finding impactful

solutions within the K-12 school setting. This is related to the work of Crenshaw because students in multiple educational settings are also subjected to the same type of harm generated through generalizations in student data. These generalizations are made in regards to the forces of oppression that impact the lives of individuals simultaneously. These include, but are not limited to, (a) race; (b) class; (c) ethnicity; (d) sexuality; (e) gender; (f) sexuality; (g) age; and (f) nation of origin. The generalizations then manifest themselves in policies and procedures. This addition to the field of intersectionality is important because it is used to fix misapplied policies and practices that currently harm the student. "It draws attention to the sometimes hidden yet critical domains of oppression that overlap in the experiences of students, who most often struggle to secure success in schools" (Carey, 2017, p. 122). Therefore, critical consciousness in this arena is just one remedy to the issues that have currently manifested themselves in our educational system.

Building on this foundation, Museus and Griffin (2011) conceptualize how "conflation is problematic because it fails to capture the ways in which multiple social identities shape the lives of oppressed individuals, to conflate means to ignore intergroup differences as they essentially combine these groups into one" (1991, p. 1242). This also relates to the work of Carey et al. because it speaks to the multiple identities creating this unique experience. This addition to the field of intersectionality is important because multiple social identities are ignored when looking through student data on the higher education level. Museus and Griffin's work speaks to the experience of faculty and students in the higher education system whose actual diversity is not represented since most research simply disaggregates them by gender or race. This causes student's problems to end up being misunderstood and unaddressed (Museus & Griffin, 2011,

p. 6). Ultimately, this fails to capture how lives of oppressed individuals are shaped and stunts the process of addressing issues of equity and discrimination within higher education settings.

In summary, intersectionality claims minority groups simultaneously experience multiple forces of oppression and are often subjected to misguided or mismanaged solutions by those who do not understand the complexities of the intersections formed from those multiple identities. These articles have outlined the faults found in institutions' current understanding of student issues and how this presents a barrier to providing policy solutions since these misunderstandings will limit the help provided. They also present a way in which critical consciousness can aid in the effort. The most effective and personalized solutions to college food insecurity may come from understanding the following body of scholarship through an intersectional framework. The following sections describe this research and justify the claim that students located at the intersections of various marginalized and discriminated groups are more vulnerable to food insecurity. The first of these sections describes the demographics of who is food insecure and how it impacts academics.

### Minority Students and Prevalence of Food Insecurity

Research demonstrates that students of color, which include underrepresented minority groups, are more likely to experience food insecurity. This research includes studies by Knol et al. (2018) and Gaines et al. (2014) who discuss how students are in debt and their likelihood of being food insecure. Showing in terms that are more general the negative relationship between debt and food security. It also includes research by Ilieva et al. (2018), with a study addressing the lack of information on minority student groups and food insecurity. Finally, studies by Khosla et al. (2018) and Boton and Goldrick-Rab (2016) identify factors that lead to this material benefit in marginalized groups. This is important because taken together, these studies suggest

that minorities are more likely to experience food insecurity versus other groups and this may in turn have an impact on their academic success.

According to Knol, Robb, McKinley, and Wood (2018), college students experience food insecurity at higher percentage rates than that of the national average. Responding to his problem, Knol et al. examined "relationships of food insecurity and selected financial indicators among college students who live off campus, on their own, or with roommates" (p. 36). Conducted at the University of Alabama, this study included 691 students, ages 19 and older that lived off campus. The key results were that 38.4% of those surveyed were food insecure. This percentage was startling in that it was higher than the national average and was preceded by Gaines et al.'s study looking to bridge the gap in this field of study.

Gaines, Robb, Knol, and Sickler (2014) originally attempted to address the lack of information on the prevalence of food insecurity within the college student population. Gaines et al. studied the amount of food insecurity present at a large public university and examined the relationship between this deficit and potential risk factors. This study took place at the University of Alabama and included 557 returning undergraduate students (ages 19 - 25). The findings of this study demonstrate that in this case the percentage of food insecure students appeared to match the national percentage rates for food insecurity. "The majority of students reported high food security, although 20.02% experienced anxiety about their food supply and 14.06% had experienced altered food intake within the previous year due to resources limitations" (Gaines et al., 2014, p. 379). The data also showed that those who received financial aid were more likely to experience food insecurity.

In 2018, Ilieva, Ahmed, and Yan addressed the lack of information on food insecurity experienced by minority college students. Ilieva et al. addressed this gap in the literature with

both narratives and survey data on how students in an urban community college "navigate their college food scape" (Illeiva et al., 2018, p.1). Conducted at a public Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) community college in the Northeastern part of the US, this study included 50 minority undergraduate students (31 female, 19 male). These students were also classified as low income. The key results were that "74% of the students scored as having very low food security and 26% scored as having low food security" (Ilieva et al., 2018, p. 6). The study also identified on-campus food outlets, which included vending machines, the cafeteria, and food pantry as well as the level to which those and other options were used. While community colleges act as gateways to minority and low-income students, they compromise this vital social role by perpetuating structural barriers to healthy and affordable food (Ilieva et al., 2018, p. 10). Another key finding is that there was a significant positive relationship between level of food insecurity and student academic performance, which means, "the more food insecure the students are, the more likely they are to experience academic difficulties during a class or an exam" (2018, p. 8). Ilieva et al. concluded that administrators interested in diminishing food insecurity should focus on investigating student perceptions and experiences in order to inform the adoption of relevant solutions and policies. This is related to the work of Khosla et al. (2019) who demonstrate the adverse effects of food and housing insecurity on meeting personal and academic goals.

Similar to Ilieva et al. (2018), Khosla et al. addressed the achievement gap by exploring barriers and facilitators of success, specifically focusing on those students "experiencing food and housing insecurity as well as the complex and overlapping issues that may impact students more broadly" (2019, p. 5). This longitudinal mixed methods study took place at California State University East Bay, Hayward, CA, with 53 students, 25 years old and younger, at the beginning of the study who identified as 83% female and 60% heterosexual. This number was lowered to

48 by the fourth wave of surveys. However, only 13% reported as white, making for a sample that was diverse and showed many ethnicities and diverse races. The quantitative results showed that the majority of the students experienced food insecurity and out of the 70% that were aware of the CalFresh (the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)), 47% applied. The qualitative results from interviews showed the adverse effects of food and housing insecurity on meeting personal and academic goals. This study is also related to the work of Broton and Goldrick-Rab (2016) who demonstrate how food and housing insecurity hurt the chances of college completion for students from low-income families.

The literature review conducted by Broton and Goldrick-Rab (2016) focused on how students from low-income families pay for college costs and the results of those decisions. When analyzing studies around college affordability, they focused on specifics around food insecurity and housing. The writing is organized in sections that discuss (a) how students go without food; (b) how food insecurity hurts chances of college completion; (c) institutional practices that address food insecurity; (d) how students can get help with food insecurity; (e) the role of federal and state policy in ameliorating food insecurity; and (f) the most critical step for students experiencing food insecurity: getting informed and getting help. The analysis from this literature review suggests, "Students who experience food insecurity were at greater risk of housing insecurity, and vice versa" (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016, p. 19).

In summary, research demonstrates that there is a disproportionate burden of food insecurity on students of color. This includes studies by Knol et al. (2018) and Gaines et al. (2014) who identify college students as having high levels of food insecurity. They are also able to show how debt influences food security. The research by Ilieva et al. (2018) addresses the lack of information on minority student groups and food insecurity. Finally, studies by Khosla et al.

(2018) and Boton and Goldrick-Rab (2016) identify how food insecurity keeps students from marginalized groups from meeting personal and academic goals. Taken together, this body of research helps to justify the claim that minorities are more likely to experience food insecurity versus other groups and that this may, in turn, have an impact on their academic success. Related to this is research that describes the prevalence of food insecurity on minority students, the following section describes coping strategies for those experiencing the material deficit.

## Coping Strategies to Combat Food Insecurity

Research describes college students' experience and the coping strategies they use to navigate food insecurity. This includes (a) a study that illustrates how students cope with money shortages by compromising their food intake and searching for financial options (Maynard et al., 2018); (b) a study that articulates the top four coping strategies and common themes among the experiences of students who experience food insecurity (Henry, 2017); and (c) a study that claims a high percentage of students experience worry about having enough funds and change their eating habits in order to make ends meet (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016). This is important because taken together, these studies convey the negative impact that food insecurity has on retention rates, graduation rates, and wellbeing and help to justify the claim that students located at the intersections of various marginalized and discriminated groups are more vulnerable to food insecurity.

In 2018, Maynard, Meyer, Perlman, and Kirkpatrick addressed how a fifth to two-thirds of students in universities experience food insecurity but little examination of this issue had been done in North America. Maynard et al. did this by exploring the experience of food insecure undergraduate students and noting the barriers to food security, strategies for coping with food insecurity, and the implications of food insecurity on health and academic achievement.

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Conducted at a university in southwestern Ontario, this qualitative study included eight undergraduate female students and six undergraduate male students ages 19 to 25. Although identities were not discussed in detail, three self-identified as international students. The findings of this study demonstrate that "most students reported their average day as being 'a bit stressful' or 'quite stressful'" (Maynard et al., 2018, p.134). According to the results of this study, students cope with money shortages by compromising their food intake. The participants in this study wanted to gain independence from their families so they avoided asking for help and would feel guilt when they did ask. Feelings of stigma, shame, and isolation were also associated with food insecurity. Attempts to cope with food insecurity included applying for scholarships and government assistance. Maynard et al. also demonstrate some other coping strategies these students would use such as compromising their food intake, applying for financial assistance, and support from friends and family.

Similar to the findings of Maynard et al., Henry (2017) addressed the lack of data for understanding student experience with food insecurity. Henry adds to Maynard's insights by providing common themes across the experience of food insecurity and adding to the list of coping methods. He also found that institutions of higher education are limited in their ability to offer the right solutions when recognition of the problem is low (Henry, 2017, p. 17). To address this gap, Henry gathered the stories of students experiencing food insecurity in order to reach policy makers and administrators who may have the power to affect change. This study took place at the University of North Texas (UNT) and included 27 students (18 women and 9 men). The key findings of this study demonstrate that the four top coping strategies included (a) cheap fast food; (b) sharing food with roommates; (c) suppressing hunger with excess fluid; and (d) downsizing meals. Common themes among the experiences of the participants included an

inability to concentrate and poor academic performance. Students also noted unreliable transportation as a barrier to food access. Stores that were easy to access such as Walmart, Kroger, Sack N Save, Aldi's, and Dollar General, were among the most used to access food. Henry concludes, "Though participants were overwhelmingly motivated to attend school despite being food insecure, their school performance tended to suffer" (Henry, 2017, p. 14). These findings are related to the work of Broton and Goldrick-Rab (2016) because they speak to both the negative effects of food insecurity coping strategies and the possibility of finding a sustainable solution through institutional and government policy.

Similar to the findings of Maynard et al. (2018) and Henry (2017), the literature review conducted by Broton and Goldrick-Rab focused on how students from low-income families pay for college costs and the results of those decisions. With its focus on food insecurity, one section from the article speaks to how students "do without" saying that confronting material hardships is felt by students across colleges including the Ivy League universities. One study analyzed with 3,000 students coming from low-income families at a four year college in the state of Washington found that nearly 90 percent of those surveyed in the first semester were upset or worried about not having enough money (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016, p.18). Some of the top ways they would make ends meet included cutting back on social activities, changing their eating habits, borrowing money or using credit cards more, and increasing the amount of time spent working (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016, p.18). Ultimately, this study cements the idea that "material hardship seems to inhibit educational attainment" (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016, p.19), as this presented another barrier to completion.

In summary, the research reviewed above describes the experiences of food-insecure college students, as well as the coping strategies used to combat the effects of food insecurity.

This includes (a) Maynard et al.'s (2018) study on how students cope with money shortages by compromising their food intake and searching for financial options; (b) Henry's (2017) study that articulates the top four coping strategies and common themes among the experiences of students who experience food insecurity; and (c) Broton and Goldrick-Rab's (2016) analysis that claims a high percentage of students experience worry about having enough funds and change their eating habits in order to make ends meet. Taken together, this body of research helps to justify the claim that food insecurity has a negative impact on retention rates, graduation rates, and wellbeing. Further, it deepens the understanding of how low-income students and college students in general deal with food insecurity in much the same way. Related to this is a body of research, the following section looks at the institutional response, which contributes to student's dependence on current coping mechanisms.

## Institutional Response

Research demonstrates the various factors that should influence the institutional response on food insecurity. This includes Knol et al. (2018) and Gaines et al. (2014) discussing individual approaches like teaching financial management skills since those less versed in responsible financial behaviors, such as borrowing money, are more vulnerable to food insecurity. Studies by Broton & Goldrick-Rab (2016), Willis (2019), and Khosla et al. (2019) analyze more of what universities should do to respond. Finally, Cady (2014) demonstrates the threat to student success suggests a proactive approach. Taken together these studies suggest that growing trends in higher education costs will continue to increase food insecurity in college students unless institutions step in to change that outcome.

The research by Knol et al. (2018) found that students using food and financial assistance programs were more food insecure. For example, "When financial aid debt was $10,000 or more,

students were at higher risk for food insecurity than students with less than $1,000 in debt" (Knol et al., 2018, p. 39). Another finding was that there was a high rate of food insecurity but low participation in food programs, which shows a breakdown in the institutional response. This suggests that students should receive additional resources and counseling to help them manage their needs. Knol et al. concludes that financial factors were related to food insecurity but more work needs to be done to discover all the financial alternatives available to these students. This is related to the work of Gaines et al. (2014) who demonstrate that students who were better versed in financial management skills, budgeting, and efficient food management were less vulnerable to food insecurity. Gaines et al. goes further to explain, "food insecurity is a problem that is likely to grow in prevalence as cost continue to surpass available grant and loan support" (2014, p. 383). The study finds that food insecurity may lead to high levels of borrowing which creates debt and undermines the expected benefits of a college degree. Both of these studies claim financial and food management skills may help, but further analysis indicates that if insufficient funds are available then no amount of these skills will help.

The literature review by Broton and Goldrick-Rab (2016) also included a discussion of institutional practices that address food insecurity. According to the article, one way that institutional leaders can help is by drawing on their resources and changing policies that leave economically insecure students vulnerable. Food and housing insecurity hurt students' chances of college completion, but there were other programs and non-profit organizations mentioned by this study that offered aid (such as the College and University Food Bank Alliance, Single stop, and The Center for Working Families). In addition, the authors noted a dearth of federal and state policies related to food insecurity among college students and found promise in programs such as the Tacoma Community College Housing Alliance Program. Broton and Goldrick-Rab conclude

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that ultimately coordinating a social safety net would create the most opportunities for Americans to pursue higher education (2016, p. 21).

Another proponent of harboring financial management skills was Khosla et al., who found that students benefited from having in-depth discussions about their goals with faculty members and that these discussions led to a greater understanding of available options and tools (2019, p. 12). Khosla et al. imply that there is a need to work further with mentors and advisors to support the long-term goals of students from underrepresented minorities who face academic, personal, and financial challenges. Designing these connections between mentors and students has huge potential for improving student success as a whole.

Going further, Willis addressed the "disproportionate burden of food insecurity on students of color" (2019, p. 168). Willis tried to decipher which elements of age, gender, race, and sexual orientation are associated with food insecurity among a population of college students. The author also focused on which financial factors contribute to food insecurity. This quantitative study, standing in contrast to the qualitative studies examined, took place at the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) with a random sample of 389 undergraduate students. The key results are that over 30% of the people surveyed were food insecure, leading the researcher to estimate a prevalence of 32% for the whole student body. Women and non-Hispanic white students were overrepresented in this sample. However, the study also found that "Racial and sexual minorities have a higher prevalence of food insecurity and higher odds of food insecurity than students who are non-Hispanic white or heterosexual when controlling for other key variables" (Willis, 2019, p. 172). While students of color face these hardships during college, Willis concludes that they also experience inequalities prior to attending college, so interventions should be made while keeping these particular populations in mind.

Similar to the findings of Willis (2018), Cady (2014) conducted a literature review on the topic of food insecurity and focused on the burden to students from marginalized groups. The literature review illustrated how food insecurity impacts college success and included (a) a definition of terms; (b) a discussion of food insecurity as a student issue; (c) an explanation of the impacts of food insecurity on education, health, and behavior; (d) an examination of the relationship between food insecurity and underserved student populations; and (e) a discussion of why campus administration should respond to issues of food insecurity among students. The analysis suggests, "food insecurity exists on campuses and is a barrier to student well-being and success" (Cady, 2014, p. 268). It also suggests that underserved student populations such as African-American, Latino/a, Chicano/a, Native Americans, LGBTQ, and women are at greater risk. Supporting this finding, the authors cited how the studies that collected race data reported that specific minority populations experienced greater levels of food insecurity. The author suggests that campus administration should work at being proactive and reactive to their student needs by assessing the number of food insecure students on campus and responding to their specific needs.

Taken together, these studies add to a body of research that suggests better institutional solutions to the issue. This includes Knol et al. (2018) and Gaines et al. (2014) discussing individual approaches to food insecurity. Studies by Broton & Goldrick-Rab (2016), Willis (2019), and Khosla et al. (2019) analyze more of what universities should do to respond. Finally, Cady (2014) demonstrates the threat to minority student success and suggests a proactive approach. These proactive and reactive measures by the institution can help the individual to better manage resources and foster food preparation skills. Eventually, these steps may undue

some of the past harm caused to these individuals and have a positive impact on retention rate, graduation rates, and well-being.

## Summary

This literature review claims that students located at the intersections of various marginalized and discriminated groups are more vulnerable to food insecurity which has a negative impact on retention rate, graduation rates, and well-being. Evidence that supports this claim includes three sets of evidence that demonstrate: (a) who is food insecure and what impact food insecurity has on academics; (b) how students cope with food insecurity; and (c) institutional responses to the issue. The intersectionality theory can be used to frame this body of scholarship because it will recognize the complexity of the participants' life story, and aid in the understanding of personalized interventions that may alleviate food insecurity. This claim and body of evidence address the needs of students located at the intersections of various groups that are marginalized and discriminated against. None of the studies centralize identity and how it shapes student understanding and the experience of food insecurity. They instead treat identity markers as variables rather than lived experiences. This study fills this gap and suggests that institutional responses will be more supportive when understanding how student identities shape their responses to this issue. With my thesis, I conduct a narrative study exploring the experience of students who identify at the cross section of multiple minority identities and experience food insecurity. The results of this study may inform administrators and policy makers in their efforts to support more effective solutions related to food insecurity on campus.

**CHAPTER III**

**METHODOLOGY**

As students pour into the university setting each year some are met with a new set of challenges due to living expenses, rising tuition costs, or gaps in the social safety net (Willis, 2019, p. 168). One challenge that has garnered attention recently is that of food insecurity. The trend appears to be that food insecurity rates are higher for college students than those found nationally in the United States, with one study noting that nearly 32% of undergraduate students at a four-year university experienced food insecurity (Cady, 2014, p. 266; Willis, 2019, p. 167). Strategies that students use to cope with food insecurity, such as buying cheap fast food, sharing with roommates, and suppressing hunger can become hazardous to student's health and wellbeing (Henry, 2017, p. 14; Maynard et al., 2018). Grades may begin to suffer and students will experience other difficulties with school if solutions are not found (Maynard et al., 2018). Alarmingly, students of color are disproportionately represented among food-insecure students (Willis, 2019, p. 168). Because of this, research suggests that interventions geared towards students who experience food insecurity should be designed with both systemic and institutional factors in mind (Willis, 2019). Financial factors also play a role in this equation but material hardships are the product of a myriad of decisions and conditions (Broton & Goldrick, 2016, p. 18). Currently, there is a gap in the literature related to students who identify as members of two or more minoritized groups. Comprehending how these students experience and understand food insecurity may aid institutions of higher education in reimagining solutions, and revising existing policies and practices that have previously ignored the complexities of students with multiple identities.

## Methodology Summary and Rationale

The methodology employed by this study of food insecurity in the lives of college students with multiple compounding identities was a narrative study. A narrative study is well suited for addressing the needs of these students because the inquirer gets to know more about the unique lived experience of the subject being interviewed. The value of a narrative study does not lie in its ability to be replicated or generalized. Capturing what participants' stories speak will not be captured through generalizations (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004, p. 113). According to DeMarrais and Lapan this methodology offers a way of knowing. It allows the person to express themselves in a story that links together events, perceptions, and experiences (2004, pp. 106-107). Much of the work surrounding this qualitative method started in the 1990s and "John Dewey's theory of experience is most often cited as the philosophical underpinning" (Clandinin & Caine, 2008, p. 2). Clandinin and Caine outlined how the two methods used are listening to stories and living alongside the participant as they go through these experiences, which makes it all the more important for the inquirer to engage in a reflective process so that their biases do not interfere (2008, p. 3).

According to Creswell (2006), analyzing a narrative means that it goes through the process of restorying. In this way, the story can be reorganized into a framework, typically in the form of chronologically putting the events on a timeline and smoothing out transitions (p.56). This allows the opportunity to look at the causal relationships throughout the narrative to deduce meaning. The research text derived from this method ultimately became a collaboration between the researcher and participants attending "to the personal and practical significance of the research" (Clandinin & Caine, 2008, p. 4). This teamwork between researcher and participant was vital to the study on food insecurity because it is a very personal issue that has become

shrouded in stigma. People experiencing food insecurity may not speak up about the issue and may try to downplay the severity of their situation.

## Research Setting and Participants

### Setting

This study took place in a medium-sized private university in northern California. For the purpose of this study, the university will be called Northern California University (NCU). The size of the university's main campus is over 50 acres with full Fall 2020 student enrollment at about 10,000 students (Tom, 2020). Twenty-seven percent of students in the fall semester of 2020 were white; 22% were Asian; 21% were Hispanic or Latino; 13% were international; 8% were multi-racial; 6% were African American; 2% were unknown; 0.5% were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; and 0.15% were Native American (Tom, 2020). The university also has a student to faculty ratio of 13:1 (Tom, 2020). The data collection setting was through Zoom conferencing software, with the participants and researcher conducting interviews from their own homes located throughout the state of California. This was due to statewide restrictions and precautions influenced by the COVID-19 global pandemic.

### Participants: Sampling/Recruitment Plan

The sampling procedure used was purposive sampling. The participants were restricted to three current students who attended the university and were willing to participate in the study. They also had to meet the criteria of self-identifying with two or more minority groups and having experienced some level of food insecurity since enrolling in the university. The researcher contacted campus leaders working with various student groups and organizations on campus for support and aid in the recruitment process. The campus leaders contacted in this study were the department chair for the leadership studies department and a director in the

department of student leadership and engagement. They sent out an email with the study criteria, researcher's contact information, and an interest form created through Google Forms to the members of these organizations. The information captured in these forms was collected in the researcher's password protected account. By using an administrator the student was familiar with as an intermediary, it aided in increasing the likelihood of participation and the trust in the researcher. The template of the email and Google Form that was sent out to student organizations is located in Appendix A.

**Participant Description**

Three participants were chosen for this study, with diverse ethnic backgrounds. As the subject of this study dealt with conditions at NCU, all of the participants were current students at the university. Two of them were undergraduate students, sophomore and senior, and one was a graduate student entering their second year. One of them identified as male and two of them were female. Of the female students, one identified as LatinX and a first generation college student and the other self-identified as white, first generation college student, gender nonconforming, and part of the LGBTQIA community. The male in this study identified as Asian, gay, and a first generation Asian-American. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants in the study: Kathy, Martha, and Adam. Since qualitative studies tend to have smaller sample sizes, each student's contributions are heavily weighted in regards to generalizability (Bui, 2020, p. 146).

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**Data Collection**

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The data collection methods for this narrative study of food insecurity on college campuses included interviews and document/artifact analysis. Interviews were used to document the student's personal experiences on campus as they related to the issue of food insecurity and

access to other resources. These consisted of three separate interviews ranging between 30-45 minutes each. The interview protocols were semi-structured and relied on open-ended questions. The interview questions can be found in Appendix B. Interviews were recorded through Zoom conferencing software for transcription purposes and were stored on the researcher's password protected personal computer. As noted by Denzin and Lincoln, "video and audio recordings are what provide the richest possible data for the study of talk and interaction today" (2005, p. 875). The participant had the option of having the camera on or off and communicating only through audio. Once the participant confirmed that the interview was accurately transcribed, a practice known as participant validation, the video file was deleted. The transcription document was then coded under a different name and kept on the researcher's computer. Document/artifact analysis was used to get an idea of what current policies and interventions on campus were composed of.

According to Creswell (2006), these methods are appropriate choices for a narrative study because interviews help to "situate individual stories within participants' personal experiences (their jobs, their homes), their culture (racial or ethnic), and their historical contexts (time and place)" (p.56). In addition, the document/artifact analysis aided in providing more context for these stories and providing the proper analysis (p.56). The documents that were examined consisted of campus email communication to students and staff, the university website, and other electronic communication about available resources. Examples of these documents and artifacts can be found in Appendix C.

### Data Analysis

The plan for data analysis included (a) organizing and preparing the data; (b) reading/reviewing the data through conversations analysis; (c) coding the data in order to generate themes; and (e) identifying a validity procedure. First, the data was organized and

prepared by transcribing through the Zoom conferencing software. After that, the researcher read and reviewed the data in order to uncover latent meaning and themes that developed. The researcher then coded and indexed the data in order to generate themes. The researcher then triangulated sources of data, such as interviews, document/artifact review, and feedback from the process of participant validation, in order to establish the validity of the findings. Finally, the researcher added a second layer of analysis in order to uncover some of the more hidden themes surrounding identity. This consisted of leveraging the theory of intersectionality to analyze how student's multiple identities have had an impact on their experiences.

## Plan for the Protection of Human Subjects

Finally, the plan for the protection of human subjects included (a) engaging participants in the process of informed consent by approving via signature a form that included the purpose of the study, the topic that was explored in the interviews, and their expectation of confidentiality; (b) informing subjects of the study procedures and answering any questions they had before the interview process begins; (c) making a plan for and discussing the confidentiality of records and identity with participants, including the use of pseudonyms, password-protected data storage, and storing contact information and raw data in different files (d) the recognition of any potential risk, such as the participant being asked to share their experience on campus as it related to their personal life and their intersecting identities. There may be some discomfort or risk to emotional triggers from the past but these present little to no risk. In an effort to minimize these risks, students were given the contact information to the campus counseling and psychological services center. Finally, the researcher identified and discussed potential benefits, such as the opportunity to share their experiences regarding food insecurity that will result in material that includes recommendations for the institution. There were no financial or monetary

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benefits. A copy of the consent form can be found in Appendix D. The university's Institutional

Review Board has approved this study for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS).

**Chapter IV**

**Results**

**Introduction**

The researcher conducted nine interviews with current Northern California University students that have experienced some level of food insecurity within the past year. All three students self-identified as having multiple minority identities, using loans to pay for their education, and having held jobs to supplement their income as they finished their degrees. The interview questions were aimed at gathering their narratives and revealing their perspectives in regards to the experience, interpretation, and navigation of food insecurity in the university setting.

Background on these participant's current settings is also explored in order to give a more holistic view of their narratives within the context of the past year and the COVID-19 pandemic. The university these participants attend was forced to go into remote instruction halfway through the Spring 2020 semester. This made for the foundations that informed these students' settings and decision-making. Adam, a queer Asian-American student, moved back home to a city in southern California where he is currently living with his parents and two brothers, while entering his sophomore year. Martha, a gender non-conforming student, was once a resident assistant (RA) at the university but lost their position and corresponding meal plan due to the shift in living conditions and policy. After moving to Oregon to live with family during the remainder of the spring and summer semesters, they decided that moving back to California and closer to the university created better opportunities for work and school during their senior year. Kathy, a LatinX female student, was the only graduate student in the study and had just started her second year in the program. When the research started, she was finishing a part-time job with the Census Bureau and was living at an apartment a few miles away from the university with roommates.

## Findings

The findings of this study were revealing in that many times the students would agree on common themes. Some of these themes appear to have a relationship with their identities. This section is organized through identifying certain aspects of the experience, which is telling of how personal aspects of everyday life interact the situation. Then it goes into the interpretation, where the lenses and frames by which students see these events are explored. Finally, the navigation of food insecurity is looked at for its coping methods and potential to inform future action.

**The Student Experience**

Some of the most telling parts of the students' experience are explored through the subthemes of variation in access, the influence that campus engagement had on this access, different methods used in budgeting for food, and finally the pressure to conform. These sections span not only the experience of food insecurity but also the experience as a student as a whole as it is useful to creating the narrative.

*Variation in Access.*

Barriers to access were present. For example**,** sometimes the two first generation college students in the study, Martha and Kathy, would speak to the difficulties associated with getting materials. Kathy had a hard time simply finding someone to pick up her food pantry package. As was the case with new COVID-19 procedure, students now had to come in on a certain day to pick up food that was prepackaged from the pantry after putting in their order through a Google Form on a certain day (Pantry Information, 2020). For Kathy this proved difficult as she explained the struggle to find someone to pick up her package. As Kathy described:

> Three people that I have asked to pick it up have forgotten or have not been able to. So, it's a little annoying because If I could do it myself, I would. And because it is only from twelve to two, so I can't ask any of my family members to do it. So, that has been a little frustrating.

The times when Kathy was able to pick up materials, other issues of access would arise such as transportation. She spoke openly about the hardship of getting everything back home on the bus. Martha's issue with access was in that being new to the experience, they sometimes did not know how much to get. As they describe it:

> I never know. Like, how much extra they have or if their resources are being used up. So sometimes, I think I select less. Then I might go in if I could see how much is left over, because I do not want to take away from other students who might need things as well.

This situation can be troubling for the conscious student as even on the pantry website they make it clear that the pantry "will complete requests on a first come, first serve basis until all items are depleted" (Pantry Information, 2020).

Offering a different perspective from that of the first generation student, Adam, has had a comparably easier time while back home in southern California. Living at home made access to food a non-issue. While living with his parents he speaks of how grateful he is for their help and support. He had also taken up employment as a server at a restaurant so that he could contribute and feel more independent.

### *Campus Engagement Increases Access*

While barriers to resources were present, there was still the overwhelming consensus that being involved on campus made for better college preparedness. All three students reported being very engaged with activities and their classmates. Adam and Martha spoke to the involvement that they had while still on campus which gave them access to resources. Martha shares how being an RA gave her an insider track of resources:

> I do feel like I am more involved than maybe a lot of students would be. I think I also had access to more sections of the university. Through being an RA, we learned about lots of the resources in the university, different sections, departments, that sort of thing. So, I think I was trained and had more knowledge about of lot of those things than an average student coming in.

In echoing this thought, Adam explained how he was more involved than most students

and enjoyed participating in events and building them up from behind the scenes. This made his

access to resources different from that of the typical student. He also mentioned the importance

of talking to advisers who can point you in the right direction depending on your needs.

### *Budgeting for Food*

The participants explored a range of options when looking at solutions for their hardship.

Part of this experience included what they considered necessary strategies such as part-time jobs

in order to budget for food. This made those hardships manageable while also creating a different

type of stress. Having moved in with his parents, Adam remembers the struggle of starting a new

part-time serving job while studying for midterms. Having a job was nothing new to him and

made for a useful way of getting meals in the past. While he was living on campus just a few

months prior, he recounts:

> I would say that I would see myself eating more a lot for dinner, because the place that I
> worked at was a restaurant so they would give us meals for free. So, that was another
> great way that I was able to save money was because they would just provide me a dinner
> and I could just eat a lot.

This made for a fortunate situation as he also explained that budgeting from his campus

meal plan only allotted him about twenty dollars to spend on food each day. This was not much

considering that complete meals were around fifteen dollars on his account. Martha also

validated these claims when saying:

> The different meals cost different amounts; the prices in the cafeteria for the food are
> incredibly high. It would be much easier to spend less off campus buying food than it is
> on campus and I did not think the quality of the food was particularly high; but like I
> said, for me, it was free.

Conversely, Kathy depended more on budgeting in order to get her groceries and do the

majority of the cooking herself. In trying to be more health conscious and save, she would take

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the time to buy in bulk at stores such as Costco and would seldom eat meals outside of her home if it were not the weekend.

### *Pressure to Conform*

Finally, all three participants seemed to experience this same pressure to succeed. Although it came from different sides of their identities, it was a prevalent theme. For Adam and Martha there was the common thread of having parts of their queer identity invalidated by those from their hometown. Adam experienced this at his new restaurant job when a customer finished a casual conversation by advising Adam find himself a nice American girl and get married. This led Adam to feel that his identities are undervalued in this setting. Martha has felt similar pressure while talking to old friends from home about their heteronormative ideals. As she described:

> I could feel that pressure before to, you know, adhere to sort of a traditional path in terms of like marrying a man and having kids, that were not in the stars for me at all. Also, I think academically only some of my friends have gone through the traditional college experience and there's a lot of pressure. This is from a lot of people at home like previous teachers. I have had everything to perform really highly and to go on and do more than others in my community have, and that can be stressful too.

In speaking about community expectations, Kathy's story of familial support also brings up similarities in adhering to norms. In sharing a first generation college student identity, Kathy reflects on how her family expects a lot from her and has reminded her throughout her life that she is a reflection on their family. The norms surrounding success after college created pressure to find work. Other relatives continually reminded her to run for office and get into politics with all of the knowledge that she has earned.

**Interpreting Food Insecurity**

The way students interpret their current situations is very telling of the way in which they will interpret other situations in the future. Taking the time to analyze the frames through which they made sense of their lives can also lead to a more informed strategy. Among some of the most compelling ideas found were that resource stigma was prevalent. This combined with confusion and knowledge gaps throughout the campus. The students also faced the dilemma of deciding between which lens to apply as they wrestled between their own individualism and teachings from their communities.

*Resource Stigma*

While speaking specifically to resources geared to food insecurity, students used a negative lens to understand the food pantry. All three students shared this mindset, although some had the opportunity to speak to it on a more personal level. Adam was preoccupied with other activities and studies during his time on campus so he never got the opportunity to use the food pantry. Through our interview, his comments upon learning about the service were quickly dismissive of his need. As he noted:

> Personally, I would not use the program because I do not want to take away from people that are not able to access it, because I am able to access food.

He later followed this by stating that canned food and nonperishables make it sound as if the resource is only for those in dire need. Sharing similar sentiments, Kathy and Martha both had stories that spoke to others being in need of the service. However, since they both shared the identity of being first generation, they were able to overcome these assumptions by evaluating their own needs. For Kathy, a discussion early on with her fellow classmates was the most revealing. She explained how they spoke freely and with a negative overtone about their assumptions that the food pantry may be for people who really need it. Whereas Kathy had

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developed the opportunistic mindset that students should use the resources available to them

even if just for a few meals. This helped to counter the broader negative messages she received

from her classmates. She was more open to seeing where this saved expense could be used to pay

other bills or whatever other costs came up. She later made it a point to explain that you simply

do not have to tell others about the resources that you use yourself, since there is so much stigma

attached to their usage. Martha remembers her own stigma related to the pantry. She was often

worried that she would run into an old coworker or classmate while picking up her supplies.

Ultimately, her dire situation moved her to push past these negative feelings.

### *Confusion and the Campus Knowledge Gap*

Knowledge gaps accompanied the stigma associated with resource acquisition as all three

participants spoke to the confusion surrounding what and where resources were available. The

participants also had a leg up on the matter in self-identifying themselves as more involved on

campus than the average student. Campus involvement was at the root of experience for these

students and informed the way that they would later navigate their education. Adam felt that

during his first year of college he was not well-versed in how to eat healthy. This had been the

first time he had lived away from home, and he advocated for healthy food education saying:

> I do not think that attaining food is the issue, but more of my knowledge of what kind of
> food I need, was something that I would have liked more support on. So, I think that
> something that might be helpful on campus or seeing that in the cafeteria. Like, how
> much of our daily diet should consist of protein or how much of a daily diet consists of
> greens. For people that do not know, I think that it would be super helpful.

Kathy had some experience talking to her classmates about the food pantry and went on

to say:

> I do not even know honestly a lot of graduate students that are aware of the food pantry,
> but I think in general food pantries are seen as being for people that are not able to feed

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themselves at all, but I don't think that's the case. I think it is almost like a weekly help and I do wish more students would see if it is something for them.

Misinformation became the culprit when confusion about whom the aid is meant to help made its way through Kathy's classroom. A misguided interpretation could also form the stigma surrounding what is acceptable student behavior.

### *The Dilemma of Conforming*

Participants felt a range of emotions but most pronounced they felt the stress of being caught in between frames when making decisions. The lenses through which they would try to make decisions were constantly shifting between that shared by family, which skewed safe and planned, or a more individualistic and risky frame. Knowing the payoff of successfully completing their education, they had to traverse through different situations while switching back and forth.

There was a consensus that students did not want to be a burden on others when it came to financial factors. While each had a safety net in some form of familial support, financial stress prevailed as they saw their education as being their issue alone. For Adam it was very simple in that he had grown up in a home with two other siblings that also had aspirations of going to college. He was now very aware of the costs associated with higher education. In his own words:

> I want to be able to support as much as I can and I want to be able to support my family as well.

Martha and Kathy's shared identity as first generation college students seemed to take this mindset even further. Having no immediate family that had previously attended a university, they felt as if they had to figure out many things on their own. Martha best explained:

> I think challenges were figuring out where I needed to go for everything. Financial aid was something really stressful every year, when it came up. I always felt like I did not

know how to fill out the forms correctly or if I was going to mess up something or mess up everything and not be able to pay.

Kathy revealed how her parents had always instilled the importance of being financially independent. However, college had presented unfamiliar territory. Kathy, who had been using her savings from her previous employment to pay her living expenses, also had to depend on loans. It was a topic of discussion and arguments as Kathy describes:

> I have loans. Since this is my first time taking out loans ever, my family, they are a little wary of me relying on that too much. So, they are also looking very aggressively at me to try and figure out what I'm going to do. But, I always tell them, once I graduate or even next spring, I am going to find a job and there's no question about it.

Kathy's family influenced her thoughts on her financial situation and to a certain extent her views on success. Kathy felt that her LatinX and first generation identities led to misunderstandings on how to prioritize as her family wanted her to maintain a collectivist lens. In one account, she explained:

> I remember family was actually a big issue for me because I had midterms, but it was also a family birthday party that I could not miss. I go and when I have my laptop out, they are like, "Why do you have your laptop? Why are you always doing work?" So, it was really hard to make my family understand that I am busy. It is not that I do not want to see or spend time with you, I am just busy and school is kicking my butt.

This situation was one of many where Kathy and her family had divergent views and faced this dilemma. She also recalled their disappointment early on when she decided to go back to school and stop working in order to change her career. While Kathy admired her parent's hard work throughout their lives, she was adamant that she wanted to create her own path and this individualistic approach prevailed. Martha recalled similar difficulties with her friends from back home. In Martha's own words:

> Everyone is really different and has really different beliefs and ideas. Sometimes those beliefs and ideas conflict with each other and we have different opinions that we have to

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work through and talk through. Sometimes the sort of traditional, conservative values that some of my friends at home hold, cause them to put expectations on me about what they think my life would ideally look like in adhering to sort of their own.

Martha goes further to couple this with imposter syndrome, which is "a psychological condition that is characterized by persistent doubt concerning one's abilities or accomplishments accompanied by the fear of being exposed as a fraud despite evidence of one's ongoing success" (Merriam-Webster, 2020). To Martha, imposter syndrome felt very real throughout their undergraduate career. She also states that it is exacerbated by being a first generation college student since family and friends who have not been through the experience just do not understand.

While Adam was not a first generation college student, he also spoke of the parallels with his own Asian culture. He felt the push and pull of divergent mindsets. Adam related in saying:

I think culturally a lot of Asian families do prioritize education. But, in our family, we also just are all about our academics.

This thinking in conjunction with the preceding stories cement how the participants faced the dilemma of conforming when conflicting lenses were present.

**Navigating Material Deficits**

The everyday life of a student can become very complex. As the experience and interpretation of food insecurity can be very subjective, next steps can vary from person to person. The participants each had come up with their own ways to deal with barriers and material gaps that also added to the complexity. Some of these ways described often overlapped between participants. As part of the experience explored budgeting, navigating food insecurity goes beyond the various level of planning that also occurred.

*Food Insecurity and Proximity to School*

Adam's decision to move back home was a decision that proved to be very beneficial. He spoke openly about how much easier it was to find food now that he had moved back home with his family. This had enabled him to focus on the health factor of his food consumption. After a recent doctor's visit revealed that he could be in danger of having too much cholesterol, he now focuses his efforts on eating more nutritious items and keeping track of his progress with a phone application.

Kathy and Martha did not have this same luxury. Both students decided to stay in the same city in which the university is located. Both student's programs were completely taught in person when they began their studies. With the majority of classes being moved to some level of online instruction, they had the opportunity to reevaluate their need to stay nearby. However, Kathy had found a part time job in the city that worked around her schedule and knew people with whom she could continue to live near the institution. Martha had also found work as a research assistant in the fall semester and felt she needed her own space to focus on their studies. This meant that these two students, coincidentally sharing the identity of being first generation, had a higher level of stress associated with food attainment.

### Maximizing Resources through Planning

In navigating food insecurity away from family, living near the institution translated to higher levels of planning. Campus emails revealed the food pantry was operating in the fall semester despite COVID-19 restrictions (see Appendix C). However, pantry operations had changed, to safely transfer materials to students during a worldwide pandemic. These documents highlight how pantry food was limited to those with close proximity to the school and listed specific dates for students to pick up food twice a month. Kathy's family preached the importance of balanced and nutritious meals while she was growing up. She was not someone

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that was going to skip meals. Kathy, who prioritized balanced meals, had some difficulty with transportation and timing went it came to pantry items. She would have to lug around the items on two or more buses to get them home. There was also confusion surrounding who would pick up her items during a very specific timeframe when she was unavailable.

The burden of planning meals takes time and money. These are difficult for full-time students working part-time jobs to afford. While Martha was also aware of the importance of balanced meals, she was honest about the variety she found in the food pantry saying:

> I could probably make 10 meals out of the stuff that I get, but I was eating the same thing every day and not very much of it. Probably stretching it a little bit.

This situation also helped to highlight the importance of university communication as all three participants commented on the importance of proper messaging. Proper and efficient messaging was monumental when it came to planning. Adam noted how campus messaging about remote instruction and policy changes had improved and given him more time to prepare for the coming semester. He also spoke about how the university was lacking in communicating to student through other mediums such as text messaging and calls. Student's inboxes seemed saturated with many emails from the university in the past months. Kathy's earlier comments about her fellow classmates not knowing about campus resources also ring true here. If the institution communicated its resources effectively, then they could better aid in the planning effort of those with a material deficit. However, Kathy also makes a point to suggest a different organizational structure for the pantry, claiming that internships, outreach, and partnerships with local food banks could make it more appealing to use the service. This was after recounting a story of how her undergraduate institution ran their food pantry and had affected more of the community in a positive way.

Looking beyond campus resources, the students cited the use of financial alternatives outside of family aid. Participants felt the need to do their part to improve their financial position and not simply take from their families. Adam in particular was quick to find part time work. As he described:

> I like being busy and working is just a great way. Especially during quarantine when you have so much free time. I feel like I have more of a sense of purpose in the world, even though that sounds so big. Even though I am serving, it is an important job. It feels like I am serving a purpose.

Working was also a great way in which he felt he could contribute to his education.

Kathy spoke to this when remembering her childhood:

> Even in times when we were low income, where we were kind of going through difficult situations. My own family never really did anything like the food pantries even outside of where they lived. So, this was actually something really new to me and I even told my mom and my mom was like, "Why are you doing that? If you need food, I can get you food." But, that's not the point. I think people do not like being vulnerable or admitting their vulnerabilities. It should not be seen as a failure. I think it should be seen as courageous.

While Kathy battled with her family's stigma, Martha's family was happy to hear that the part-time work she was doing as a research assistant, was also counting towards career experience. Leaving their parent's home in Oregon was difficult, but the ability to work on campus while finishing out their senior year was an alternative source of income that Martha valued.

### *Communities Offer Emotional Support*

Navigating such uncertainties while in the middle of a global health crisis was not easy. Although their approaches differed, the students were all thankful for the emotional support offered by their communities. Adam spoke freely about the solidarity he felt with other minority groups saying:

> Even though it is not great to feel like a minority, I believe that it is an advantage because I am able to be more empathetic and am able to put myself in a place to understand what it is like to be misrepresented or underrepresented.

He felt that this quality also helped him to support others in need. Growing up, he felt like he could open up about his sexuality to minorities because they appeared to be more understanding.

While Martha confronted her imposter syndrome, they recall the times that professors in their program would step up and offer support. They were encouraging in the way they would work with her on research or include her viewpoint in scholarly work. They also came up with sufficient duties for Martha to reach the maximum amount of workable hours. This was helpful in securing she had enough funds for the month. Kathy also felt great support from her family even while she struggled to keep up with expectations. As she described:

> By being first generation, I always thought I was behind and running to catch up. When I finally caught up, then they were already running again. Trying to do that while also pleasing my family by being the best, was something other students did not have to manage.

While facing this reality, she was thankful for the amount of care they offered. In fact, it shows the complexity of community support. As she explained, her family always found ways to support or offer help without her asking. Sometimes, this came in the form of her mother showing up with food or calling to make sure she was doing alright. These small gestures were significant enough to let her continue on her path to success.

## Summary

The three participants in this study had different identities, including some that overlapped such as being queer or a first generation college student. Other identities of interviewees such as being LatinX, gender non-conforming, and Asian-American were unique. The findings revealed that some identities helped the students to experience, interpret, and

navigate some barriers in similar ways. While first generation college students dealt with many firsts and often found conflicts with their communities, ultimately the participant's culture and identity would guide certain actions. Pressures to conform and variations in access mark the student experience. These are often reconciled through vast strategies including budgeting. The stigma surrounding resource use is only part of the problem as students are plagued with knowledge gaps and confusion. Ultimately, navigating these situations is possible through a balance of planning and support from one's communities.

# CHAPTER V

## ANALYSIS, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS

### Introduction

The experience of being a first time college student brings with it challenges such as living expenses, rising tuition costs, and gaps in the social safety net (Willis, 2019, p. 168). One challenge that this narrative study aimed to explore was food insecurity. The data collection process helped the researcher form the narratives of three participants related to the issue within higher education. As the research was conducted at a medium-sized west coast university, the students were representative of the school's diverse population and claimed multiple minority identities. Findings from three rounds of interviews gave further context to participants' decision-making and their journey into degree-seeking roles. This section begins with a recap of each student's narrative as it guides the analysis and discussion to follow.

Adam grew up in southern California. He is the middle sibling, born in between two brothers in an Asian-American household of five. Education was important in his home; his parents had also pursued higher education degrees. He eventually decided to go to school at NCU since he felt very welcomed by the orientation leaders and saw potential in the diversity of the student population. He found this to be a school where he could finally be his true self. After an extremely involved first semester, his studies were interrupted by a global pandemic, which forced the school to move to remote learning instruction. Adam experienced some difficulties during his first two semesters surrounding food insecurity, but many of these issues went away as he made the decision to move back home. Adam showed gratitude for his parents who helped support him for years. He felt the need to work a part time job so that he could contribute and decrease the amount of loans he had to take out for his education. Upon recalling his time at the

university, he spoke of some of the stigma and barriers related to campus resources. He is now in a less stressful position by being at home. He credited a part-time serving job, parental support, budgeting, and loans with helping to get him through his first year.

Martha is a first generation college student from a small town of nine thousand people in Oregon. They identified as gender-nonconforming and saw enormous potential attending an institution in a denser city. While they are now finishing their senior year, their plans had been abruptly stopped as they were forced to adjust to policies surrounding COVID-19. Before the school enacted new regulations, Martha had plans to continue a resident assistant job that afforded her free housing and a meal plan. They were forced to go back home as they reassessed the situation since the position was temporarily eliminated as the residence halls closed. After several months in a packed home with little space to study, they decided there were better opportunities near the university even if it meant that their budget would be very tight. They did not want to be a burden on their family although their parents always offered to be a safety net. Coming back to the university, Martha experienced the stigma of food insecurity, recalling that they were never sure how much to take at the food pantry and were concerned that people they knew would recognize them using the resource. They eventually moved past this feeling by evaluating their own needs as resources and funds were scarce. They credit the emotional support of friends, family, and professors that have encouraged them to continue. While simultaneously feeling the pressure to succeed from their community, they are carrying on during their senior year with hopes of finishing their degree and eventually continuing on to graduate school.

Kathy's story is similar to Martha's in that she is also a first generation college student. Unlike the two other participants, Kathy had returned to school in order to pursue a graduate

degree and change her career. The LatinX student faced some opposition from her traditional

parents who felt she should have been working full time at a stable job instead of pursuing

another degree. Kathy experienced food insecurity as she navigated the demands of paying for

school and living in the city with funds from loans and savings from her previous employment.

Kathy was the only child and felt supported by her family, although they sometimes disagreed

over the use of the school pantry and taking out loans. She was reminded from an early age that

she would always reflect her family and that she should always try her best. Her strong-willed

nature kept her focused and determined in achieving her goals. While navigating the challenges

with food insecurity she credited detailed budgeting, planning, school resources, part time work,

and her partner and family who would offer emotional and material support even without being

asked.

## Analysis

Throughout the interviews, the participants were asked about how certain experiences

could relate back to their identities. While some stories conveyed similar results and attitudes, a

minority identity would often frame the university response in a different light. This ultimately

led to the affirmation that students' identities are the lens through which they make sense of what

to do about food insecurity. Taking this concept even further, this would lead to identity

becoming a barrier to resource use as students use them as context for their decision-making,

school culture can feel like an opposing force. In line with this argument, the research conducted

conveyed how the first generation identity is complex. When the first generation college students

in this study faced the idea of using university resources, such as the pantry, to supplement their

intake, they experienced stigma, shame, and isolation. These feelings were discussed in Maynard

et al.'s 2018 study and were traced back in this study to the student's preconceived notions as

well as their own family's ideas. Similarly, in this study the first generation college students teetered back and forth between their need for such resources and their communities' thoughts on who should be using them.

Adding another layer to this identity, Martha and Kathy noted their families were immensely proud of everything they had accomplished and their status as college students brought with it honor. The pride of being first generation is accompanied by fears of failure when students are not able to do everything on their own. As Martha recounted how their father expected them to make all the right decisions, Kathy spoke to how her family would pressure her to succeed and go back to full time employment. These ideas of shame came about by exploring students narratives around the subject and finding the connections to their first generation status. This also gives another explanation as to why first generation college students experience barriers that are not simply rooted on a deficit lens when speaking to the achievement gap between minorities and white students. They face stigma between themselves and the resource and shame from within their communities – this is a key finding in that it underscores the importance of focusing on minority populations because of the higher likelihood of food insecurity among people in racial and sexual minority groups, which was a key argument made by Willis (2019). Henry noted that the stigma surrounding food insecurity is making it harder for institutions and students to find solutions (2017, p. 6). These findings tied to identity also serve as an explanation to this phenomenon.

Further, the data goes on to reveal the university as a racial structure. As Ray (2019) describes, "Racial structures arise any time resources are (intentionally or passively) distributed according to racial schemas" (p.32). While the deployment of resources in the university setting is meant to be equitable, the narrative conveyed through the results is that current efforts simply

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are not enough. The university pitches the food pantry as a neutral resource, but student's different circumstances shape access, which has racialized outcomes. In turn, the pantry is racialized. One example comes from the small windows of time given for material pickup. While these timeframes should be flexible, distribution only takes place twice a month during a weekday when most would be busy with other work or school activities. Kathy referenced how she worked a job and had school, which made it difficult to attain the materials within the timeframe. Flexibility is key as certain minority groups are subject to constraints on their availability due to multiple responsibilities. She also argued with her family about taking out more loans, which her family was particularly worried about since they did not necessarily have experience with student loans. Her fear of failure added another barrier, which demonstrates that it is not simply about being open at the supposed right time since there is a complex matrix of identity that shapes access. Another example comes from the location of some resources. Once again using the food pantry as an example, these materials were only available within a reasonable driving distance, leaving those who had to move away for the semester to fend for themselves. Most schools seem to operate under the one-size fits all assumption that one intervention or solution can solve the problems faced by multiple groups. Crenshaw's thoughts on how conflating amounts to ignoring intergroup differences ring true here (1991, p. 1242). As institutions combine these groups in order to save on resources or divert funds, the institution loses its grip on helping individual students that may not fit into this mold.

Speaking to the way in which the institution has operated, one could make the argument that the organization is not entirely committed to or organized around student needs. As Ray (2019) concludes, "How racialized subordinates spend their time at work, in school, or at church, is typically delineated by organizational procedure" (p.36). The data collected about how identity

shapes students' decisions and how they experience the food pantry offers evidence to this. It shows up in the strict hours of operation and service of which students must adhere but may miss due to obstacles. It also shows up in the technological aspect of ordering pantry materials through a Google Form, which can be perceived as another barrier (see Appendix C). While adopting these procedures was a way to maneuver around current pandemic policies, they do not take into account the barriers created by focusing on one communication method not always available to the entire campus population. The topic of minority students showing up to college without the necessary resources to succeed was a topic discussed by Willis (2019). It is validated by Adam's comments on how university communication had improved through its pandemic response but was not being used to its full potential. This served as a reminder of how complex institutional policymaking can be when confronted with multiple issues.

## Conclusion

If institutions are able to understand student needs then they can better introduce interventions. Current coping strategies discussed in the literature and in this study show how student life is impacted. In turn, there are issues down the road that affect degree completion. Maynard et al. (2018) demonstrated the use of compromised food intake, applying for financial assistance, and support from friends and family as coping strategies currently in use. Interviews with current NCU students cemented these strategies as some of the only viable options for minority students who are often the first in their families to pursue higher education. Perhaps changing the lens from which the issue of food insecurity is viewed can be part of the solution. Other ways of thinking could prove to be useful as there is now an individualistic approach to getting aid and succeeding in school. This mindset was present in how all participants spoke about their college success. Creating this shift may include looking at the underlying institutional

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issues, having a holistic approach to student life, and adding culture and identity as complex layers when tailoring interventions.

Among the common themes that arose, food insecurity seeped into various parts of the students' lives. While this study's focus was on its role in higher education, it became apparent that being food insecure had implications for different facets of a student's life. Experiencing food insecurity led to decisions about where and how to work while still taking on university courses. In the cases of Martha and Kathy, it influenced their decisions on housing as roommate situations tended to be the most cost effective. For Martha, it also impacted their opportunity to enjoy leisure time and social settings with friends as spare time was scarce due to the demanding schedule of work and school. With the financial factors of food insecurity in the mix, life decisions are further intertwined with degree attainment. For this reason, the aim should be for institutions to holistically assess how to aid students in achieving healthy and less stressful lives in order to facilitate their ability to study and succeed. This follows Cady et al.'s suggestion that campus administration should work at being proactive and reactive to their student needs by assessing the number of food insecure students on campus and responding to their specific needs (2014).

Further, the suggestion to pivot the institutional approach comes about after assessing some of the underlying institutional issues that are to blame for the disproportionate way in which minority groups are affected. Meadows and Wright recommend that, "To be a highly functional system, hierarchy must balance the welfare, freedoms, and responsibilities of the subsystems and total system – there must be enough central control to achieve coordination toward the large-system goal, and enough autonomy to keep all subsystems flourishing, functioning, and self-organizing" (2008, p. 85). The university is hierarchical and it cannot

escape the responsibility it has to its members. Here the study of student lives has shown how individual culture and perspective add a layer of complexity. This institution may be considered highly functioning in some scope, but this study has revealed a manner in which the institution has not provided for a portion of its student population and left them vulnerable. While demonstrating how taxing and emotionally demanding the experience of food insecurity can be, this study introduced how the complexities of their students can help to reimagine institutional solutions.

### Recommendations

Carrying the potential to inform a largely necessary area of investigation, the intersections of student identities are full of simultaneously unique and relatable experiences. If considering recommendations for future research, many minority identities have yet to be included. Further qualitative research is needed in this arena to prepare for any combination of identities that should walk into the higher education setting. This is a lesson worthy of follow-through, as Crenshaw (1991) warns against the conflation that turns these separate groups into one in a failed system. If institutions wish to be successful in the recruitment and retention of students from varied backgrounds, then this initial research is only the beginning. This is also backed by Museus and Griffin, who explain that there is a need to explore the experiences of those with various intersecting social identities (2011, p. 9).

The findings suggest that communication from the institution has changed throughout the pandemic and holds the potential to be more effective. The food pantry has been a useful resource for some students, but it is not a long-term solution. Ultimately, there are various avenues for interventions, as a student's community has a large level of influence over their decision-making during times of distress. Speaking more specifically to work on interventions

deployed by the institution, the research suggests that it should be better tailored to the student. For example, the creation of programs geared toward basic skills in budgeting and nutrition can aid in student decision making. In the early stages, this could mean creating programs that get the family involved before enrollment begins. These could aid in bringing down barriers common to communicating stigmatized topics. Khosla et al.'s 2019 study also suggests that students benefited from having in-depth discussions about their goals with faculty members and mentors who could help them gain a further understanding of options and tools. Martha and Adam who spoke of the immense help and wealth of knowledge provided by faculty and advisers echoed these thoughts. Making food security a team effort can open up opportunities and supports long-term goals (p.12).

However, the role of the food pantry should not be underestimated. The truth lies in the fact that, "today's public colleges have less money to put toward supporting students and providing affordable food and housing" (Freudenberg et al., 2019, p. 1655). With adequate implementation, the pantry could be more effective at helping these student populations. Changes in the structure are not easy to come by but could contribute significantly to the wellbeing of these students. One way to drive this change is by making use of data collected from beneficiaries and using it to show potential contributors and partners, the success of the program and its potential to grow. A change in human capital may also drive growth in the organization. One practical way this is possible is through becoming more student driven and nurturing more volunteer and internship opportunities for those on campus. Not only does this give the student the chance to gain skills and work experience, but also creates the conditions to reach a wider sector of the student population. Word of mouth and student led projects are among the most valuable resources on a university campus. Aside from expanding the pantry in

these ways, institutions could also look into making part of managing the food pantry a course to gain credits towards degree completion or work-study. In order to maximize benefits, pantries should be used as a point of contact to aid students in organizing for justice, publicizing affordable meals, and screening for government benefits (Freudenberg et al., 2019, p. 1657). Maximizing pantry operations when one is already available on campus is a feasible option for many institutions.

Researching food insecurity within an organization is important work in that it shows how the issue shapes the lives of students. This study helped to convey how health and wellbeing are affected and are engrained in students' narratives. Among other things, the most unjust thing about the current pandemic is that students that could have accessed the institution as a resource while living closer or on campus may now be too far to consider this as an option. Mandatory remote instruction has not only meant a lack of information, but a loss of a valuable resource that could change the lives of many in this university community. Taking the time to analyze, discuss, and pinpoint weaknesses in this and other systems will someday give rise to more effective and powerful ways of changing inequality.

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**Appendix A**

## Email Template

**Student Research: Participants Needed**

My name is Joe Sevillano and I am a Master's student at the University of San Francisco. For my thesis, I am exploring the experience of different groups of students and how easy or difficult it is to access university resources. Since you are a member of the NCU community, I am inviting you to participate in this research study by taking part in 2-3 45 minute interviews (via Zoom).

There is no compensation for responding nor is there any known risk. Copies of the project will be provided to my thesis chair. If you choose to participate in this project, please answer all questions as honestly as possible. Participation is strictly voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time.

The data collected will provide useful information regarding how resources are offered and how this process can be improved. All data collected will be kept anonymous. If you would like to be interviewed (via Zoom) about your experience, please fill out the google form at **[LINK].**

The deadline to fill out this form will be **[DATE].**

**Google Form Template**

**Institutional Resource and Identity Study**

This form is used to recruit students to participate in a research study about resources in higher education conducted by Joe Sevillano (jsevillano@usfca.edu), a graduate student in the Department of Leadership Studies at the University of San Francisco. The faculty supervisor for this study is Dr. Seenae Chong (srchong@usfca.edu) , a professor in the Department of Leadership Studies at the University of San Francisco.

WHAT THE STUDY IS ABOUT: The purpose of this research study is to explore the experience of different groups of students and how easy or difficult it is access to university resources.

WHAT WE WILL ASK YOU TO DO: During this study, the following will happen: Participants will attend 2-3 one-on-one interviews/discussions with the researcher to explore their understanding of the groups they represent, resources available to them, and their experience in a college setting.

DURATION AND LOCATION OF THE STUDY: Your participation in this study will involve 2-3 45-minute sessions within a 6 week period.

The study will take place through Zoom video conferencing software with the option to turn the video on or off.

This information will not be shared but your experience can help shape how resources are distributed. If you wish, you may choose to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time during the study without penalty. The questions below will help us understand what groups you represent.

1. Name:_____
2. Phone Number: _____

Please note that this information will be kept in a secure location and will only be used for the purposes of set up and follow up interviews.

3. Preferred Email Address: _____

Please note that this information will be kept in a secure location and will only be used for the purposes of set up and follow up interviews.

4. Year Designation
   - Freshman

- Sophmore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate Student
- Other:

5. Gender
   - Female
   - Male
   - Transgender
   - Non-Binary
   - Other

6. What groups do you identify with? (Please check all that apply)
   - Hispanic/LatinX
   - First Generation College Student
   - LGBTQIA+
   - Asian
   - Black or African American
   - Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders
   - White
   - Person with a disability
   - Native American
   - Immigrant
   - Other

7. Do you currently hold one or more jobs while in school?
   - Yes
   - No

8. Do you received financial aid or loans to help pay for expenses?
   - Yes
   - No

9. Are you a transfer student to the university?
   - Yes
   - No

Thank you for filling out this survey. If you are selected, we will be reaching out at the end of [Month] to set up an interview date.

Please feel free to email me at [Email Address] with any questions

**Appendix B**

**Interview 1 Protocol**

**Introduction**: Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. As I mentioned before, I am a Master's student and my thesis is on the use of campus resources by students that inhabit multiple minority identities. I got interested in this work from my time pursuing higher education as a first generation college student. I saw how some of the resources offered on campus were not designed for me and how some truly helped me reach my goals. So, I wanted to learn how our university is doing in serving students who identify across multiple backgrounds and hope to advocate for a way in which students can continue to be best served especially during this time. I also think that this requires a lot of thought and dialogue. So I want to understand the complexity of what it means to have multiple identities and what experiences you have had while a student here because of this I will be asking you to reflect upon yourself.

If I have your permission, I would like to record this interview. Please feel free to stop the recording or interview at any time. What happens with most people and me is that you will inevitably forget that you are being recorded.

**Do you have any questions for me? Thank you and let's get started!**

1. Where did you grow up?
2. In the questionnaire you said that you were _____ (year in school), what has been good about your experience and what has been hard so far?
3. What are the identities you use to describe yourself?
   a. What makes you identify with those groups?
   b. In the questionnaire, you said that you identified with being _____ (group), can you tell me more about that experience?
   c. How did you start identifying as _____ (group)?

**Thank you for your responses. I would now like to ask you questions about your time at the university.**

4. What influenced your decision to come to this university?
5. Are you satisfied with the work you have done so far towards your degree? **(TIME PERMITTING)**
   a. What has made the work worthwhile/difficult?
   b. You mentioned_____tell me what that was like for you.
6. Can you walk me through what a typical school day looks like for you including breaks, meals, and study time?
7. How do you budget for tuition, housing, and your day-to-day needs?
   a. Can you tell me about a time when you did not have enough money? What was that experience like?
8. So you budget for _____, are you happy with how you eat and the quality of food?
   a. What tricks do you have to get food or manage that situation?
      i. Examples: Students often have ways of stretching their budgets around food. Sometimes they share meals with each other or skip meals. Or they try to

eat food that's really filling or really cheap or go to bed hungry and make sure they get a big breakfast

      b. Have you had to skip meals?

      c. Have you had to go to bed hungry?

9. You mentioned a lack of funds for ___ describe that in more detail for me.

10. When you were stressed about running out of money, what did you do? a. Where you able to turn to anyone or any organization for help?

      b. What about the university?

11. Do you think being _____ (identities) shapes your experience at this university that is different from your classmates? How so?

12. Before we end this interview, if you could give advice to another incoming student to help him or her transition what would it be?

Thank you so much for the time that you have spent speaking with me today.

As mentioned in the questionnaire, I would like to follow up with you about the questions that I have asked today. This will help me make sure that I have fully understood everything you have told me and to fill in any questions that this interview may have raised.

**Can we set up another interview within the next two weeks?**

# Interview 2 Protocol

**Introduction**: Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. The first interview we had together was very telling and gave me some great ideas for how we can improve the current system. What I wish to do today is understand the complexity of the situation on our campus and clarify a few things you mentioned in our first interview. I will be timing the interview and it should not take longer than 30 minutes.

If I have your permission, I would like to record this interview. Please feel free to stop the recording or interview at any time.

**Do you have any questions for me? Thank you and let's get started!**

1. How have you been since we last met?
   a. How are your studies and how are you doing this semester?
2. In our last meeting we spoke a bit about nutrition, so can you tell me about how you currently are handling your meals and nutrition?
3. Can you tell me about your experience with the food pantry at school or near your home?
   a. Have you heard about the school's food pantry?
   b. Can you tell me more about how you feel this service could be improved?
   c. How do you feel about the food pantry presently and using it as a service yourself?
   d. Who do you think the food pantry is for?
4. What is it about the food pantry that makes it feel like it is for others?
   a. What is your life like?
   b. How does it feel when you are hungry and have to make these decisions on how to get food?
5. If you could eat how you wanted, what would you be eating?
   a. How often would you be eating?
   b. Generally, what is your relationship with food?
   c. What does food mean to you?

**Thank you for your responses. I would now like to ask about your decision-making and a little more about your relationship with your family.**

6. How do you feel about reaching out to your parents when you need help?
   a. What makes this process ok or not ok?
   b. How would you approach this situation?
7. What does your family think about you having a job?
   a. Did they encourage you to get one?
8. How do you feel about your parents views on getting an education?
   a. What are their views?
9. Where do you feel like you are disappointing your parents?
   a. How often does this happen?
   b. How do you reconcile these things?

10. How are you managing your job?
    a. Do you wish that you had more time for school?
    b. Do you feel like you are getting the full college experience?
    c. What is your perception of what the full college experience entails? (Outside of current COVID-19 restrictions)
11. Before we end this interview, what is one thing you think the school is doing right and one thing you think your family is doing right in helping you get through your education?

Thank you so much for the time that you have spent speaking with me today. This has been extremely helpful in clearing up some of the ideas you have presented.
As mentioned in the questionnaire, I would like to follow up with you about the questions that I have asked today. This would be the third and final interview we have together and would take approximately 30 minutes or less.

**Can we set up another interview between October 19th and November 4th?**

**Interview 3 Protocol**

**Introduction**: Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. The first two interviews were very helpful in giving me an idea of how you manage your situation and use resources throughout your life. What I wish to do today is understand the complexity of broader ideas around your cultures and the groups that you interact with. I will be timing the interview and it should not take longer than 30 minutes.

If I have your permission, I would like to record this interview. Please feel free to stop the recording or interview at any time.

**Do you have any questions for me? Thank you and let's get started!**

1. How would you describe your friend groups?
   a. Who makes up these groups?
   b. How do you all know each other?
   c. Tell me about an experience or something that happened among your friends that gives a picture of how you are together.
2. What brings you and your friends together? (E.g. What are qualities you share? What is important to you? What do you offer each other? )
   a. What are the similarities that you feel you can all relate to?
   b. Tell me about a time when you were going through something and your friends DIDN'T understand or know how to help.
   c. Tell me about a time when you were going through something and you felt like you could only share with a specific group of friends or friend.
3. What type of expectations do your friends have for you?
   a. Tell me about a time where your friends expectations felt challenging or you did not like them.

**Thank you for your responses. I would now like to ask about the role you play at the university and the cultures that you represent.**

4. How do your experiences compare to other students at your university?
   a. Do you think your experiences are typical of the average student?
   b. Tell me about something that happened recently that you think is different from most other students.
5. What are some challenges you have experienced as a first generation student?
   a. Tell me about a time where you felt that being a first generation student was an asset or a strength at the university.
6. What are some challenges you have experienced as part of the (Queer/LatinX/Asian) Culture?
   a. Tell me about a time where you felt that being (Queer/LatinX/Asian) was an asset or a strength at the university.

7. Tell me about a time that you felt really proud of yourself.

**Thank you so much for the time that you have spent speaking with me today. This has been extremely helpful in clearing up some of the ideas we've explored. Feel free to reach out if any questions arise in the next few weeks. I hope you have a wonderful day.**

# Appendix C

## Food Pantry Information Webpage

Remote Info: All approved on-site employees and students must take ▮ Health Check survey every morning before entering any campus buildings. All residential students must complete daily. ▮ see all of our COVID-19 updates, actions, and resources in one place.

STUDENT SERVICES     ACADEMIC RESOURCES     CAMPUS LIFE     SCHOOLS + CENTERS     OFFICES

### General Food Pantry Information

Due to the pandemic our pantry operations have changed to accommodate for social distancing and other mandated requirements to ensure the health and safety of our students, staff, and faculty. Therefore, we will be providing pantry items in a pre-packaged format.

If you are in close proximity to ▮ in need of pantry resources, and have the ability to come to campus, fill out the form below.

Please complete ▮ Food Pantry Request Form by 5 p.m. on Friday, September 25.

The pantry will complete requests on a first-come, first-serve basis until all items are depleted. Once a request has been fulfilled a student will receive information on when and where their order can be picked up on-campus. We will not be able to ship or mail requested items.

Shortly thereafter, you will receive an email informing you if we were able to fulfill your request. If your request was completed a confirmation email will be sent to you with detailed instructions for pick-up. It is important that you follow these instructions to ensure we are practicing appropriate social distancing guidelines.

#### Who can use the pantry?

The pantry is open to all enrolled undergraduate and graduate students at the University. You do not need to provide proof of income or financial status to utilize the pantry.

Mobile

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Library

Directions

Feedback

Title IX

Privacy Statement

Web Accessibility

form is open. Please note that the pantry operates on a first-come, first-serve basis. Pantry staff will try to fulfill as many requests as possible based on our inventory.

What types of items are available at the pantry?

- Rice
- Beans
- Pasta
- Pasta Sauce
- Lentils
- Cereal
- Oatmeal
- Boxed Milk
- Soups
- Canned vegetables
- Packaged fruit
- Macaroni and Cheese
- Peanut Butter
- Jelly
- Ramen Noodles
- Crackers
- Tuna
- Spam

https://

- Small snacks, including granola bars and popcorn

The pantry is only able to provide **non-perishable items**. Fresh produce is not available at this time. We do not offer items that require refrigeration or have short shelf lives.

### What are additional food resources for students?

Food from the ▮ pantry is intended to serve as a short-term solution. Here are two additional resources that may help you obtain additional food items:

- CalFresh: A program that provides individuals with an EBT card, which works like a debit card, to purchase food items for free. Get more info.
- Imperfect Foods: Offers imperfect (yet delicious) produce, affordable pantry items, quality dairy, and meat and delivers them to customers for up to 30% less than the grocery store. Get more info.

Check out the Food Insecurity Resource Page for additional resources.

If you are interested in having a conversation with a staff member regarding food resources, you can connect with Associate Dean ▮ at ▮

### How can I contribute or donate to the Food Pantry?

Thank you for your interest in supporting the ▮ pantry!

We are currently accepting monetary donations for the pantry. More information on how to give can be found on our Donate to the Food Pantry page.

### Who can I contact for additional information?

https:▮

# Food Pantry Operations Email

**Food Pantry Operations – Fall 2020**

1 message

Dean of Students <dean██████████edu>     Tue, Sep 8, 2020 at 3:01 PM
Reply-To: dean████████edu
To: ████████edu

Hello ████ Community,

We are pleased to announce that the ████████████████ Food Pantry will be operating during the fall 2020 semester. The pantry is meant to serve as a short-term resource for students who have limited or uncertain access to a sufficient quantity of food. The pantry is available to all currently enrolled ████ undergraduate and graduate students. Students are not expected to pay for items from the pantry.

Due to the pandemic our pantry operations have changed to accommodate for social distancing and other mandated requirements to ensure the health and safety of our students, staff, and faculty. Therefore, we will be providing pantry items in a pre-packaged format. This means that requests for pantry items will be submitted through the ████ Food Pantry Request Form and the pantry staff will pack the requested items for you. Once a request has been fulfilled a student will receive information on when and where their order can be picked up on-campus. **We will not be able to ship or mail requested items.**

If you are in close proximity to ████████ in need of pantry resources, and have the ability to come to campus, please complete the ████ Food Pantry Request Form to let us know the items you would like from the food pantry. The pantry will complete requests on a first-come, first-serve basis until all items are depleted.

Please complete the ████ Food Pantry Request Form by 6 p.m. on the dates listed below:

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- Sept. 11, 2020
- Sept. 25, 2020
- Oct. 9, 2020
- Oct. 23, 2020
- Nov. 6, 2020
- Nov. 20, 2020

Shortly thereafter, you will receive an email informing you if we were able to fulfil your request. If your request was completed a confirmation email will be sent to you with detailed instructions for pick-up. It is important that you follow these instructions to ensure we are practicing appropriate social distancing guidelines.

For all students there are many food resources currently available throughout the ██ Area. Please review the **Food Insecurity Resource Page** for available support. **Findhelp.org** is another resource that offers information about numerous assistance programs (i.e. food, rent, etc.) across the nation based on zipcode.
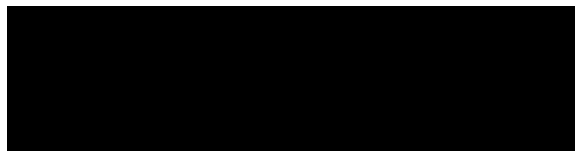
For more information on the food pantry, please visit our **website**. If you have questions about resources for longer term needs:

Students can ███████████████ associate dean of students, at ████████████.edu.

If you have general questions about the pantry please call ██████████ or email dean████████████.edu.

Sincerely,
The Office of the Dean of Students

Join the conversation ██████          ████████████████

████████████████████████████          ███████
                                      ███████
                                      DIRECTIONS
                                      CONTACT US

          ████████████████

████████
██████ url

If you wish to be removed from ████████████ mailing list, click here.
View this email online.

This email was sent to ████████████
To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.

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**Appendix D**



**UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO**

CHANGE THE WORLD FROM HERE

## Consent Form for Adults

# CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Below is a description of the research procedures and an explanation of your rights as a research participant. You should read this information carefully. If you agree to participate, you will sign in the space provided to indicate that you have read and understand the information on this consent form. You are entitled to and will receive a copy of this form.

You have been asked to participate in a research study entitled Institutional Resource and Identity Study conducted by Joe Sevillano, a Masters student in the Department of Leadership Studies at the University of San Francisco. This faculty supervisor for this study is Professor Seenae Chong, a professor in the Department of Leadership Studies at the University of San Francisco.

**WHAT THE STUDY IS ABOUT:**
The purpose of this research study is to explore the experience of different groups of students and how easy or difficult it is to access university resources.

**WHAT WE WILL ASK YOU TO DO:**
During this study, you will be interviewed one-on-one by the researcher and have discussions to explore your understanding of the groups you represent, resources available to you, and your experience in a college setting. With your permission, we will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide, and will be used for transcription purposes only. If you choose not to be audiotaped, we will take notes instead. If you agree to being audiotaped but feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, we can turn off the recorder at your request. Or if you don't wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time. These documents will not contain names or personal identifiers.

**DURATION AND LOCATION OF THE STUDY:**
Your participation in this study will involve two to three 45-minute interview sessions within a six week period. The study will take place through Zoom video conferencing software with the option to turn the video on or off.

**POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:**
The risks and benefits associated with this study are a loss of your time and the risks associated with regular activities. The benefit of the study is that it may add to the research on the field of education and international/multicultural issues. This information, once collected, might be read by policymakers, educational experts, educators and scholars and could affect the educational practice. If you do not want to participate in the study, you will not be mentioned in any documents of the study, and your decision to not participate will not be told to anyone. You may choose to withdraw your consent and

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discontinue your participation at any time during the study without penalty. If you are upset by any of the questions asked, the researcher will refer you to counseling services available publicly or at the university if you are a member of the academic community (student, staff or professor).

**BENEFITS:**
You will receive no direct benefit from your participation in this study; however, information from this study may benefit other people now or in the future by helping to shape how resources are distributed.

**PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY:**
Any data you provide in this study will be kept confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In any report published, no information will be included that will make it possible to identify you or any individual participant. To minimize the risks to confidentiality, real names will be replaced by pseudonyms on all interview and observation transcripts, and all audio files, observation notes, or other documents that contain personal identifiers will be stored in a password-protected computer or hard-drive that we will keep in a locked file cabinet until the research has been completed. Original audio-files will be destroyed at the completion of the study. Specifically, all information will be stored on a password-protected computer and any printouts in a locked file cabinet. Consent forms and any other identifiable data will be destroyed in 3 years from the date of data collection.

**COMPENSATION/PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION:**

There is no payment or other form of compensation for your participation in this study.

**VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:**

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits. Furthermore, you may skip any questions or tasks that make you uncomfortable and may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. In addition, the researcher has the right to withdraw you from participation in the study at any time.

**OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS:**

Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you should contact the principal investigator: Joe Sevillano at (305) 778-2810 or jsevillano@usfca.edu or the faculty supervisor, Seenae Chong at (408) 421-2085 or srchong@usfca.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board at IRBPHS@usfca.edu.

**I HAVE READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION. ANY QUESTIONS I HAVE ASKED HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.**

_____

*PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE*                                                            *DATE*