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**Narrative Study: The Impact of Food Insecurity on
Student Health and Persistence**

by

Deborah A. Allen

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of St. Cloud State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

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Dissertation Committee:
Jennifer Jones, Chairperson
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Abstract

The current study collected and evaluated students' firsthand stories to learn whether their stress from nutritional intake or lack thereof impacts students' health, well-being, coursework, sense of belonging and mattering, and persistence. Additionally, this narrative study investigated students' experiences with a college pantry on their campus. The students were invited to share personal narratives about their engagement with the campus food pantry and their feelings about any perceived effects of this institutional support in such areas as health, self-esteem, community support, academics, motivation, and future plans.

The research question presented in this study utilizing a qualitative narrative-inquiry approach was the following: What are the experiences of food-insecure students at a two-year college in Minnesota? The study explored Baumeister and Leary's theory of the Sense of Belonging (previously described in the third tier of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, "love and belonging"); Morris Rosenberg's theory of Mattering; Schlossberg's theory of Mattering and Marginality; and Tinto's Framework of Student Departure. It was through these frameworks that the current study connected a student's basic need of food, a sense of belonging along with a sense of mattering. With the sense of belonging and a sense of mattering, the current study explored the degree to which regularly accessible student-support services such as a food pantry could foster health, and greater percentages of student persistence, completion, and graduation from students' programs.

The results of this study show that food-insecure students are suffering from physical- and mental-health issues, lack of energy, lack of focus needed for class work, stress, anxiety, poor self-care, and undesirable behaviors such as stealing or other non-ideal methods of obtaining food for survival. Additionally, findings from the students suggest that if a college campus offers a food pantry to its students, it may inspire food-insecure students to have a greater sense of belonging and mattering to their institution, with a variety of benefits to the student, the college, and the community.

Index Words: food insecurity, sense of belonging, mattering, student persistence, student success, academic performance, and food pantry.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my brother, Donald Hemming. Although he was my inspiration to pursue a higher education, he is unable to see my graduation from my doctoral program as he passed away before I graduated. Donald passed away in 2018 from pancreatic cancer. This is for him.

Acknowledgements

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I would like to thank all the students that participated in this project. Their stories of food insecurity will hopefully help raise awareness of the challenges that our students are facing while they are in college. Finally, a special thanks to my children, Jennifer Koontz and Drew Koontz who inspire me to be the best that I can possibly be.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Despite studies conducted by The Hope Center (2020) indicating that basic needs insecurity was consistent from 2015-2019, the current rate of food insecurity is still high and ranges from 42% to 56% at two-year institutions (Baker-Smith et al., 2020). Studies in the past have concluded that food insecurity not only leads to hungry students, but it also has a negative impact on students' psychosocial, academic, mental, and physical health (Meza et. al, 2018; Farahbakhsh et al., 2017; Bruening et al., 2018). The current study investigated the lived experiences of food-insecure students at a two-year college in Minnesota, by exploring the participants' attitudes about food insecurity, such as "how students perceive it, describe it, feel about, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others" (Patton, 2002, p. 104). Furthermore, the current study examined the relationship between food insecurity and an on-campus food pantry as a student-support service for students.

Background of the Study

Nationally, college students struggle with food insecurity. According to the 2019 report, "College and University Basic Needs Insecurity: A National #RealCollege Survey Report," of the 86,000 students participating in the survey, "45% of respondents were food insecure in the prior 30 days" (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019, p. 2). In the United States, 10.5% of all U.S. households, equating to 13.7 million households, experience food insecurity (Silva, 2020). Pertinent to this study, the Minnesota, the Minnesota Private College Council (2019) found that 40% of respondents in a statewide basic needs survey had experienced food insecurity in the prior 30 days. Food insecurity impacts Minnesota State's college students as well (The Hope Center, 2020).

Food Insecurity in Minnesota

In Minnesota, 461,200 people are struggling with food insecurity, which equates to one in 12 people who struggle with food insecurity (Feeding America, 2020). In 2017, Minnesotans made 3,402,077 visits to food shelves (Minnesota Department of Health, 2020). According to the Minnesota Department of Health (2020), “Minnesota ranks 7th worst in the nation for the share of residents with access to healthy food” (p. 1) and is ranked in the bottom third of states for grocery-store access. Nearly 900,000 Minnesota residents have insufficient grocery-store access, and 235,000 Minnesota Residents live more than 10 miles away from a large grocery supermarket (Minnesota Department of Health, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

Food insecurity can impact student success and academic performance (Cady, 2014; Camelo & Elliott, 2019) and can lead to a myriad of problems that interfere with focus in the classroom. Food insecurity can leave students feeling tired (Glik & Martinez, 2017). Students might experience depression, hunger, and low self-esteem (Farahbakhsh et al., 2017; Meza et al., 2018; Henry, 2017; Martinez et al., 2018). Food-insecure students might also feel embarrassed, have a lower self-confidence in their academics, and lack focus for tests (Farahbakhsh et al., 2017; Meza et al., 2018; Henry, 2017; Martinez et al., 2018). Camelo and Elliott (2019) stated that “food insecurity is not only a public-health problem; it is a barrier to academic achievement among college students in the U.S.” (p. 316).

Purpose of the Study

It is well-documented that federal food assistance programs in the United States fail to eliminate the need for emergency food assistance for many of its recipients (Nord et al., 2005). Many college students may already be utilizing food assistance from the government, but higher-

education institutions must also learn how to help alleviate the problem of food insecurity for their students. Academic success is the result of individualized student support, including for food insecurity, which impacts students' perception of how their institution supports them in their journey (Tinto, 2016).

The current study collected and evaluated students' firsthand stories to learn whether their stress from nutritional intake or lack thereof impacted their health, well-being, coursework, sense of belonging and mattering, and persistence. Additionally, this narrative study investigated students' experiences with a college pantry on their campus. Students were invited to share personal narratives about their engagement with the campus food pantry, and their feelings about any perceived effects of this institutional support in such areas as health, self-esteem, community support, academics, motivation, and future plans. Questions were open-ended for the greatest level of objectivity.

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to understand students' experience with food insecurity. My research sought to learn the experiences of students who use the campus food pantry. As Goldrick-Rab et al. (2019) pointed out, "Despite this emerging evidence, more information is needed regarding potential causal connections between basic needs insecurity and college students' academic, health, and other outcomes" (p. 5). While higher-education professionals focus on ways to improve retention, persistence, and graduation of students, the impact of efforts to address food insecurity not only on students' physical and academic performance, but also on their perceptions of their institution as a community, have not yet been fully explored (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019). The theory undergirding the current study was Tinto's (1993) Framework of Student Departure. The literature reviewed aspects of food insecurity, statistics related to college students, and issues related to food insecurity.

Significance of the Study

Existing literature on food insecurity in higher education has focused on the extent of the issue without thoroughly explaining the impact that food insecurity can have on a student's perception of their institution as a welcoming or uncaring community or the impact that food insecurity might have on students who are being supported with a food pantry. Campus administrators involved in this study are aware there is food insecurity among college students. Existing qualitative research broadly confirms that food-insecure college students feel insufficiently supported by their institution (Meza et al., 2018); however, there is a lack of qualitative evidence specific to this college campus (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019). The current study sought to determine if food-insecure students using the food pantry at this particular institution aligned with the existing research regarding feelings of being supported and mattering.

Overview of Methodology and Methods

The current study utilized a qualitative narrative-inquiry approach to research the experiences of students enrolled in a two-year vocational college in Minnesota. As stories were gathered from students, the researcher endeavored to aggregate the students' experiences around food insecurity, including mental health and physical health, and their relationship to persistence issues. Stories were collected through a one-time interview format via Zoom (due to the restrictions of Covid-19 on the campus). This information was then analyzed to find key relationships in students' stories.

Methodology

To gather the stories from the students, a narrative approach using in depth semi-structured interviews took place via Zoom. Participants were asked open ended questions which

allowed flexibility in the conversation to explore in greater depth how students experienced food insecurity.

Methods

Due to COVID-19, most students were away from campus. I decided to solicit participants by directly emailing the entire student body at the two-year institution requesting participation in the study. I also placed a flyer in the bags of food distributed through the college's food pantry during the months of April and May. I offered a financial incentive in the form of a \$15 Target gift card for participation and placed this information in the email and flyer. I also listed my email address for the students to contact me if they were interested in participating in the study. Participants were asked to participate in one interview with me. Once a student stated they wanted to participate, they were sent an Informed Consent Form to sign and return before the interview took place.

On the day of the interview, I went through the demographic survey with the student. The purpose of the demographic survey was to gain knowledge of the students' age, ethnicity, gender, marital status, and if they were currently employed part-time or a full-time student or both working and attending college. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour and took place during the months of April and May.

The interviews were recorded using Zoom's recording function and then uploaded to a password-protected computer in my home office. The recordings were placed into Kaltura for a transcript to be produced. After the transcripts were produced and corrected, I emailed the transcript to the student to make sure I had a correct transcript. Next data analysis began. I utilized analytical coding techniques by applying line-by-line analysis of qualitative data that allowed me to organize the data to identify different themes and relationships.

Conceptual Framework

The current study explored Tinto's (1975) Model of Student Integration and Tinto's (1993) Model of Student Departure as conceptual frameworks for an examination of the issues inherent in students' food insecurity. It is through these frameworks that the current study explored students' persistence to the institutional commitment to the students.

Theoretical Frameworks

The current study explored Baumeister and Leary's theory of the Sense of Belonging (previously described in the third tier of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, "love and belonging"); Morris Rosenberg's theory of Mattering; Schlossberg's theory of Mattering and Marginality; and Tinto's Framework of Student Departure. It is through these frameworks that the current study connected a student's basic need of food, with a sense of belonging along with a sense of mattering. The current study explored the degree to which regularly accessible student-support services such as a food pantry can foster health, while positively influencing student persistence, completion, and graduation from students' programs.

Research Questions and/or Research Hypotheses

The research question for the qualitative narrative study focused on the issues of food insecurity at a vocational college campus. The question was ingrained in the literature of food insecurity in higher education and narrowed by the conceptual framework. In particular, the current study examined one main research question: What are the experiences of food-insecure students at a two-year college in Minnesota?

Objectives and Outcomes

The impact of food insecurity on students has been previously studied, but the impact that a food pantry has on the perceptions and feelings of food-insecure students as a result of being

supported by their academic institution, has not been widely reported. I wondered if regular access to a campus food pantry has any effect on the student's experience of the college community, and if so, in what ways? If there are changes of perception toward the campus community as a result of this food support, how does the student feel this change impacts them, in addition to relieving some of their hunger?

The results of this study will be shared with the college administrators in an attempt to determine if sustaining a food pantry is necessary on their campus. The objectives will include the following:

1. Investigate students' level of food insecurity.
2. Determine what perceived effects, if any, result from students' use of a campus food pantry; for example, how do they describe their feelings toward the institution providing this support, and what role, if any, does that play in a decision to persist in their studies at the institution.

Limitations

Limitations of the current study involved a possible reduced number of participants due to impact of COVID-19 on students' presence and engagement on campus. COVID-19 mandates impacted the number of students using the campus food pantry during the period of the study. Many students were not on campus to utilize the food pantry due to most classes being online. Further, visits to the school required preauthorization via an online self-reported health screening. Additionally, due to the pandemic, overall new student enrollment at the college was down 12.4% as of February 25, 2021, and full time enrollment was down by 11.9%. Another limitation of the study was that students of diverse backgrounds might be reluctant to share their stories with a long-term, White faculty member rather than someone closer to their own age

group and background. This would impact the diverse and representative participation for the study.

Assumptions

The current study had four basic assumptions: (a) the participants will answer the interview questions in an honest manner; (b) the inclusion criteria of the sample are appropriate and therefore, assumes that the participants have all experienced the same or similar phenomenon of the study; (c) participants have an interest in participating in this study and do not have another motive, i.e. getting a better grade in a course the researcher might be teaching (Wargo, 2015); and (d) a majority of the students at this institution are food insecure, based on the literature, statistics, and graduation rates of the institution.

Definition of Food Insecurity

According to Coleman-Jensen et al. (2017), nutritious food is considered a basic human right. Food insecurity is “the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate, safe foods, or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable food in socially acceptable ways” (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2017, p. 1). Equally important, food insecurity can range broadly from experiencing hunger to skipping meals (United States Department of Agriculture, 2016). Skipping meals means that the individual does not eat one of the meals during the regular occasion of the day when large amounts of food are consumed, such as breakfast, lunch, or dinner. However, for the purpose of the current study, food insecurity is defined by United States Department of Agriculture (2020) as “the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways” (“Measurement,” para. 3).

Key Terms

There are several key terms used throughout this study. Articulated below are the definitions and understanding to which I subscribe relating to these words below to ensure that my readers, participants, and I are on the same page.

Food Desert: “Regions where people have limited access to healthful and affordable food. This may be due to having a low income or having to travel farther to find healthful food options” (Caporuscio, 2020, para. 1).

Food Insecurity: “Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways” (United States Department of Agriculture, 2016, p. 6).

Food Bank: “Non-profit that safely stores millions of pounds of food that will soon be delivered to local food programs, like a food pantry” (Waite, 2019, para. 2).

Food Pantry: “Distribution center where hungry families can receive food. Supplied with food from a food bank” (Waite, 2019, para. 4).

Graduation Rate: “Percentage of a school’s first-time, first-year undergraduate who completes their program within 150% of the published time for the program (Federal Student Aid, 2020, para. 1).

Mattering: “A motive: the feeling that others depend on us, are interested in us, are concerned with our fate, or experience us as an ego-extension exercises a powerful influence on our actions” (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981, p. 165).

Psychosocial Health: “Psychosocial health encompasses the mental, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions of what it means to be healthy” (Zinger, 2011, para 1).

Retention Rate: “Percentage of a school’s first-time, first-year undergraduate students who continue at that school the next year” (Federal Student Aid, 2020, para. 2).

Sense of Belonging: “The experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of the system of environment (Hagerty et al., 1992, p. 173).

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): “The nation’s most important anti-hunger program...[SNAP] provides important nutritional support for low-wage working families, low-income seniors and people with disabilities living on fixed incomes, and other individuals and households with low incomes” (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2019, para. 1).

Tinto’s Model of Institutional Departure (1993): “States that college consists of two systems: academic and social. Students need to be integrated into both systems to persist in their academic institutions” (Aljohani, 2016, p. 6)

Summary and Forthcoming Chapters

In this chapter, I introduced and provided background information for this study. Chapter 1 explained that there are high rates of food insecurity within the two-year college system and that insecurity can impact academic performance and student success, while also leading to a myriad of other problems. This current study sought to explore firsthand stories of food-insecure college students.

United States colleges and universities have significantly low rates of student retention. At 2-year degree-granting institutions between 2017 and 2018, only 62 percent of full-time degree-seeking undergraduate students were retained (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Although the relationship between food insecurity and student success is not new, studies

of food insecurity in higher education have primarily focused on understanding the prevalence of the issue. It is important to look more broadly at the issue to determine its impact on college student success (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, et al. (2018) pointed out the growing need to expand the understanding of campus food insecurity beyond frequency of food insecurity to the implications and consequences that result from food insecurity. Therefore, the need to examine and expand beyond what we already know of students' food struggles is essential to increasing the awareness of the critical issues surrounding food insecurity.

Chapter 2 covers the definition of food insecurity and its frequency and impact among college students. Chapter 2 also covers the theoretical framework that supported this study. Chapter 3 addresses the qualitative research overview, narrative inquiry, methodology, applications of narrative inquiry in higher education, applying narrative inquiry, research methods which include the research setting, recruitment and selection, participants demographics, data-collection methods, data-analysis procedures, and the researcher reflexivity. Chapter 4 reviews the findings from this study, including a summary of themes. Five major themes emerged from this study that included the following: barriers to physical health, barriers to mental health, barriers to food security, social science concepts and socio-economic status, and essential student-support services. Chapter 5 covers my passion for this study, discussion, limitations, implications, future research directions, and chapter summary along with concluding thoughts.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents existing literature on food insecurity in higher education and key theoretical concepts used to narrow the scope of the study. Although there is existing research on food insecurity in higher education, there is a limited understanding of how students experience this challenge. I determined to know how the experience of food insecurity impacts the students' sense (a) of belonging to the campus community; (b) of mattering as individuals; and (c) of being supported by the college on their academic journey. To achieve this purpose, a review of existing literature on food insecurity including Baumeister and Leary's Theory of a Sense of Belonging, Schlossberg's Theory of Marginality and Mattering, Morris Rosenberg's Theory of Mattering, and Tinto's Theory of Student Departure, were explored to narrow the scope of this study and to establish a conceptual framework.

Food Insecurity

Food Insecurity in the United States

In order to understand the impact of food insecurity on college students, I explored what food insecurity looks like across the United States, the state of Minnesota, and then how it manifests in college students. When reviewing the literature in the United States, I discovered that food insecurity is prevalent in the United States (Silva, 2020). Before the COVID-19 pandemic struck the United States in 2020, households that included children were nearly 1.5 times more likely to experience food insecurity than homes without children (Silva, 2020). This equates to 13.6% of households with children suffering from food insecurity (Silva, 2020). One report found that by late June, 2020, the number of households with children who were food insecure had increased to 27.5% (Silva, 2020). Another report from the Institute for Policy Research found that food insecurity had tripled in homes with children to 29.5% (Silva, 2020).

Second Harvest Heartland, a nationwide network of more than 200 food banks in the United States (Second Harvest Heartland, 2021), reported that since COVID-19 hit the United States, their food shelf partners had experienced a 60% increase in people being serviced, and that there was a 30% increase in demand (Second Harvest Heartland, 2021). This information tells us that COVID-19 has increased food insecurity.

To understand the different levels of food insecurity, the United States Department of Agriculture in 2006 identified four categories of food insecurity: (a) high food security, (b) marginal food security, (c) low food security, and (d) very low food security (Gaines et al., 2014). People with high food security have no problems accessing food, while those with marginal food security might feel anxiety over household food shortages. Those suffering from low food security have reduced diet quality and variety of foods. At the most challenging, very level low food security is a condition in which the person might reduce their food intake and go longer periods without food. Placement in one of the categories is determined by the results of a household questionnaire. Eighteen survey questions are used to place a household on a spectrum of food insecurity. The survey questions evoke such responses as, the family is worried about their food running out before they can afford more or they can't afford to eat balanced meals (United States Department of Agriculture, 2012).

Notably, according to the available literature, food insecurity is not equal between different races, nationalities, or locations. Second Harvest Heartland reported that “Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Indigenous families are at least twice as likely as White families in Minnesota to live with hunger” (Second Harvest Heartland, 2021, para. 7). Within the United States, the United States Department of Agriculture data reported that 19.1% of Black households and 15.6% of Hispanic households experience food insecurity, while only 7.9% of

White households experienced food insecurity. Additionally, adults with a disability suffer two times the rate of food insecurity as citizens who do not have a disability (Silva, 2020).

Location can make a difference in food insecurity. A *food desert* is a location where food is harder to obtain (Silva, 2020). A food desert can be created by living far away from a source, by living far away from a reasonably priced source of health foods, or by having limited income. For example, one place where a food desert can appear is in rural areas where residents have to drive greater than 10 miles for food (Silva, 2020). A food desert can also include urban areas where 33% of the population lives more than 1 mile from the nearest large grocery store or in rural areas where 33% of the population live more than 10 miles from the nearest large grocery store (Caporuscio, 2020). Other food deserts are described as places where the food at nearby stores is more expensive in one location than in others, making it difficult to access nutritious food while living within a budget.

In this kind of food desert, basic items such as milk and cereal might be 5% to 25% more expensive to purchase (Silva, 2020). Caporuscio (2020) utilized the United States Department of Agriculture's definition of a food desert as "an area that has either a poverty rate greater than or equal to 20%, or a median family income not exceeding 80% of the median family income in urban areas, or 80% of the statewide median family income in nonurban areas" (para. 5). A 2012 United States Department of Agriculture report on food deserts described characteristics of areas more likely to become food deserts, including: (a) very large or very sparse populations, (b) low income, (c) high levels of unemployment, (d) inadequate access to transportation, and (e) low number of food retailers providing fresh produce at affordable prices (Dutko et al., 2012).

Currently, Minnesota is struggling with food insecurity. The report found that rural areas in the West, Midwest, and South are more likely to become a food desert than rural areas in the

Northeast (Dutko et al., 2012). Minnesota is in the Midwest, and many areas in Minnesota are food deserts because they do not have access to healthy food (Benner, 2017).

Predictors of Food Insecurity

There are predictors of food insecurity. More than 60% of former foster youth are food insecure (Romo, 2018). Under-represented minority students and subgroups of the population are more likely to be food insecure (United States Department of Agriculture, 2014). Student parents and adults living in households with incomes at or below 185% of the federal poverty level are more likely to have high food insecurity (United States Department of Agriculture, 2016).

The United States Government Accountability Office (2018) has identified four primary risk factors associated with food insecurity among low-income students, including “having a low income, being a first-generation student, receiving SNAP benefits, and being a single parent” (Que, 2019, para. 12). Students at community colleges and vocation and technical colleges are more likely to meet these risk factors than students at four-year institutions. Additionally, these students are less likely to live on campus in residence halls with meal plans in the dining halls. When reviewing the Minnesota State College System, there are thirty community college, vocational college, and combination community and technical colleges. Out of the thirty institutions, only seven of the colleges offer residence halls for their students (College Simply, n.d.).

Food Insecurity with College Students

Research on food insecurity revealed that between 25% and 50% of students in colleges and universities are food insecure (Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018; Dubick et al., 2016; Goldrick-Rab, Cady, et al., 2018; Wood et al., 2017). Students at two-year colleges and vocational schools are more likely to be food insecure than students at four-year institutions (Larson, 2017; Que,

2019; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017; Maroto et al., 2015). Data shows that students enrolled in vocational colleges tend to have rates of food insecurity that are higher than the average U.S. household (Blagg et al., 2017).

In 2015, a report found 13.5 percent of students at vocational colleges were facing food insecurity compared to 11.2 percent of students attending a four-year college (Affordable Colleges Online, 2020). In 2019, the Association of American Colleges & Universities found 28 percent of two-year institution students had a low food security compared with 24 percent of four-year students (AAC&U News, 2019). In the surveys conducted by #Real College between 2015-2019, 42%-56% of students at two-year institutions reported they were food insecure as opposed to an average of 43% of students in the four-year institutions reporting food insecurity (Baker-Smith et al., 2020, p. 7). In #Real College's 2019 survey, 42% of students at two-year institutions that responded reported being food insecure and 33% of students at four-year institutions reported being food insecure (Baker-Smith et al., 2020). In another study, Broton and Goldrick-Rab (2018) found that "data from more than 30,000 two- and four-year college students indicates that approximately half are food insecure, and recent estimates suggest that at least 20% of two-year college students have very low levels of food security" ("Abstract").

A 2011 study of full-time University of Alabama students younger than 26 years reported that 14% of students had a low or very low food security with 20% having marginal food security (Gaines et al., 2014). A 2011 study in rural Oregon at a four-year college found 59% of their students were experiencing food insecurity (Patton-Lopez et al., 2014). The same study found 59% of students at Western Oregon University were experiencing food insecurity.

Recent research revealed that 36% of students at four-year post-secondary institutions and 42% of students at two-year postsecondary institutions experience food insecurity, with 22%

of four-year students experiencing the most acute form of food insecurity, which includes hunger (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, et al., 2018).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many students lost their jobs. Goldrick-Rab et al. (2020) learned that “two in three students who were employed before the pandemic experienced job insecurity, with one-third losing a job due to the pandemic. Basic-needs insecurity was higher among students who experience job loss and/or cuts to pay or hours” (p. 2). Additionally, Goldrick-Rab et al. (2020) learned that half of the students surveyed experienced moderate anxiety, could not concentrate on schooling during this pandemic, and did not know they were eligible to apply for support such as SNAP and emergency aid. These figures suggest that food insecurity is on the rise and is not isolated to students attending two-year institutions.

Food insecurity can include multidimensional features, including parental responsibilities, employment status, and the “cultural, historical, and social context of students’ situation” (Daugherty, 2017, p. 17). Other aspects for possible food insecurity can include how students access food and housing, if they have reliable transportation, or if they require childcare assistance (Cady, 2014). Crutchfield et al, (2020) found that food-insecure students are “(a) impacted physically, mentally, and academically; (b) despite negative impacts, students may normalize basic-needs insecurity; and (c) students will go to great lengths to mitigate the impact of insecurity, but often do not link with services” (p. 413).

Cliburn Allen and Alleman (2019) stated that “students are often not awarded enough aid to cover all of their costs of living and extracurricular expenses” (pp. 53-54). Students max out their student loans, find employment, and can still experience food insecurity (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2018; Goldrick-Rab, 2016). Cliburn Allen and Alleman (2019) stated that students from a low socioeconomic status “often feel marginalized on campus, struggle to

develop a sense of belonging, and perceive their campuses as having a less welcoming climate” (Espenshade & Radford, 2009; Lubrano, 2006; Soria & Bultmann, 2014). They “are aware of the disparity between the possessions they can afford and those of their peers” which in turn “reaffirms the perception that they do not belong” (Cliburn Allen & Alleman, 2019, p. 54).

Researchers studying college students at various postsecondary institutions found problems with food insecurity exist for between 32.9% to 50.9% of college students (Dubick et al, 2016; Bruening et al., 2017; Nikolaus et al., 2019). Fifty-six percent of working students reported they were food insecure, with 38% of the students working 20 hours or more per week (Dubick et al., 2016). Baker-Smith et al. (2020) found that among the working students, students who work more hours than other students experience basic-needs insecurity (p. 23).

Additionally, students who report being food insecure or homeless often “report grades of C or below, compared to students who do not face these challenges” (Baker-Smith et al., 2020, p. 24).

Many campuses offer nutritionally adequate and safe food in the campus dining halls, but having a meal plan with a campus dining hall does not eliminate the threat of food insecurity. Students who have a meal plan with a campus dining hall still reported that 43% of them still experience food insecurity (Dubick et al., 2016). For some students access is a problem. Fernandez et al. (2019) conducted a study of participants largely from Texas Community College that found many students lacked access to campus dining options. For some students, the hours the dining centers are open might not be compatible with their busy work/school/life schedules. For others, access might be limited due to their not living on campus.

Further, with the rising cost of tuition, students may not have enough money left over to pay for their meals plans. In a survey taken with students enrolled in a meal plan, 33% of the students ran out of meal points by the end of the term (Dubick et al., 2016). Dubick et al. (2016)

found 24% of students eat fewer than 5 meals per week in the campus dining center, 32% eat between 5 and 9 meals per week, 30% eat between 10 and 14 meals weekly, and only 13% eat 15 or more meals per week. This indicates that simply having a meal plan with the dining center does not solve food insecurity for many students.

Food Insecurity Among Diverse Students. As colleges and universities work to attract low-income students to their institution, they are seeing degree-completion gaps between low-income and those from more affluent backgrounds (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2018, para. 2). One reason for this gap is the high price of college that does not allow for students to be able to meet their basic needs (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2018). According to Foreman et al. (2018), “The factors associated with the higher adjusted odds of food insecurity: being a first-generation college student, Hispanic ethnicity, a third-born child or later in the family, and less confidence about financial management” (p. 3). That being said, food insecurity disproportionately affects certain student populations.

Students who are Black or Hispanic are more likely to be more food insecure than White students (Dubick et al., 2016; Freudenberg et al., 2011; Goldrick-Rab, 2015; Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, et al., 2018; Maroto et al., 2015; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018). Dubick et al. (2016) conducted a study with “3,765 students in 12 states attending eight community colleges and 26 four-year colleges and universities” and found that 57% of Black or African American students were food insecure compared to 40% of non-Hispanic White students (pp. 6-7). They found that Black and Latino students were about 1.5 times more likely to experience food insecurity than White and Asian students (Dubick et al., 2016). Baker-Smith et al. (2020) found that “White students have lower rates of food insecurity (36%) as compared to most of their peers; Hispanic or Latinx students (47%), Black (54%) and Indigenous (60%) student are higher” (p. 18).

Foreman et al., (2018) conducted a study among undergraduate students at the University of Texas and found 23.5% reported food insecurity with “a disproportionately higher percentage of food insecurity among the Hispanic than Non-Hispanic White or Asian students” (p. 3).

Freudenberg et al. (2011) had similar findings when they discovered specific underrepresented populations at City University of New York (CUNY) had higher rates of food insecurity compared to others.

Female students commonly report more incidences of food insecurity than males (Freudenberg et al., 2011; Gaines et al., 2014; Koller, 2014; Martinez et al., 2016; Morris et al., 2016; Patton-Lopez et al., 2014), while in two studies males were overrepresented (Chaparro et al., 2009; Maroto et al., 2015). However, students who identify as bisexual are at the highest risk of experiencing food insecurity (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019). Baker-Smith et al.’s (2020) research also found that rates of food insecurity “are lowest among male students; [while] non-binary and transgender students have the highest rates of food and housing insecurity” (p. 21).

Life circumstances are also associated with “higher-than-average risk of basic need insecurity” (Baker-Smith et al., 2020, p. 22). Baker-Smith et al. (2020) found “students with children, those that previously served in the military, former foster youth and returning citizens are more likely to experience basic need insecurity than their peers” (p. 22). Black and Hispanic students with children along with single parents that live with income at or below the federal poverty line are suffering from food insecurity at rates higher than the national average (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2016). Additionally, first-generation students report a higher food insecurity of 56%, compared to 45% of students who had at least one parent attend college (Dubick et al., 2016). Students who qualify for the Pell Grant are also at a higher risk to be food insecure (Dubick et al, 2016; Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, et al., 2018; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017).

Only four percent of the food-insecure students reported being food insecure prior to college (Foreman et al., 2018).

Food Insecurity Among Non-Traditional Students. The populations of non-traditional-aged college students, loosely defined as students over the age of 40, have increased on campuses across the United States. Currently, one in 10 college students in the United States is age 40 or older (Bernhard, 2020). In 2016, a fifth of all undergraduate students had dependents; 14% were single parents; the average student age was 26 years old; and the average age of first enrollment was 21 (United States Government Accountability Office, 2018). Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, et al. (2018) found that students who have children are at a greater risk of food insecurity compared to students without children (43% versus 34%). Reasons for food insecurity among this student population could include having increased family obligations and limited time for working. This combination of working, attending class, and caring for their families may also contribute to a lower persistence rate.

Psychosocial Health

Psychological health issues have been specifically tied to food insecurity. Psychosocial health includes the mental, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects of what it means to be healthy (Ware, 2015; Zinger, 2011). People who experience good psychosocial health feel good about themselves, feel comfortable with other people, have a sense of belonging, have a zest of life with high energy, and are able to meet the demands of life (Zinger, 2011). When psychosocial health deteriorates, mental illness can occur (Zinger, 2011). Mental-health threats to college students can include difficulties in relationships, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse (Zinger, 2011). Food insecurity also threatens the mental health of students who may experience a decreased ability to focus on academics (Meza et al., 2018), a difficult time concentrating in

class, trouble studying for and focusing on exams, and difficulty completing assignments (Farahbakhsh et al., 2017). Students can also experience embarrassment from their hunger, as well as a lack of self-worth (Meza et al., 2018), and are at higher risk of skipping meals, leading to mood disorders (Wilson et al., 2020). At the University of Massachusetts in Boston, 27% of students skipped meals and 6% did not eat for 1 or 2 days due to food insecurity (Silva et al., 2017). Broton and Goldrick-Rab (2018) found that the students that participated in their study reported that they “had some level of food insecurity, ranging from anxiety over food sufficiency to reduced food intake” (para. 21) with challenges including not being able to eat a balanced meal, cutting the size of their meals, or not eating at all. Food-insecure students reported skipping meals, going to bed early to avoid being hungry, ignoring their hunger pains, and using supplements such as water or juices to compensate when food was not available (Stebleton et al., 2020). Further, Martinez et al. (2019) found that students who were food insecure ate fewer fruits and vegetables, which can lead to poorer health.

Students who worry about money and being able to purchase food might also experience deep shame, desperation, and humiliation in telling their teachers or school administration that they need help obtaining food (Heimbaugh, 2020). Students reported that the stress of food insecurity interferes with their daily lives, and that they have a fear of disappointing their families (Meza et al., 2018). Some students might experience an inability to develop meaningful social relationships due to jealousy or resentment of their peers who have more stable food access and financial situations (Meza et al., 2018). Other students lash out at their academic institutions for not providing enough resources for food-insecure students to support their academic performance (Meza et al., 2018, para. 9).

Trouble Concentrating on Studies

According to Meza et al. (2018), a common thread shared by the participants was that food insecurity “presented a significant challenge to their academic success because of the physical manifestation of food insecurity and the mental trade-off, focusing on food or focusing on academics” (para. 16). The participants struggled to complete their academic studies due to a lack of energy resulting from a lack of food and were embarrassed at their stomach growling in class. Meza et al. (2018) found that students had a tougher time being able to concentrate on their studies as the focus was more on their hunger than on the topic they were attempting to study (para. 11). Farahbakhsh et al. (2017) echoed similar findings with food-insecure students having difficulty concentrating in class, studying for and focusing on exams, and completing assignments.

Social Deprivation

Food-insecure students can suffer from social deprivation. Fernandez et al. (2019) found that some students with low food insecurity described having so much work to do that they feel socially deprived. Cliburn Allen and Alleman (2019) found food-insecure students attempting to conceal their struggle with hunger from friends and peers. Students would make comments such as they were “just dieting” and that is why they were not eating. When students wanted to eat out, food-insecure students might make an excuse that they have homework to do. When the students did go out to eat, they might take a portion of it home so they could have two meals out of the one meal. Additionally, these students found it hard to “form relationships in part because they did not think that affluent student could understand or respect the life of a student struggling to pay for food” (Cliburn Allen & Alleman, 2019, p. 62).

This aligns with a study at the University of North Texas where the research found that students who stressed about not having enough food often did not want to go to social gatherings due to feelings of lack of self-worth and embarrassment (Meza et al., 2018, para 26). Several students with low food security expressed that they felt they were missing out on the healthy benefits of socializing, meaning “social activities can rejuvenate students, at once providing a reprieve from stress and a community of support” (Fernandez et al., 2019, p. 48). Family and friends could help students with their food needs, but participants expressed that they did not want to accept help from friends or family (Meza et al., 2018, para. 26). Further, this sense of needing to socialize can impact the student’s feeling of belonging to the institution.

Mental Health and Illness

Issues resulting from food insecurity are not limited to students having a tough time concentrating on studies; it can also lead to mental-health issues and illness. Food insecurity can lead to poor general health, depression and/or anxiety, and suicidal thoughts (Roncarolo et al., 2016; Bruening et al., 2016). A review of literature on food insecurity among low-income people links food insecurity with mental health problems, along with a host of illnesses that include type II diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease (Mayer et al., n.d.; Sun et al., 2020; “What is Food Insecurity,” n.d.). Food insecure students are more likely to report their health as being “fair” or “poor” (Bruening et al., 2016). Mental health concerns of food insecure college students include feeling overwhelmed by all they need to do, thinking that things are hopeless, difficulty functioning due to depression, and thoughts or actions of self-harm (Zinger, 2011). Physical symptoms of major depressive disorders include sleep disturbance, appetite disturbance, fatigue, and self-harm (Zinger, 2011).

Student Success and Academic Performance

It is important for the college to try to support the student in every aspect of their academic journey. When exploring why students leave their college, the “interactionist perspective of student departure is a consequence of the interaction between the individual student and the college or university as an organization” (Braxton, 2003, p. 327). Students want to know if their institution is committed to student welfare (Berger & Milem, 1999). They want to know that they can receive support with academic guidance, advising, counseling, and financial aid information, as well financial assistance when necessary to alleviate some of their financial stress, so that they don’t have to worry about money and can focus on their studies. Between 1989 and 2016, the price for a four-year degree doubled (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Between “2005-2006 and the 2015-2016 school years, prices for undergraduate education at public institutions rose 34% and at private nonprofit institution by 26% after adjustment for inflation” (Freudenberg et al., 2019, p. 1683). Students are facing higher tuition costs as well as other expenses such as housing, food, and books, Grant aid and tax benefits are not covering the costs for tuition and fees (Seltzer, 2017; Mitchell et al., 2018), and financial aid has not kept pace with these additional expenses (Seltzer, 2017). Pell grants now cover less than one third of the costs, and the Federal Work-Study program has become underfunded (Freudenberg et al., 2019).

Several studies identify that food-insecure students are more likely to have lower GPA (Maroto et al., 2015; Morris et al., 2016; Patton-Lopez et al., 2014). The United States Government Accountability Office (2018) stated that “increasing evidence indicates that some college students are experiencing food insecurity, which can negatively impact their academic success” (cover page) and further, that “substantial federal investment in higher education is at

risk if college students drop out because they cannot afford basic necessities like food” (p. 1).

Hagedorn and Olfert (2018) found food-insecure students displayed behaviors that differed from “food-secure students, including spending more money on other items, engaging in more coping strategies to find food, and having lower academic success in the classroom” (p. 8).

In a study conducted by the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), 45% of the participants indicated that finances were important for their continued enrollment in college (Cooper, n.d.). Many researchers report that students who experience food insecurity suffer from a lower GPA and poor attendance (Henry, 2017; Hughes et al., 2011; Maroto et al., 2015; Martinez et al., 2018; McArthur et al., 2017; Morris et al., 2016; Mukigi et al., 2018; Nugent, 2011; Patton-López et al., 2014; Silva et al., 2017). According to Freudenberg et al. (2019), “Several studies have found that food-insecure students are more likely to have low grade point averages, delayed graduation, or higher dropout rates than their food-secure peers” (para. 24). Maroto et al. (2015) and Patton-Lopez et al. (2014) found food insecure students are more likely to have lower self-reported GPAs than their peers without food insecurity. Silva et al. (2017) found that food-insecure students were more likely to fail or withdraw from courses, or fail to register for courses, than their peers. Kyte (2017) found that those who “worked more than 15 hours each week stand out as having statistically lower GPAs than higher-income students who do not work” (p. 7). Over 40 percent of full-time students work for pay during the school year, and 26 percent work more than 20 hours per week (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Literature also supports that offering emergency aid is important for student persistence and degree attainment (Cooper, n.d.).

Food Pantries

Community Resources exist to support people who suffer from food insecurities. Food pantries and food banks are different, but work together to help the community in need of food. Second Harvest Food Bank (n.d.) defines a *food pantry* as “an individual site that distributes bags or boxes of food directly to those in need who reside in a specified area. A food pantry is a member agency of, and obtains food from, a food bank” (para. 2). Second Harvest Food Bank (n.d.) defines a *food bank* as “an organization that collects product from the food industry and food drives, inventories and stores it, and distributes it to agencies-such as food pantries, soup kitchens, Kids Cafes and shelters-that provide food directly to individuals in need” (para. 1).

Food pantries can help food-insecure students and become an important first point of contact between students and university resources. Food pantries can help connect students to SNAP and other public benefits. Baker-Smith et al. (2020) found that “only 18% of food-insecure students across two-and four-year colleges receive SNAP benefits” (p. 25). Additionally, they found that on-campus supports are increasing; however, it “does not mean that students who need them the most are accessing those resources” (Baker-Smith et al., 2020, p. 27). An example is that “only 21% of food insecure students use a campus food pantry” (Baker-Smith et al., 2020, p. 27). While it is true that students can turn to public assistance and family along with trimming their budgets and working longer hours, it is difficult to make these strategies work (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2018). Broton and Goldrick-Rab (2018) found that “two-thirds of undergraduates’ households used some type of public benefit” along with 49% reporting using tax refunds, 30% public health insurance, 21% using SNAP, and 29% receiving food-related public assistance (para. 24). Crutchfield et al. (2020) found that some students did not “consider themselves “the type of person that needs support” or “not poor enough.” They felt

they should bypass opportunities for support services to ensure that others who were “more needy” would have available resources” (Crutchfield et al., 2020, p. 417).

El Zein et al. (2018) found in a study that out of 616 respondents, 15.4% experienced low food security and 16.1% experienced very low food security, with a total of 32% of the respondents being food insecure. In this study, 70% of the students were aware of the food pantry, but only “15.6% had used the food pantry for food acquisition” (El Zein et al., 2018, “Food Pantry Awareness and Determinants of Use,” para. 1). Out of the students that used the food pantry, 36.4% used the pantry as their sole source of food. Reasons for not utilizing the food pantry included “resistance barriers, including social stigma, and self-identity” (El Zein et al., 2018, “Discussion,” para. 2). However, campus pantries engage the broader campus population in organizing for food justice (Ordway, 2019) and can demonstrate to students that their institution cares about them and that they matter.

Evolution. In 1993, Michigan State University was the first in the nation to open a food pantry run by students for students. In 2012, Colleges and Universities Food Bank Alliance (CUFBA) was founded. CUFBA focuses on “alleviating food insecurity, hunger and poverty among college and university students in the United States” (Colleges and Universities Food Bank Alliance, n.d., “About Us”, para. 1) and defines *food pantry* as a program designed specifically to deliver food (that has not been pre-prepared) to students who are experiencing food insecurity (Goldrick-Rab, Cady, et al., 2018). In order to join CUFBA, a college simply commits to learning about student food insecurity and to creating a food pantry on its campus.

Running a Food Pantry and Funding. There are challenges to operating a food pantry. According to The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, “Building a pantry program at a college often means addressing bureaucratic and systemic challenges unique to college campuses” (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, et al., 2018, p. 1). When a food pantry is implemented on a campus, administration needs to consider many things such as privacy issues, rules of use, and the hours they want the pantry to be open. Food pantries can run in different ways using students, administration, paid workers or volunteers. Food pantries can have set hours or be by appointment only.

Finding volunteers can be an issue when running a food pantry. Many stakeholders are needed to run a successful food pantry on campus. Additionally, there might be a disagreement as to who is in charge of the food pantry, i.e., is it run by the Dean of Student’s office, the student government, or some other service/office on campus (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, et al., 2018). Some pantries have paid staff to manage the pantry, while others are run entirely by volunteers (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, et al., 2018).

CUFBA invited 530 campuses by email and phone to participate in a study about running a campus food pantry, with 262 campuses responding. The survey included up to 155 questions and took about 20 minutes to complete. Of respondents, 83% had a food pantry serving students with 68% located at four-year institutions and 20% located at two-year institutions. Public institutions comprised 84% of the respondents and 16% at private, nonprofit colleges and universities. The institutions were located in 40 states and 199 cities with the higher concentration in larger states such as California and Texas (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, et al., 2018). The campus size varied, with about 25% at very large institutions and 38% on small campuses. The study found that some campuses partner with a nonprofit organization, while

some campuses work with their campus foundation. Common nonprofit partners include hunger relief organizations (16%) and religious organizations (7%) (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, et al., 2018). Some campuses rely on student activity fees to pay for the service, with the student government providing the needed space for the pantry (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, et al., 2018). CUFBA found that 52% of the pantries surveyed are open more than 30 hours per week. Most pantries are open more than one day a week, with 32% open weekdays and 14% open daily, including weekends (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, et al., 2018).

Access and Offerings. Students learn of food pantries by word of mouth, referrals, fliers, websites, and social media (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, et al., 2018). Some pantries are only open to students, while others are open to students, faculty, and staff. Only a few open their pantries to the public. Five percent of campuses responding to CUFBA's study required proof of financial need (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, et al., 2018). Some pantries allow students to pick the food they want; other campuses pre-bag the food. Some campuses offer personal hygiene products or other supplies or home goods, including toiletries, feminine hygiene products, shampoo, soap, toilet paper, can openers, utensils, and dishes. One campus found that putting the food pantry in a prominent area of campus helped to normalize utilization of pantries and promote a "culture of caring" (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, et al., 2018).

Impact of a Food Pantry at Dominican University of California

While there is a lack of research assessing the effectiveness of college food pantries, one assessment, conducted at the Dominican University of California, provided meaningful insights. Students there expressed that they did not initially feel that the university had given much support to students struggling to pay for both high tuition costs and basic living expenses. They had expected the University to have services such as a food pantry and believed that the

University should be providing more basic aid to their students as the cost of tuition is quite high at this University. After a food pantry opened on its campus, students were able to receive a variety of healthy food options (Cortez, 2019). The study found that the campus food pantry was well-located for the students who resided on campus, as it was not too far from the dormitories. However, access for off-campus students was difficult due to parking and limited hours of operation. Additionally, it was difficult for off-campus students to pick food up during open hours and then store the food while they were in class.

Situating this Study in the Literature

The literature presented supports the development of the dissertation as it is reported that food insecurity among college students attending two-year institutions is problematic not only in Minnesota, but across the United States. Additionally, students who struggle disproportionately with food insecurity are students of diverse population, female students, and students from non-traditional backgrounds. Chapter 2 outlined the percentages of food insecurity among these students.

The literature review has shown that food insecure students can suffer from psychological health issues resulting in trouble concentrating on their studies, social deprivation, mental illnesses, and lack of student success and persistence. One way to elevate these students is with a food pantry located on campus. Chapter 2 also outlined food pantries—how they evolved, the process of running and funding a food pantry, and the impact of a food pantry at a college or university.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

When I began my doctoral work, I believed that a narrative inquiry was appropriate for this study. Conducting interviews with students could provide the stories that would frame their

lived experiences. To proceed, I would first ensure that students had a clear definition of food insecurity, and then I would ask about their experiences with it and any effects food insecurity has had on their health, well-being, and being in classroom interactions and coursework competition. I would explore what students felt were essential student support services and if they felt a food pantry was a necessary student support service. If they felt the food pantry was necessary, I would explore how the food pantry could help with maintaining their health, well-being, classroom interactions, and course completion.

As I viewed different conceptual frameworks, I thought it was appropriate to connect Tinto's (1975) Model of Student Integration and Tinto's (1993) Model of Student Departure and Tinto's (1993) Model of Institutional Departure as these frameworks explore why students leave their college before graduating. The theories connect the commitment from the student to the institution and the institution to the student.

Further, as I viewed different theoretical frameworks, I thought it was appropriate to connect Baumeister and Leary's theory of the Sense of Belonging, Morris Rosenberg's theory of Mattering and Schlossberg's theory of Mattering and Marginality, as these theories explore how a sense of belonging and mattering help with student persistence.

Recently, I attended a conference in which Sara Goldrick-Rab spoke about food insecurity. She has written many articles on food insecurity, but I wanted to add students' stories to share the impact that a food pantry might have on students' health, well-being, classroom interactions, and course completion. My hope is that this study will be beneficial to college administrators as they determine if a food pantry is a worthy and necessary investment in support services for their students and institution.

Conceptual Theory

The current study used Tinto's (1975) Model of Student Integration, Tinto's (1993) Model of Student Departure, and Tinto's (1993) Model of Institutional Departure as conceptual frameworks for an examination of the issues inherent in students' food insecurity. Vincent Tinto (1975, 1982, 1987) formulated a theory that explores why students leave their college before graduating. The theory interprets persistence of a student as being a match between the student's motivation and academic ability with the institution's academic and social characteristics (Cabrera et al., 1990). There are two goals tied into this theory that revolve around the student's goal of college completion and the institutional commitment to that student. Tinto's model contains five categories with ideas interacting to determine a student's decision to drop out of college. Intertwined in these ideas is the institution's commitment to the student, the student's commitment to their college, and the student's commitment to their social and educational community (see Appendix A).

Theoretical Framework

The current study explored Baumeister and Leary's theory of the Sense of Belonging, Morris Rosenberg's theory of Mattering and Schlossberg's theory of Mattering and Marginality. It is through these frameworks that the current study connects a student's basic need of food and a sense of belonging along with a sense of mattering. With the sense of belonging and sense of mattering, the current study explored the degree to which regularly accessible student-support services such as a food pantry can foster health and positively impact the percentage of student persistence, completion, and graduation from students' programs.

Sense of Belonging. A sense of belonging is key to a person's sense of self and self-worth. Students who possess these tools have higher levels of persistence and success in college (Strayhorn, 2013). A sense of belonging means that the student feels connected, important, and of value to others (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). Strayhorn (2013) believed that the sense of belonging is a basic human need located in Maslow's framework. Additionally, Strayhorn (2013) organized the sense of belonging into three categories: "belongingness as a concept, circumstances that engender (or thwart) belongings, and the relation between belonging and other outcomes or behaviors" (p. 11).

Correspondingly, a student's sense of belonging has been identified as a potential lever to promote success, engagement, and well-being in college (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017). Research shows that students who feel a sense of belonging to their institution are more likely to seek out the campus resources that can help them become successful at college (Yeager et al., 2016; Strayhorn, 2012). Additionally, having that sense of belonging can help students cope with stress and improve their mental health (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Conversely, if a student feels a lack of a sense of belonging, they can feel "rejection, social isolation, loneliness, or 'marginality'" which can link to low self-esteem, depression, substance abuse, and suicide (Hagerty et al., 2002). Additionally, not having that sense of belonging can undermine students' academic performance (Walton & Cohen, 2007).

According to Over (2016), "The idea of a need to belong has deep roots in social psychology" (para. 8). Belonging has two criteria; the first is having "relatively frequent, positively valenced interactions with at least a few other people" (Over, 2016, para. 9). Further, these interactions should "take place within a framework of long-lasting affective concern for each other's welfare" (Over, 2016, para. 9). Having a sense of belonging allows the person the

“experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of the system or environment” (Hagerty et al., 1992, para. 1). Additionally, having that sense of belonging can help alleviate students' stress and improve their mental health (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). To address student success at the college level, higher-education professionals need to look at the whole student – academic, social, psychological, as well as physical health (Patton et al., 2016; Stebleton & Aleixo, 2011).

It is difficult to be a successful learner when a student is hungry and basic needs are not met (Dominguez-Whitehead, 2015). According to Wood et al. (2017):

Students with food insecurity are significantly less likely to perceive a sense of belonging from faculty, to feel welcome to engage inside and outside of the classroom, to report having access to student services, and to see campus services as being effective in helping them address their needs. (p. 3)

College students' sense of belonging, relating to their academic success and emotional wellbeing (Ahmed, 2017), increases when food needs are reliably met. Meeting these needs enhances students' ability to feel respected, valued, accepted, cared for, and included. Addressing food insecurity is a powerful step toward building students' sense of belonging, leading to positive impacts on students' cognition, affect, and behaviors (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2012).

Students report an increased sense of belonging when colleges help with things such as offering a food pantry (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016). Unfortunately, some students feel as if institutional leaders do not have an awareness about food insecurity. These students feel as if faculty members are separated from the reality of food insecurity and cannot see the struggle for their students (Stebleton et al., 2020). Additionally, food-insecure students may also be facing homelessness and mental-health issues (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017). Diamond and Stebleton

(2017) recommended that colleges collect food-insecurity data; hire advisers to advocate and join national organizations that address food insecurity; implement procedures to accept SNAP credits on campus; reduce associated costs for students; encourage advisors to donate their time and items to a pantry; have emergency funds available for students facing food insecurity.

Without additional support, some students are faced with a bad set of choices: poverty/school or survival/academic failure. As students pick and choose how they will spend their money, many will struggle if they have to choose between food or a costly required textbook. If the student chooses to purchase food in place of the required textbook to fulfill a basic need, the student may suffer academically by not having the proper materials to complete assignments and be prepared for class. Some employers may not offer flexibility to working students, so that they must pick between working a shift, missing class, dropping out, or losing income (Freudenberg et al., 2019; Maynard et al., 2018). As this type of life spirals downward, the student may have to hold off graduating for some future time, or never graduate at all.

Morris Rosenberg's Theory of Mattering and Schlossberg's Theory of Mattering and Marginality. Mattering is “a motive: the feeling that others depends on us, are interested in us, are concerned with our fate, or experience us as an ego-extension, exercises a powerful influence on our actions” (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981, p. 165). There are five aspects associated with mattering that include (a) Attention: when the student feels that they are noticed; (b) Importance: that the student feels that they are cared about; (c) Ego Extension: the student feels that someone else will be proud of what they do or sympathize if they fail; (d) Dependence: the student feels that they are needed; and (e) Appreciation: the student feels that their efforts are appreciated by others (Schlossberg, 1989).

When colleges students believe that they matter, their feeling of marginality diminishes (Rayle & Chung, 2007). Schlossberg found in 1989 in her theory of college students' mattering that first-year college students often feel marginal, and that they do not matter to their colleges (Rayle & Chung, 2007). Additionally, these students may develop self-consciousness, irritability and depression that can lead to a lower academic success and greater academic stress (Sand et al., 2005; Schlossberg, 1989). Students who do not feel like they matter to the school could "experience greater levels of academic stress and increased dropout rates" (Rayle & Chung, 2007, p. 23).

When looking at marginality versus mattering, marginality is the sense of not fitting in. Marginality can take place when students are taking on a new role such as being a freshman student. The student might be uncertain about the new role they are pursuing. According to Charter for Compassion (2021), a marginalized identity is anyone who feels or is "underserved, disregarded, ostracized, harassed, persecuted, or sidelined in the community" (para. 1).

Summary

The many faces of food insecurity include the student with low family income, the student in a college with high tuition, the international student who lost a graduate assistantship, a veteran living out of a van, a gay or trans student that was just kicked out of their home due to non-acceptance (Patton-Lopez et al., 2014). Most of these students believe that if they can just get their degrees, their lives will be better. Patton-Lopez et al. (2014) explained that "in 2011, the U.S. Department of Education reported that people will earn 33 percent more in their lifetime and cut their chances of being unemployed in half if they get a bachelor's degree" (p. 28). These students are literally starving for knowledge (Patton-Lopez et al., 2014).

Food insecurity across the United States is well documented, and college students are increasingly impacted by this issue that threatens their persistence in college. The current study used a narrative inquiry to understand students' lived experience with food insecurity and how it impacts their perceptions of their connectedness to their institutions and success in class.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I introduce the research methodology for this qualitative narrative inquiry study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Utilizing a narrative approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) revealed how food insecurity was presented on a vocational college campus located in Minnesota. In gathering the stories from students, I explored the degree to which regularly accessible student-support services such as a food pantry can foster health and positively impact the percentages of student persistence, completion, and graduation from their programs. To document students' stories, a constructivist approach was used. As Muñoz (2016) stated, “A constructivist approach allows me to examine how students create meaning, or purpose from their life experiences and how their individual contexts shape how they view themselves” (p. 718). Further, this current study was narrowed to the social constructivist worldview. Individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views, rather than to narrow the meaning into a few categories or ideas (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). My goal as researcher was to rely on the complexity of the participants' views of their situation in order to construct meaning (Creswell, 2009). I sought to learn from their perspectives and backgrounds to become a leader in the ability to problem solve and work toward possible solutions for food insecurity on this campus (Kim, 2010).

A qualitative narrative approach was appropriate for this study because it allowed me to explore how students felt about food insecurity using interviews. Through the students' stories, I heard their experiences surrounding food insecurity. Additionally, through this study, students shared experiences that suggest the important role that campus food pantries play in students ability to stay in school. The stories that were shared exposed the impact of being food insecure

that can result in such issues as reduced performance and potentially, withdrawal from the college as a result of food insecurity. Additionally, I gained an understanding of some of the underlying reasons that students may not be doing well in their course work or why they would decide to withdraw from the college. Qualitative was the proper approach as I did not test a theory or hypothesis or utilize numerical data to formulate a fact.

Narrative Inquiry Methodology

Narrative methodology is the “study of the ways human beings experience the world” (Moen, 2006, p. 56). Educational researchers studying college students have used narrative inquiry to explore curricular and pedagogical strategies (Conle, 2003; Coulter et al., 2007); for interrogating teaching and learning (Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002); and as an inquiry into the interrelationships between literacy, pedagogy, and multiculturalism (Clark & Medina, 2000; Grinberg, 2002; Phillion et al., 2005). As these students’ stories unfolded through narrative research, a picture emerged of how a person experiences the world. When using this method of inquiry, the “narrative is both phenomenon and method” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2) meaning within study the researcher explores participants’ situations, experiences, or events, and the researcher will use methods such as interviews, field notes, journals, letters, autobiographies, and orally told stories to interpret the participant’s situation, experiences, or events. The researcher then records the participants’ situations and facts surrounding the topic and constructs a narrative of the study.

To begin a narrative inquiry the researcher will want to create a relationship with the participant to construct a caring community (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Participants need to feel connected to the researcher in a context of equality between the parties, with a “mutual purpose and intention” (Hogan, 1988, p. 12). Participants share their experiences and their

understanding of the world around them (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), which results in an understanding of a certain phenomenon. As these participants are telling their stories, the researcher needs to listen carefully as the story is told to hear the story rather than anticipating what will be told (Maple & Edwards, 2010).

Taken together, this means narrative inquiry is a process in which information is gathered for the purpose of research through the participants' shared stories. In recording these stories, the researcher is gathering knowledge from the past. These stories are the raw data that is used to learn more about the participants' "culture, historical experiences, identity, and lifestyle" (Butina, 2015, p. 190) in an effort to better understand the experiences of the participants. By utilizing the raw data, the researcher then becomes the interpreter of the participants' stories. In the interpretation, the narrative researchers consider how people want to be known and understood in a given social context, leading to a deeper understanding of how the participant made sense of an experience (Riessman, 2008).

Applications of Narrative Inquiry in Higher Education

Narrative inquiry is used in higher education to gather information about college students' experiences, and in gathering this information the researcher might reveal deeply hidden assumptions such as that middle class students can provide healthy nutritious meals to their families (Bell, 2002). A narrative inquiry might reveal that those middle class students might also be struggling with food insecurity, and through narrative inquiry we can uncover the physical impact of this struggle (Bell, 2002). Additionally, through narrative inquiry, we can recognize "that one's understanding of people and events change" and that college may have to make changes as our world changes (Bell, 2002, p. 208) such as when COVID-19 became present in the United States. Narrative inquiry has the potential to guide decision-making and

institutional change with the stories of representative students showing the way. Through narrative inquiry the institution can gain access to student experiences, provide information about the campus culture, and enhance theories regarding college students (Reason, 2001). Additionally, engaging in narrative inquiry in higher education can build relationships between the institution and the students by showing the students that they matter to the institution and want to know their thoughts about their college experience. By engaging in narrative inquiry in higher education, institutions can encourage student growth and development by providing the students with the student support services they need to be successful (Reason, 2001).

Examples of narrative inquiry studies used in higher education include exploring the experience of first-generation college students (Stitt & Winsor, 2014), spatial experiences (Cirakli & Ozbay, 2020), and community college pathways (Ross, 2013). By conducting a narrative inquiry study of the real-life stories of food insecurity, participants can help college administrators learn more about the campus culture and the prevalence of food insecurity among students. Additionally, the stories shared might possibly reveal the need for student support services to help food insecure students. Further, through narrative inquiry college administrators may be building a sense of belonging and sense of mattering with the college students who are engaged in the narrative-inquiry process by exploring the students' experiences and showing the student that they care about what they think about their experience at the college.

Applying Narrative Inquiry

By using a narrative inquiry, I recorded the food-insecure students' lived experience in their own words. I was able to interpret the participants' stories to create meaning. Additionally, by using narrative inquiry, I took the students' experiences beyond the boundaries of a questionnaire and into the realm of lived experience, with stories that can provide insight as

campuses determine which student-support services are needed for their students (Overcash, 2003).

The stories shared by participants in a narrative inquiry have three aspects: interaction, continuity, and situation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). *Interaction* refers to experiences of personal and social relationships. At the beginning of the interview, I shared some of my history as well as my purpose for conducting the interview. In sharing this information, my goal was to establish some common ground with student so that they felt comfortable sharing their stories with me. Second, *continuity* is the aspect of the story in which the participant shares their past experiences, their present situation, and future thoughts and feelings toward the experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In collecting students' stories relating to food insecurity, I sought to document their past-present-future trajectory of their lived experiences, noting their thoughts and feelings about how food insecurity may have impacted various aspects of their lives, as students, such as health, social connection, academics, and use of student-support services. *Situation* refers to the particular setting or location of the story, based on a time and place that frames the participant's experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In this study, the stories shared outlined their experiences with food insecurity at a two-year college in Minnesota.

Within the aspect of interaction, there are four directions of inquiry: inward, outward, backward, and forward (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). *Inward movement* is the internal thoughts that people have with "feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). *Outward movement* is the external influences that can impact that person. *Backward* and *forward* refer to the past, present, and the future dimensions of the narrative. Viewed in their entirety, the four directions of inquiry can give the researcher a comprehensive "map" to trace the participants' transitions through various times and events in their lives

(Waido, 2013), to gain an “experience of the experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189). Through hearing about the participant’s feelings and hopes, external influence, and stories of past, present, and anticipated future, I explored how food insecurity has impacted students at a two-year college and what role food insecurity may play in students’ ability or inability to remain in college, and ultimately, to graduate

“The oldest and most natural form of sense making” is that of stories or narratives (Jonassen & Hernandez-Serrano, 2002, p. 66), but there is a dearth of studies that ask the students directly what they need from their college experience to stay enrolled and be successful. Therefore, it was beneficial to examine my research question through a narrative lens as I gathered the stories and experiences from students. With 18+ years' experience teaching at my current institution, I anticipated that the students had stories to share about how food insecurity has directly impacted them. My research explored not only the effects of food insecurity on the health and college performance of students but also the attitudes of students toward the college’s continued support of a food pantry as a remedy for food insecurity. Additionally, I asked participants to identify necessary student support services on campus and then asked if they felt the presence of a food pantry on a campus was an essential student-support service to offer to students. The data for this narrative inquiry took place in the form of field notes of the participants' stories as I interviewed each participant.

Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of students at a two-year vocational college located in Minnesota. A narrative inquiry methodology was applied through the use of interviews carried out on college students ages 25-54. This study took place during April-May 2021.

Research Setting

This vocational college is a public, two-year institution that offers associate degrees, diplomas, and certificates. The college is set in a large suburban area and does not offer on-campus housing. According to the latest Carnegie report listed on its website, there are 1,102 part-time students and 1,064 full-time students. The college is predominately White with 71.3% White, .5% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 4.6% Asian, 11.6% Black or African American, 5% Hispanic/Latino, 4.7% Two or more races and 2.2% races unknown (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). There are more women part-time students than men, and more full-time men attending this institution than women. Regarding federal financial aid, 59% of the students receive federal aid, and 52% of students receive state/local aid. This college implemented its food pantry in 2019.

Recruitment and Selection

Participants in the current research study satisfied the following two criteria: (a) be a student at this vocational college; and (b) have experienced food insecurity. This college was the only college selected for this narrative study. Dworkin (2012) stated that 5 to 50 participants is adequate to interview for a qualitative study. I initially sought to have 5-10 students participate in this current study.

To solicit participants, I emailed the entire student body once at the two-year institution requesting participation in the study. I placed a flyer in the bags of food distributed through the college's food pantry during the months of April and May. I offered a financial incentive in the form of a \$15 Target gift card for participation and placed this information on the email and flyer. I also listed my email address for the students to contact me if interested in participating.

Participants were asked to participate in one interview with me. Five students agreed to participate in an interview.

Participant Demographics

Demographic surveys are widely used as an approach to studying food insecurity. In the current study, demographic information was gathered after the students stated they wanted to participate. The purpose of my survey questions was to identify this demographic information, and it consisted of five questions. Information gathered revealed participants' age, ethnicity, gender, marital status, employment status, and whether the participant was a part-time or full-time student.

Participants' ages ranged between the ages of 25 and 54. Four participants were White, and one student was Black or African American. Four students identified as female, and one student responded that they were not male or female, but rather "other." Three students identified as single, one student was married, and one student was divorced. Two students were employed part-time, with one participant being a full-time student and the other a part-time student. One student was a part-time student working two part-time jobs. One student was employed full-time and was a full-time student. One student was a full-time student and did not identify as working. In the interview, three of the participants shared that they had dependents who relied on them for food, and one participant mentioned their animals as being their dependents.

Table 1

Alias, Age, Ethnicity, Gender, Martial Status, Employment Status, and Student Status

Alias	Age	Ethnicity	Gender	Marital Status	Employment Status	Student Status
Georgina	45-54	White	Female	Divorced	Part-time	Part-time
Angela	45-54	White	Female	Married	Part-time	Full-time

Table 1 (continued)

Alias	Age	Ethnicity	Gender	Marital Status	Employment Status	Student Status
Linda	25-34	Black or African American	Female	Single, never married	Part-time (two positions)	Full-time
Darla	25-34	White	Female	Single, never married	Full-time	Full-time
Larry	25-34	White	Other	Single, never married	Not working	Full-time

In conducting a narrative inquiry, it is important that we not only listen to hear and record the participants stories, but first we must lay a foundation for the interview. This foundation can take place in a demographic study. For this study, I wanted to know if the students that agreed to participate in the study represented the general composition of the college.

Data Collection Methods

Interviewing as a form of qualitative data collection has been proven as an effective form of research (Babbie, 2015; Kvale, 2008; Patton, 1980; Spradley, 1979). Semi-structured interviews allowed me to guide the conversation and explore in greater depth how students experience food insecurity. I wanted to hear from the participants if the elimination of food anxiety allowed the students to feel more comfortable in class, be more clear-headed so that they can focus on their work, and be less stressed about the need to balance work, college, and home life (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). An example of my interviewing protocol is located in Appendix A.

To solicit participants, I emailed the entire student body once at the two-year institution requesting participation in the study. I placed a flyer in the bags of food distributed through the

college's food pantry during the months of April and May. I offered a financial incentive in the form of a \$15 Target gift card for participation and placed this information on the email and flyer. I also listed my email address for the students to contact me if interested in participating. Participants were asked to participate in one interview with me.

Data collection occurred between April 20, 2021 and May 4, 2021. Five students agreed to participate in an interview. I requested their email addresses in order to send the informed consent form. Once the participants signed and returned the informed consent forms, I scheduled the interviews. The interviews took approximately 45 minutes to one hour and varied with each participant. Interviewing provided a deeper insight into the phenomenon of food insecurity and its potential relationship to student persistence. While person-to-person encounters are the most common form of interviewing (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), due to the restrictions of COVID-19, the interviews took place in a Zoom conference room.

Before starting the recording, I wanted the participants to feel comfortable with the process, so I explained what we would do during our time together. I reviewed the demographic survey, asked if they had questions regarding the informed consent form, and reminded the participants that the interviews would be audio-recorded. During the interview, I began with the prewritten questions but rephrased and clarified some of them as necessary to ensure participants' comprehension. The flexibility of open-ended questions invited student participants to share their unique stories in their own way. With this participant-centered practice, I was able to gather detailed material on a wide range of relevant topics. I took notes during each interview while the verbatim responses were captured in the audio recording.

The interview consisted of multiple semi-structured questions that lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour. Each question allowed the participant to elaborate in the way they chose.

I started the conversation with, “Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your background?” Interview questions are located in Appendix D.

The set of questions for the participants explored their financial situation, coping strategies, the impact of food insecurity, and student-support services that can help the food-insecure students. Participants were asked to describe their experiences with food insecurity. By asking these questions, I was able to learn more about the students' experiences and any challenges placed on them. Open-ended questions allowed me to explore students' perceptions about the social and economic problems due to food shortage and economic hardships. I sought to understand how students experience and cope with food insecurity for future use in helping design policies that can support food-insecure students.

Within 24-48 hours of each interview, I downloaded the recording into Kaltura and went through the transcript to correct the errors that took place during the transcription process. I then sent copies to the participants via email and asked them to review their responses, correct anything they felt was not what they meant to say, and return a copy back to me if changes were made. In all cases, students stated that I had accurately recorded their thoughts and beliefs expressed during the interview.

I scheduled one interview per day to allow time for reflective journaling. Additionally, all transcript edits were completed before interviewing the next participant. I implement journaling after each interview in order to critique myself and the interview. I reflected if the rapport building had been effective and if the participants felt comfortable in the interview. My goal was to make sure that the participants understood each question, and if they did not, to reword it for greater comprehension in the future interviews. When going through the video transcripts, I carefully observed the body language, tone, and facial expression of each participant. I had

practiced the interview questions before meeting with the first participant, but felt that my comfort level and confidence grew with each interview.

All participants provided detailed and authentic responses to the interview questions. There was no sense of withdrawal or hesitancy to answer the questions. One participant cried during the interview. I reassured the participant that she was in a safe place and that we were discussing difficult topics, so I wanted her to feel that it was okay to start crying while sharing her stories. I wanted her to feel no sense of shame or embarrassment while being interviewed.

Recruitment concluded after I interviewed the fifth participant, as the food pantry was closing for the summer. I assigned unique identifiers to all participants (Larry, Linda, Darla, Georgina, and Angela), and used these identifiers throughout the interview, transcription, and analysis process.

Data Analysis

Steps/Approaches. To begin the analysis process, I started by uploading the interviews into to a password-protected computer in my home office. After the interview, the recording were ready for closed captioning. I was the only person to review the data and to read the transcripts produced in Kaltura. I listened to the recording and made corrections as the auto-generated transcription had many errors. During and after this process, all information was confidential and remained anonymous to the participants, principal investigator, and the dissertation committee.

Data analysis was completed for each participant by conducting category constructions that entailed reviewing each transcript, jotting down initial notes, and then starting to write comments, observations, and queries (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I followed Merriam and Tisdells' (2016) instructions when starting to code. First, I read through the full transcript to

“warm-up” before the detailed work began (Saldana, 2014, p. 17). Using a Microsoft Word document, I created a table with three columns for my preliminary jotting. The first column listed the participants, the second column identified the emerging theme; and the third column recorded preliminary codes. Next, I used analytical coding techniques by applying line-by-line analysis of qualitative data. This method allowed me to organize my data in order to identify different themes and the relationships between them. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described analytical coding as going beyond descriptive coding to reflect on meanings. The goal of this step is to allow data themes and meaning to emerge.

Some of the questions I considered while looking for codes were: What are the participants experiences? What assumptions are they making? What do I see going on here? What did I learn from these notes? (Saldana, 2014, p. 20). Further, after looking at the notes I had acquired, I looked to see what surprised and intrigued me (Saldana, 2014, p. 20). I did find an emerging theme I had not considered, which was socio-economic. I had not thought about middle-class students that were unable (or in some cases unwilling) to access resources that lower-income students were afforded.

Software. Zoom, an easy, reliable cloud-based platform for video and audio conferencing, was utilized to conduct the interviews. Zoom is used for teleconferencing, telecommuting, distance education, and social relations. Zoom also allows for easy recording, which was then uploaded into Kaltura for closed-captioning to produce a transcript.

Possible barriers that I considered but did not encounter when choosing Zoom as the interview platform were the potential for unreliable WiFi, the possibility that students might not have a computer or phone capable of using the Zoom application, and/or that participants might

be forced to go to a public space for WiFi, such as a library or other public venue to complete the interview.

Data Authenticity and Trustworthiness

An informed consent was obtained prior to completing the survey, as indicated in the initial email. The informed consent allowed the prospective participant to document their agreement to take place in the study. All participants were informed of the voluntary nature of the participation and of their right to end participation with the survey at any time prior to, or during, the survey. After the student agreed to participate, I arranged to meet with them in Zoom at a time and location of their convenience.

Member Checking. Member checking – verifying the trustworthiness of results based on respondent verification – took place in this current study. Member checking is a way to solicit feedback on the emerging findings of the people interviewed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), member checking is the:

single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do, and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying a researcher's own biases and misunderstanding of what was observed. (p. 246)

I asked participants if the interpretation I have formed from the interview “rings true” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 246).

Researcher Reflexivity. Reflexivity refers to a systematic attention to “how we as researchers and practitioners constitute meaning through our own taken-for-granted suppositions, actions, and linguistic practices” (Cunliffe, 2003, p. 989). It is an integral part of qualitative research that examines how processes of performing research shape its outcomes (Hardy et al.,

2001). As a researcher, I sought to question my own understanding of reality and the research context along with the research data (Corlett & Mavin, 2020). I thought about what constitutes valuable research and any assumptions I may have about who we are as humans (Corlett & Marvin, 2020). I reflected on any potential bias on my identity as a White woman and higher-education professional, any preconceptions I might have about what insight was gained from this research, the purpose of the methods that I was using for this current study, and any potential impact of the methods on the research findings. I reflected on decisions surrounding data selection and omission in reporting my findings.

As I approached the study, it was imperative to examine any personal motivations for this research and how it could be shaped by my own personal interest and angle of vision. As a faculty advisor to the student senate and as a food pantry committee member, I see students struggling with food insecurity. I questioned if I would only hear the information that I wanted to hear in the interviews to help sustain a food pantry on this college campus. Would the students see me as this advisor and committee member? Would the participants say the things I wanted them to say? As I reflected upon what impact my “race/gender/class have on the research relationship” (Day, 2012, p. 72), I considered how I can research “with” rather than “on people” (Cousin, 2010, p. 11) and anticipated any way that my relationships with respondents could potentially influence the research. Finally, I questioned whether I would be able to make sense of the lived experience of my participants.

Positionality. My perspective as a researcher is impacted by my personal experience as a researcher is impacted by my personal experience with food insecurity and my professional experience working with the study population. I am a faculty member whose personal path to academic achievement began from a lower-class status as a single mother raising two children.

Attending college was a choice presented to me by my brother and his wife; they offered me a farmhouse to live in with my two children so that I could better afford to attend college. Like Linda in this study, I was awarded child support, but also like Linda, I was not receiving that child support. While in college, to supply my family with food and basic essentials, I was employed in a work-study position at the college and also worked a part-time job outside the college. Additionally, I received Pell Grants and State Grants to attend college.

To supplement the groceries needed by my family, I received food stamps, but I still remember the shame and embarrassment of going to the grocery store to purchase food with the stamps. When I was in college, food stamps came in the form of a coupon book. You would pull a coupon out of the book with the dollar amount needed and hand it to the cashier. Everyone in the line knew you were a recipient of food stamps. My experiences, together with my drive and aptitude, strengthened my determination to earn a degree where I would make enough money to take care of my family. After a several-year process of working my way from student to educator at my alma mater, I knew I needed to help other students in their journey.

Even before this study, as faculty advisor to the student Senate, I have been privy to firsthand information about how students suffer from food insecurity. When I sit in the student lounge, I interact with the students coming in for a bag of popcorn, who share that this is their only meal for the day. Though I wasn't aware of the scope of the problem, I knew there were students who needed help with food insecurity. In the Student Senate Office, where we have a microwave and other appliances, we started stocking small items that students could heat up for lunch. It was obvious that students needed more than one small meal. Finally, we were blessed to have a pastor contact our college stating he wanted to help us to put a food pantry on campus. After a summer of meetings, the campus got its food pantry. However, finding volunteers to run

the pantry was hard. I knew I needed to complete a study of students willing to participate, in order to measure the extent of food insecurity, its effects on them as students, and their beliefs about a food pantry's role within the other types of student-support services deemed by the college as essential. If the findings showed that students felt the pantry helped them with their course work and kept them enrolled at the college, I would be able to show my institution that the pantry is an essential support service. Doing so would entitle the food pantry to the paid assistance of current college staff members. If the study findings did not support the need for budgetary help from the institution, then I would have to find other ways to keep this service running. The small yet significant group of students I was able to interview shared numerous stories that together, presented a unified picture of suffering from food insecurity that threatens physical and mental health and disrupts the students' attempts to attend school and complete course work. All the students interviewed felt that a food pantry is a necessary student-support service for a college.

Human Subject Approval

To ensure that the rights of human subjects were protected, my proposal was submitted to the St. Cloud State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval before beginning research. In the application, I outlined the research question, research design and analysis, and recruitment procedures. I also outlined the description of potential participants, how data would be collected, managed and destroyed, compensation for the participants, and potential risks for participants. I received approval on April 12, 2021. My approval is located in Appendix C.

Summary

This chapter has provided a description of the methodological approach that was used in collecting and analyzing data associated with food-insecure students. The current study relied

heavily on participant-observation, with a goal of providing a thorough description of the experiences of students who experience food insecurity. The open-ended nature of the interview questions allowed for participants to share their individual challenges with food insecurity. Additionally, the interviews permitted the students to share the impact that a food pantry has on their health and coursework. Describing the experiences of current students may provide an incentive for the college to maintain the food pantry, helping future students to succeed. After interviews were completed, I remained organized by utilizing notes from the interviews and transcripts from the interviews recorded in Zoom, to analyze the predominant themes. The study followed all Institutional Review Board (IRB) ethical considerations and best practices with regard to confidentiality.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a more in-depth understanding of the experiences of food-insecure students at a two-year college in Minnesota. I wanted to learn how food insecurity impacts students in such areas as health, well-being, coursework, sense of belonging and mattering, and persistence. Additionally, this narrative study investigated college students' experiences with a college pantry on their campus. Five major themes emerged: food insecurity creates barriers (a) to physical health, (b) mental health, (c) to food security in a household, (d) to social and socioeconomic wellbeing, and the last theme to emerge was, (e) the essential nature of student-support services to remove these barriers. The resulting analysis and themes are detailed below.

Summary of Themes

Five major themes emerged from this study. Underneath each of the major themes, sub-themes appeared. The sub-themes share the same central theme and provide more in-depth detail about the student experience. The five major themes for food insecurity are Barriers to Physical Health, Mental Health, Feeding a Household, Social and Socioeconomic Wellbeing, and the Need for Student Support Services.

Table 2

Major Themes for Food Insecurity and Sub-Themes for Food Insecurity

Major Themes for Food Insecurity	Sub-Themes for Food Insecurity
Barriers to Physical Health	Students Not Taking Care of Themselves Sleep Disturbances Not Eating Healthy Foods
Barriers to Feeding a Household	Feeding Children and Animals First Skipping Meals

Table 2 (continued)

Major Themes for Food Insecurity	Sub-Themes for Food Insecurity
Barriers to Mental Health	Low Self-Esteem Lack of Energy Anxiety and Stress Embarrassment, Shame and Guilt Trouble Concentrating on Studies Continuity
Barriers to Social and Socioeconomic Wellbeing	Social Stigma Lack of Socializing Making Too Much Money Being in a Catch-22 Situation Lack of Resources
Need for Student Support Services	Providing Getting a Better Education Allowing Me to Focus Students Feeling Grateful for Having a Food Pantry

Defining Food Insecurity

It was important as I began my conversation with students that we had a shared understanding of how food insecurity is defined for my study. As interviews began, participants were asked to define *food insecurity* in their own words and the degree to which they understood the term. I found that participants' definitions of food insecurity were similar to the one I used for the study: "The limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate, safe foods, or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable food in socially acceptable ways" (Coleman- Jensen et al., 2017, p. 1). To ensure that both the participants and I understood a common definition of food insecurity, I shared my definition of food insecurity with each participant before continuing my questions regarding their experiences with food insecurity. For example, when describing food insecurity, Linda defined food insecurity as follows:

It's where you don't have enough means to provide, like, a full nutritious meal, three times a day.

For Georgina, food insecurity means:

Not being able to afford food. Having to go to food shelves for food, and or at worse than that--difficult to access to the food shelf.

Theme One: Food Insecurity as a Barrier to Physical Health

For the participants, food insecurity as a barrier to physical health means that students are suffering from not taking care of themselves, from sleep disturbances due to hunger, and from compromised health due to not eating nutritious, consistent, adequate meals. An example of compromised health due to not eating nutritious, consistent, adequate meals was when Larry stated, "You don't have energy. Very little want to actually do things." Additionally, sleep disturbance was mentioned as a mental-health issue in the literature review as being a result of being depressed, which can result in sleep disturbance, but I felt it was relevant to mention sleep disturbance under the theme *barriers to physical health*, as students need good sleep to stay awake in class and to complete homework. Additionally, students need to eat healthy meals to help them focus in class and complete homework. Finally, it's not easy to sleep with a growling stomach.

Not Taking Care of Themselves

Food insecurity can not only impact students' mental health, but also their physical health. In the interviews, I had one student share that if they were not eating, why should they take care of the rest of themselves. Larry expressed:

When I was really struggling, I wasn't taking care of myself and it made me not want to be around others. I just didn't keep up with hygiene because I figured, okay, well, I'm not eating, so why should I take care of the rest of myself?

Sleep Disturbance

Darla described how not eating properly affects her sleep and said:

I mean, not eating properly also affects my sleep. So then when my sleep is affected and then my eating habits are lacking, those two combined to have a huge impact on well-being. Her story suggests that combining food insecurity with not sleeping properly, students' well-being is impacted.

Not Eating Healthy Foods

Angela explained that she knew she was not eating healthy food, and it is not good for the body to go without eating healthful, nutritional meals. Angela said:

Eating healthy is not realistic most of the time. So, you eat foods that are, you know, boxed, lot of boxed food. And that's what you gotta do. And so, I've noticed, myself included, that going to college, you don't eat normal meals anymore. You don't eat, you don't...it's like, okay, let's make salad and get fruit and all of these things, because you can't afford all those things. But then also the fact that you don't have time to, because you're studying. So, everybody gains like 30 pounds, and it's not 30 pounds because we're eating all this food that's amazing. It's 30 pounds because we're eating crap or we're not eating at all. And we eat one meal a day. Her story suggests that good nutrition is about not eating anything but eating the right food items to stay healthy.

Nutrients were brought up multiple times in the interviews. Georgina felt that when she got food, it brought her spirits up and made her feel better. Larry expressed that a food pantry helps them, “Kind of get a basis for, like, what nutrients I should be having.” Linda explained why lack of nutrients leads to problems:

Because you’re being deprived of the basic nutrition and nutrients that you need and, doesn’t allow you to focus. Doesn’t allow you to do your work. Doesn’t allow you to be successful.

Darla compared the body to a car and shared:

When you're not getting the proper nutrition, your... food for people, it's like fuel for a car. It provides you with energy, and when you don't have it, you kind of lose that motivational piece because you don't have the energy to really care.

Georgina communicated:

Because you feed your brain when you eat, and your body needs food for fuel to function. Both – brain, body, mind, and soul – need food.

Angela shared:

I don't know how many times I have seen and know people that, they don't eat before they come to school. And even if they're at school for six hours, they haven't eaten all day long. And your performance in the classroom drops dramatically. You are hungry, your brain does not function that way. You have to eat. You have to have a nutritional source in your body. Things are not going to work properly if you do not feed it. So, you know, it's not just sit there with your stomach growl [sic], and it's the fact that, you know, your neurons are not firing

properly. Things are not happening the way they're supposed to. Your glucose is dropping. Everything is going haywire in your body when you do not eat.

Students know they have to eat and feed their families to help maintain good physical health, but struggling to take care of their physical health can be a detriment to their schoolwork.

Linda reflected on having to find food and said:

When it comes down to finding food and going to class, I'm going to do the food.

I'm not going to go to class. If it comes down to it, I going to neglect school 100 percent.

The participants indicated awareness that they need proper nutrition, as the term *nutrients* came up many times in the interviews. Additionally, students at this college are not only taking care of themselves, but their families' physical health, which can result in a student missing class to find food for their families.

Theme Two: Food Insecurity as a Barrier to Mental Health

For the participants, *food insecurity as a barrier to mental health* means that they are suffering from low self-esteem, lack of energy, anxiety, stress, embarrassment, shame, and guilt, as a result of their lack of a stable, nutritious food supply. Due to these issues, students described having trouble concentrating on studies. Additionally, in one interview, I found the concept of continuity, in which a student who was food insecure as a young child suffered from shame being food insecure and now is once again experiencing food insecurity.

I found in this study students' mental health was impacted from being food insecure. When describing the definition of food insecurity, one student shared that it is a:

whole mental and emotional side to not having the funds to buy food for your family.

Food insecurity is not just the lack of food or the lack of funds, but also the emotional toll that it takes on you, worrying about it.

Another student felt that being food insecure flared up her anxiety and put her in a bad mood. When interviewing Larry, mental health came up in the interviews; Larry expressed, “Hunger can play a huge role in, just, mental health.”

Linda spoke about depression and anxiety. She shared:

It’s hard to talk to people and to be engaged in your classes or with your teachers, because all you’re focused on is, when am I going to eat next, and you're sheltered [due to COVID], which, sheltering yourself leads to depression. Depression leads to anxiety. Anxiety leads to suicidal ideations and stuff like that. So, mentally, you’re not going to be successful, you’re not going to be in class learning what you need to pass your courses and to get a better income and be actually able to provide.

Darla made a comment and explained:

A lot of times when I'm on campus, like other students that are in class will hear my stomach growl, and they're like, “Oh, you must be hungry.” And I'm like, “No, it's just, you know, my food is digesting,” even though I haven't eaten. Or I'll make some comments like, “No, I had an early lunch and I'm waiting to have dinner until I get home.” Or, you know, stuff like that. So, we kind of--we hide the fact by lying to others, and kind of essentially in a way, lying to ourselves, which also isn't good for mental health.

Georgina made a comment about having her stomach growl in class, too, which echoed Meza et al. (2018), a study that found students were embarrassed at their stomach growling in class. Georgina said:

When your stomach is growling, and you're hungry, and you're pissed off because you're hungry, that affects how well you can think about other things. Schoolwork becomes kinda, unfortunately, further back on the back burner because your body needs--you need to fulfill your body's needs. Your body kind of tries to take over in any capacity to think about schoolwork.

Additionally, Georgina spoke about the body being able to function correctly associated with mental-health issues, and shared:

If you can't give yourself the energy and nutrients that your body and your mental health need to be able to function correctly, you're going to get mentally ill at some point.

Whether it be further down the line, if you starve someone, they're going to have mental-health issues. That's just... that's a basic fact.

Not being able to pay for food is another stressor for food-insecure students. Angela explained:

Not knowing, are you going to be able to pay for food, have enough for your family?

There's a whole mental and emotional side to not having the funds to buy food for your family. So, to me, food insecurity is not just the lack of food or the lack of funds, but also the emotional toll that it takes on you worrying about it.

Low Self-Esteem

Linda and Georgina described questioning themselves and asking why they didn't have access to food. I could see the self-doubt and shame in these two participants. They wanted to

know why they were struggling so much, living paycheck to paycheck. Linda suggested that choices she had made had gotten her in this situation of food insecurity. On a positive note, she expressed determination to persist in her goal of going back to school to get a better job.

Lack of Energy

As the interviews continued, the lack of energy as a side effect of food insecurity was a common thread in the conversations. Larry described an effect of chronic food shortage:

You don't have energy. Very little want to actually do things. Just not having the mental capacity to participate in discussion makes it hard to understand the topics that are discussed sometimes... Leads to not wanting to go to class, because you don't feel like you're learning anything.

When asked about having an accessible campus food pantry to help her family, Linda said that with this support service, she could cut down on her hours for work to have more time to study and spend time with her family. She said it helps her health as well. Linda stated:

I feel like when I'm hungry, I'm irritable, I'm crabby. I suffer from chronic migraines. So, if I'm hungry or I don't eat enough protein, I'm susceptible to more migraines, and then I'm pretty much down for the day when I have my migraines.

Her story suggests if she could eat nutritious meals, she might not suffer from a migraine, which in turn would allow her to enjoy the day.

Anxiety and Stress

Anxiety and stress can lead to students becoming depressed, panic attacks, not being able to attend class, and not completing their school work. Anxiety and stress around food shortages were mentioned as barriers to health and wellbeing. Larry said that being food insecure, "Played a major role in my anxiety flareups last fall." Linda detailed that if she was not food insecure:

I would be less stressed. I would be eating better. My mind health would be better, I wouldn't have anxiety. Know [sic] that I don't have to skip school or spend all day looking for food would allow me more time for school.

Darla spoke about not eating and being food insecure. Darla shared:

I believe that it can increase anxiety and depression. You know, when you're not eating healthy and you're lacking the nutrition that your body needs, like, is very depressing. I've had panic attacks from my anxiety, so I definitely think that food insecurity is tied into mental health.

Georgina struggles with food insecurity and recounted:

I have been so hungry at one time or another and that I just wanted to go eat, and not have to stand there making popcorn, or just have popcorn to eat, or not have to be able to function, right because all I can think about is how am I going to have time to go to the food shelf or am I...what am I going to have for lunch today? What am I going to eat here? When am I going to have time to eat, and where am I going to get my next meal?

When asked about how utilizing a food pantry could help with food insecurity, Angela shared:

Well, I mean, that helps with making sure that you have food to eat. I think that it ... it helps relieve some of that stress and anxiety of how much money you have to spend at the grocery store.

Embarrassment, Shame, and Guilt

In this current study, embarrassment, shame, and guilt were brought up in the interviews by the students. Darla shared a story in the interviews based on her experience in a student-leadership role that some classmates don't drive, so they don't have a means to take home the

heavy food-pantry bags. She also shared that some classmates were embarrassed to bring the food-pantry items to class, as they were ashamed of needing to utilize those services. Angela works in the Student Office and described seeing hungry college students coming into the office:

Working in the Senate Office, I have seen so many people from all different ages that--they literally live on free water and popcorn that the Senate gives out. And they are embarrassed to come and get it. They're embarrassed to ask for help.

They don't want people to know that they're hungry, and you can see the sadness.

Some food-insecure students just get to a point where they stop thinking about what others think of them utilizing food pantries. Students feel that they need to put their sense of embarrassment to the side so they can provide for their families. Both Darla and Georgina shared that they had finally gotten to a point where they stopped thinking about what others thought of their using the food pantry as they knew that they needed to obtain food. Darla shared:

I've gotten to the point now where I know that some people are going to judge based off of that, but, you know, I need to do what I need to do, and I need to be able to provide for my family. If people want to judge, let them judge. You know, I ... I really try not to let it affect me even, though probably deep down inside it still does. I just kinda shove it all back and try not to let it affect me. But I definitely know that people stare as they walk by and who knows, maybe people are staring not out of a negative connotation, which is what most people-- generally they're like, "Oh, that person staring at me, like, are they judging me because I need to utilize the service?" It could very well be that it's someone else who was contemplating using that, but are embarrassed or shameful themselves,

and they're like, oh, okay, well, you know, this person is utilizing it and they seem fine with it.

Trouble Concentrating on Studies

Linda mentioned the struggle of “hunting” for food, as she was unaware of the campus food pantry and would spend hours in search of food, standing in line for hours, or traveling miles to obtain a meal. When Linda was in class, she would think about where they were going to get the next meal for her family and felt she could not focus on her academics. There were times when Linda would have to skip school in the search for food for her family.

Experiences Grow out of Other Experiences

Angela described being food insecure as a child and said her family had learned to live with being food insecure. She expressed that as a teenager she would come to school with just a bag of corn nuts to eat for the day. As a result of having only that snack food to eat, Angela felt embarrassed when everyone else was eating a meal, and all she had was this bag of corn nuts.

Angela described how she learned to say things like “I’m not hungry. I ate earlier” or “I’m going to have a big dinner or big meal after this.” Later in life, Angela got married, had children, was part of a middle-class family, and was no longer food insecure. Before COVID-19 struck Minnesota, her family had decided that she would go to college to further contribute to the family income, but when COVID-19 struck Minnesota, her spouse received less money in his job. They had purchased two vehicles and were stuck making car payments along with a mortgage payment. There no longer was money for new clothes, so they started buying clothes from garage sales. They were trying to make ends meet, but because they made good money in the past, they did not qualify for resources that are afforded to lower-income students. Now facing food insecurity, Angela reached out to her campus for help.

Angela cried as she shared the story of a staff member on campus helping her get gift cards for the grocery store and gas gift cards so she could drive to campus. There was true gratitude from this student to the staff member that helped her. It was soon after this that Angela became a leader on campus to help other students, which included helping to set up the food pantry on campus. This student felt she could make a difference in other students' lives by helping to feed them. She wanted a food pantry that did not stigmatize individuals or have an income requirement. Angela wanted all students to have access to healthy nutritional food. This student was motivated to not only to finish college but help her classmates, too.

Mental-health issues caused by food insecurity was the prevalent topic in the interviews. I found that students were suffering from low self-esteem, lack of energy, anxiety, stress, embarrassment, shame, and guilt from being food insecure which can lead to trouble concentrating on studies. Additionally, I found that mental-health issues such as shame and embarrassment from food-insecure childhoods can transfer into mental-health issues in food-insecure adults, and yet can lead to adults wanting to make positive change for their colleges. By helping our food-insecure students, we can create leaders of change for our campuses.

Theme Three: Food Insecurity and Barriers to Feeding a Household

For the participants, shortages of food create barriers to feeding everyone in a household, leading to a variety of problems impacting their college success. The students interviewed described sacrificing their own needs and skipping meals in order to be able to purchase the food required for their children and animals. Students described their lack of money as disrupting the class attendance and coursework completion. A common thread of student responses dealt with the work involved in affording or obtaining food.

Larry expressed that they worried about food insecurity and if "I'm going to be able to afford to continue to eat."

Linda shared that she often had to spend hours waiting in lines at food pantries to have food for her family. She was one of the students that was not awarded enough aid to cover all of their costs of living and extracurricular expenses.

Not having enough awarded money, Linda, as a single mother, was forced to work two jobs to provide for her family. Having to work so much negatively affected her class attendance. Being in this Catch-22 situation of having to work and also take care of her dependents (which also meant feeding her dependents) while being a college student, Linda could not find enough time in the day to accomplish all that she needed to do. She stated, "When it comes down to finding food or going to class, I'm going to do the food."

Being a College Student and Head of Household While Hungry

A barrier for many students who struggle with food insecurity while going to class and completing coursework is that they are trying to take care of themselves and also their families. Many of the participants feed their pets and children before feeding themselves. Larry shared, "Honestly, I just make sure my dogs eats before I do." Linda explained that her family comes first and shared:

If it comes down to it, I going [sic] to neglect school, 100 percent. You know, because my family comes first and my kids come first, and their hunger comes first.

Angela spoke of not letting her kids go hungry and shared:

Is there enough lunch food for lunches for my children and my husband? And I will not take stuff for lunch until I know that there is enough for them until I go

shopping again. So, I usually struggle if I am there in the afternoons. And if it's not a good week financially for my family, because we really do live paycheck to paycheck, then I don't ... I don't eat lunch. I make sure that kids eat and I make sure everybody else eats, and I'll put a little itty-bitty amount on my plate and ... and ... and--no, no, I'm not hungry. I ate something earlier. Drink lots of water. My kids won't go hungry. My kids will never go hungry.

Georgina shared that going to college is expensive:

Many people don't have the money to pay for education, along with buying healthy food. You buy what you need to get by, enough to not starve to death. Enough to make sure your kids have food on the table. But you have to, in order to fulfill what you set out to do, which is to get an education and get a better job and have a career. And not just any job you can get your hands on. You have to buy books, you have to buy supplies, you have to buy tools, you have to pay your tuition. And I don't know anybody in two years, that doesn't struggle with that and paying for all of those things.

Angela shared many of the same feelings that Georgina shared:

You buy what you need to get by, enough to not starve to death. Enough to make sure your kids have food on the table. But you have to--in order to fulfill what you've set out to do, which is to get an education and get a better job and have a career, and not just any job you can get your hands on--you have to buy books, you have to buy supplies, you have to buy tools, you have to pay your tuition.

When COVID-19 struck the United States, schools were closed and parents needed to not only purchase breakfast and dinner, but now they had to purchase lunch and snacks throughout

the day. Darla described that during COVID-19 she was worried about purchasing food for her children and shared:

I pick and choose which bills I pay each month to make sure I have money to put food on the table, especially with my kids, distance learning now and, you know, them not having the benefit of school breakfast and school lunch, instead of providing one meal per day during the week and really only needing to focus on three meals on the weekends. I now have to provide three meals seven days a week to five children and myself ... and it's expensive. You know, people don't realize that, yeah, I work a full-time job, but I pay rent, I have a vehicle payment and car insurance and, you know, all my utilities and stuff, and money dwindles fast. You know, it...it really doesn't matter how, how much you make or how much you work because it, it goes out almost just as quickly as it comes in.

Hungry for an Education

Participants in the study shared that they know of classmates that skip meals or don't eat before they come to school. Two students shared stories of students coming to the Student Senate lounge to get popcorn so they had food to eat for the day. They experienced a stomach growling and glucose levels dropping. Multiple students mentioned students in their classes being tired and not able to focus. One student felt that when they had food, they were able to absorb new information. Larry shared:

Just not having the mental capacity to participate in discussion makes it hard to understand the topics that are discussed sometimes and leads to not wanting to go to class.

Georgina shared:

When you are hungry, the body takes over and you can't think about the schoolwork that needs to be completed.

As food insecurity can lead to students skipping meals and not eating nutritious meals, multiple participants reported that being food insecure can lead to being tired. Darla admitted that she would skip meals because she wanted her family to have food first. Some days Darla would skip breakfast and lunch and not eat until she got home from school at 9:30 p.m. Larry expressed that being food-insecure related to not having energy and "very little want to actually do things." Larry further shared that they just didn't have the "mental capacity to participate in discussions, which made it harder to understand the topics that are discussed sometimes." Darla expressed that when you are food insecure, "You're exhausted, you're tired, you're not replenishing the energy that you're utilizing, so then we're not putting as much effort in as we normally would be if we had the energy that having stable square meals would provide us." Angela shared that she "see it time and time again where student get lethargic and they're tired and they can't focus."

When skipping meals was mentioned, Darla said:

I do skip meals to make sure that my kids eat first, because I want them to have those three meals a day at least. So, there's oftentimes that I will skip breakfast and lunch, and then not eat until I get home from school at 9:30 PM.

The interviewees all described a barrier not revealed to me in the literature, namely, that students are cutting back on their food consumption in order to feed their dependents and their animals. Additionally, students are having to pick whether to pay their bills or to provide food for their families.

Theme Four: Food Insecurity as a Barrier to Social and Socioeconomic Wellbeing

For the participants, their food insecurity creates barriers to their social and socioeconomic wellbeing. They are suffering from social stigma and lack of social connection and sense of belonging. Additionally, some students are making too much money and are in a Catch-22 situation to access resources.

Social Stigma

Even though a college may offer a food pantry on its campus, El Zein et al. (2018) identified attitudinal reasons for students not utilizing a food pantry such as “resistance barriers, including social stigma and self-identity.” Georgina said:

There's always an unfortunate stigma on going to the food pantry. Personally, as a person that has needed it, I get to a point, I could care less what people think.

People's opinions are not going to fill my stomach.

Lack of Socializing

In the interviews, participants shared about not wanting to be around others due to food insecurity, thus increasing their isolation. Students also described just going to see other people to be fed rather than for socializing. Cliburn Allen and Alleman (2019) found food-insecure students attempted to conceal their struggle with hunger from friends and peers. Larry shared:

So, when I was--when I was really struggling. I wasn't taking care of myself, and it made me not want to be around others.

Linda noted:

You call one of your friends and just be like, “Hey, I want to hang out,” but really, you’re going over there because you know they’ll feed you.

Linda also said:

I don't go out anymore. I don't hang out with friends. Number one, I don't have the money. And then number two, it's embarrassing.

Linda's statement echoed Fernandez et al. (2019) that found several students with food insecurity expressing their regret that they were missing out on the health benefits of socializing.

Making Too Much Money

Many students work hard while in college to not only complete their schoolwork but to work for a paycheck and to care for their dependents. My research revealed a Catch-22 situation with food insecurity where working jobs and making "just too much" money affects being able to apply for benefits and County/State resources. Many students who live paycheck to paycheck still cannot afford nutritious food. Additionally, one student shared that as a result of COVID-19 restrictions and business impacts, her husband lost most of his working hours and the family could not afford what they could in the past. This student felt that the colleges and other resources need to look at the current situation of the student to help them. This student stated, "They need to realize that not everything is about what you made a year ago or two years ago, that families and individuals need support now." This student mentioned all the homeless students at the college who are probably food insecure, too.

Being in a Catch-22 Situation. Linda expressed frustration for a situation where she was awarded child support but never received the money. The child support is still counted as income, thus disqualifying her from things such as EBT or cash. Linda also shared that when trying to provide food for her family her last resort is to go to the Dollar Store to steal food.

Asking students about whether they feel that a food pantry is an essential student-support service needed on campus evolved into an interesting theme that I had not considered when

starting this study: middle-class students and food insecurity. While the interviews made clear that the food pantry is needed by underserved, lower-income students, some participants shared that as non-traditional but middle-class students, they are not given the same resources as lower-income families, which in turn can create food insecurity. Some students felt that there were inequities in access to resources. Linda expressed:

I didn't get approved for any scholarships. Financial aid wasn't enough. I ended up having to file bankruptcy to try and just get everything back together.

Linda was wondering if she was:

Going to pay my electric or heat bill or am I going to buy the kids food for their lunches at school, or going to the food shelf when they were open, but a lot of the times, I wasn't able to get there just because of work.

Additionally, Linda shared her frustration:

Some of the programs, you won't qualify because of your income. Going to see if I qualify for EBT or cash assistance and finding out oh, no, you make \$10 too much. Or the fact that I have a child-support order for \$400 a month--but I haven't received it in five years--but because I have that order, I'm not eligible. Reaching out to your social worker at school, or your kids' social workers to see if you're eligible, trying to get free and reduced lunch, but not eligible because you had worked that year.

Darla explained:

That well, because you work full time, that it shouldn't be a problem for you to be able to afford to put food on the table, but I live paycheck to paycheck. And I mean, even me currently like I work full-time, I still struggle to put food on the

table, but I'm not eligible for government programs. I have to do whatever I can to squeak by. I mean, I had to put off my vehicle payments for a while to the point where I got a repossession notice. And then I'm stressing and worrying about that.

Angela felt there were other students in the same economic status that struggled, and expressed:

I think that there are a lot of people that are struggling with food insecurity that are just like me, you know, that ... that have a have a nice home, that drive a nice truck. It's--I mean, granted, at seven years old, but it's a nice truck. I think those people get dismissed a lot, and I think that food insecurity is very real for those families. I think it's something that...that aid should be across the board. You know, of helping people. It shouldn't be about what they make for an income. It should be, do they need the help now.

Lack of Resources. Angela shared:

People who are in poverty or low-income bracket struggle obviously, but there are a lot of resources there for them. Do they always know what they are? Not necessarily, but there is ... there's WIC, there's, SNAP, EBT, food shelves.

Churches help them. I think that where there is a big gap for help and support is in middle-income families. People look at it as, oh, well, you have a house or you live in a nice apartment, or you live in a nice area, you drive a nice car. But they don't see ... and that's all they see. They don't see the internal struggles. They don't see that the family is barely, ya know, is a month and a half behind on that car payment or that when they bought that car, they were making a lot more money and now they're stuck in it and they can't get out of it. So, they have to

make that payment. So, they wear...all their clothes are from garage sales and they can't--they don't have hardly any food in their cupboards. You know, they...the resources are not there for those people. I mean, my family struggles financially, but my husband makes good money. But yet I don't...I don't qualify for SNAP. I don't qualify for EBT. I can go to food pantries. I don't qualify to go there because they think I make enough money as a family, because they look at everybody's income. I just think that there needs to be equal resources for families, and there isn't. I think that they only look at the low-income most of the time and say, that's where the need is, that's who we need to help.

Having a food pantry on campus that did not have any qualifying criteria was important for these students so they were able to obtain food.

Theme Five: Necessary Student-Support Services

When Larry mentioned that a food pantry was a necessary support service, they explained:

It plays a part in, like, just making sure I eat, even. There was a period there where I was eating nothing but saltine and peanut butter crackers.

Darla mentioned that a food pantry was a necessary support service. She expressed:

I definitely think the food pantry is a definite necessity. It's kind of a common thread I hear amongst my classmates.

Georgina articulated some reasons that, in her view, a food pantry is a necessary support service:

I think a food pantry should be on every college. I think it is just as valuable as that water fountain and the bathroom down the hall. I think that it ... it helps relieve some of that

stress and anxiety of how much money you have to spend at the grocery store, and whether or not you can buy what you consider to be essentials for your family.

A Food Pantry Helps Students "Provide, and Get a Better Education"

Four out of the five students interviewed agreed that a food pantry can help them provide for their families. One student was single and not providing for a family. The stories told all noted together that having a food pantry can help them get a better education. When Linda expressed agreement that a food pantry is a necessary support service, she made the link between food security and college students' motives for pursuing higher education. She said:

Yeah. I do [think it is essential], 'cuz a lot of us have children. So, it's not just like only us. It's, you know, it's our dependents and our families. Because we're ... because the whole reason we're going to school is to provide and get a better education and so we can make more money.

Darla added, "Because when I eat good, I do better in school."

A Food Pantry "Allows Me to Focus"

Linda also shared:

It'll allow me to focus more and dedicate more time. And then with the hopes that I could cut down on my hours, I think I can eat better. It'll take a little stress off my plate for work. I would be eating better. My mind health would be better. I wouldn't have anxiety. I wouldn't be more susceptible to illness. I feel like because the healthier you are mentally, physically and emotionally, the better you're going to do. So, knowing that I don't have to skip school or spend all day looking for food would allow me more time for school.

A Food Pantry Makes Students Feel "Grateful"

Georgina also mentioned that a food pantry was a necessary support service. She said:

I know when I...before COVID and I was making popcorn [in the Student Senate Office], I know there was students at that school, even with the cafe open, that all they got was that popcorn. And to have the food shelf open now, I'm, I'm sure there...there's people that are extremely grateful that there is that service at the school.

Having student-support services on a college campus is necessary not only to provide services such as tutoring and counseling for the students, but also to meet the needs of food-insecure students.

Summary

The finding of this research supports the premise that some students at this two-year college face food insecurity. Research participants provided first-hand knowledge of their experiences of food insecurity. When asked about their definitions of food insecurity, all the participants understood the definition, and their responses included words such as healthy, nutritional food, struggling to get basic needs, difficult access to food pantries, and lack of food.

All five participants described past and/or current experiences with food insecurity. Along with sharing their experiences, they also described the consequences of chronic food insecurity, which creates barriers to health, wellbeing, and academic success. Students described not being able to afford to eat, and in many cases having many "mouths" to feed, so that any available funds went to feeding children and pets first and themselves last.

One surprising obstacle shared was that middle-class, non-traditional students found that they were unable to access the resources that the lower-income families are able to access, which

can be a barrier to overcoming food security. As the interviews continued, participants identified what they feel are necessary student-support services: Having a food pantry on campus was included in this category for all those interviewed. Participants expressed satisfaction with the food pantry on campus but noted that due to COVID-19, the food pantry now just serves supplemental food such as canned vegetables, pasta, rice, beans, cereal, and juice, and not whole meals that include meat, fruit, and dairy products. Participants are hoping that in the fall, the food pantry will be open and will again serve meat, fruit, and dairy products, along with the canned and dry goods.

This study has shown that food insecurity is a significant problem for some students at this two-year college in Minnesota. The findings also show that there are barriers to accessing healthy, nutritious food, such as having to balance work, school, and childcare duties. One participant reported having to expend many hours a week looking for food pantries and standing in long lines, which she said can take time away from going to school. Other barriers included being a middle-class student who could not access resources due to income level. Such a student is in a kind of Catch-22 situation where they make too much money for aid eligibility per documents such as tax returns, but not enough to buy food in reality. For some students, a recent change of circumstances has left them needing the food-pantry resources to feed their families, while they pursue their college education. 100% of the students interviewed, stated that a food pantry is a necessary student-support service.

Chapter 5 includes discussion and conclusions drawn from this study. The limitations and implications of the research are also shared. Additionally, Chapter 5 covers future research directions and concluding thoughts.

Chapter 5: Discussions and Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to collect and evaluate the firsthand stories of a group of two-year college students with a goal of learning how nutritional intake, or lack thereof, impacts students in such areas as health, well-being, coursework, sense of belonging and mattering, and persistence. Additionally, this narrative study investigated college students' experiences with necessary student support services, specifically a college pantry on their campus.

In this chapter, I include an interpretation of my findings and recommendations related to issues surrounding food insecurity and the role having a food pantry on campus could play in increasing a sense of belonging and mattering among college students. This study adds to the research and existing knowledge surrounding food insecurity with respect to a wide range of issues, including mental health, lack of energy, stress and anxiety, nutrients, costs of food, food shortage and classwork, shame and embarrassment, effects of the "hunt" for food on personal conduct, and barriers of being a middle-class, non-traditional student struggling with food insecurity. Additionally, this study adds to the research that intentionally evaluates food pantries as an essential student-support service. Student participants in this study were interviewed in a Zoom conference room as I explored their knowledge of food insecurity, the effects of food insecurity on themselves and their families, and their perceptions about essential student-support services at their institution.

This chapter starts with an introduction and expands on each of the themes discovered while conducting the research. I offer some reflective discussion, as well as some ideas for future research into the question driving my research: What are the experiences of food-insecure students at a two-year college in Minnesota? Additionally, this chapter: presents the implications

of my findings regarding food insecurity and the effects of a campus-based food pantry for retention and graduation rates, offers future research directions, and indicates the relationship of results and findings to the theories presented, limitations, implications for theory and practice, and future research directions. This chapter concludes with a chapter summary and final thoughts.

Summary of Themes

Theme One: Food Insecurity as a Barrier to Physical Health Discussion

Food insecurity can impact student success and academic performance and can lead to a myriad of problems that interfere with focus in the classroom, including feeling tired and experiencing hunger in class, (Cady, 2014; Camelo & Elliott, 2019; Glik & Martinez, 2017; Farahbakhsh et al., 2017; Meza et al., 2018; Henry, 2017; Martinez et al., 2018). I have learned that the students' physical health at this vocational college is suffering from food insecurity. While listening to the stories told by the students, it was evident that their physical health was impacted by being food insecure. These students were struggling with taking care of themselves, having sleep disturbance, and were not eating healthy foods. The interviews concurred with the literature that being food insecure can result in not getting proper sleep, not being able to focus, stomachs growling, and the body not functioning properly to support learning

Many of the students spoke of the lack of proper nutrients when being food insecure. These students felt that proper nutrients are important while attending college. Darla compared her body to a car and shared, "You have to eat nutritious food to keep your body running." Angela was similar in her thinking, as she spoke about "glucose dropping and the body going haywire." Further, Angela shared about the expense of buying fruits and vegetables, which

correlated with the literature where Martinez et al. (2019) found that food-insecure students ate fewer fruits and vegetables.

When we spoke about classroom attendance, students shared that due to food insecurity, they often experienced a lack of energy that prevented them from attending class. Also, students shared that while in class, their hunger made it hard to focus, think, or even want to participate with others in discussion. Larry shared that when hungry he was not learning the content.

In the literature review, sleep disturbance was discussed in Zinger's (2011) article, which found that students that suffered from depressive disorders also suffered from sleep disturbance. The comments made by the participants in my study echoed the literature review regarding not eating healthy foods. Stebleton et al. (2020) found that food-insecure students would use supplements such as water or juices to compensate when food was not available. Martinez et al. (2019) found that students who were food insecure ate fewer fruits and vegetables, which can lead to poorer health.

Theme Two: Food Insecurity as a Barrier to Mental Health Discussion

Food-insecure students might feel embarrassed, have a lower self-confidence in their academic ability, and lack focus for tests (Farahbakhsh et al., 2017; Meza et al., 2018; Henry, 2017; Martinez et al., 2018). Camelo and Elliott (2019) stated that "food insecurity is not only a public-health problem; it is a barrier to academic achievement among college students in the U.S." (p. 316). Ware (2015) and Zinger (2011) defined psychosocial health to include mental, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects of what it means to be healthy. Meza et al. (2018) found that food insecurity threatens the mental health of students. Sun et al. (2020) found that food insecurity among low-income people links food insecurity with mental-health problems along with a host of illnesses.

I have learned that students' mental health at this vocational college is suffering from food insecurity. While listening to these students it was evident that their mental health was impacted by being food insecure. Students' responses revealed that they were experiencing mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, guilty feelings about lying to hide their state of hunger, embarrassment, and shame. Students shared stories about the emotional toll of worrying about lack of food for themselves and their dependents, which not only included children but in some cases, spouses and animals. One participant, Darla, even expressed that she suffered from panic attacks from her food anxiety.

The findings from this study concur with the literature review in that food insecurity can lead to certain physical health issues; however, in the interviews, one topic came up that I had not discovered in the literature review, which was that of students neglecting their self-care while being food insecure. One student shared that while not taking care of themselves they didn't want to be around other people. Additionally, I found that students were also neglecting their self-care by skipping meals and telling their classmates that the reason their stomach was growling was not because they were hungry but because the food they just ate was digesting. The literature supported the comments that students made to cover up not eating. Cliburn Allen and Alleman (2019) found that students might make comments to their peers, such as they are "just dieting" and that is why they are not eating.

When food-insecure students are experiencing ongoing stress, physical health problems, mental health problems, or problems with money, a low self-esteem along with deep shame can occur (Mind, 2021). Students who experience low self-esteem might feel hopeless and worthless, blame themselves, and worry about being unable to do things (Mind, 2021). Additionally, Meza et al. (2018) found that food insecurity interferes with their daily lives and causes a fear of

disappointing their families. Meza et al. (2018) found students can experience embarrassment from their hunger as well as a lack of self-worth. Additionally, Heimbaugh (2020) found students who worry about money and being able to purchase food might experience deep shame, desperation, and humiliation. This study found that the students suffered from low self-esteem, embarrassment, and deep shame.

This study agreed with the literature review in which Meza et al. (2018) found that the participants struggled to complete their academic studies due to a lack of energy resulting from a lack of food. Meza et al. (2018) found that a common thread among food-insecure students was a challenge to their academic success as students had a “mental trade-off, focusing on food or focusing on academics” (para. 16). Additionally, Heimbaugh (2020) found that when food-insecure people need to ask for help, there might be deep shame, desperation, and humiliation in telling school administration that they need help obtaining food. In one of the interviews, a student shared their humiliation in telling school administration that they needed help.

Theme Three: Food Insecurity and Barriers to Feeding a Household Discussion

By conducting this study, I have learned that the students are struggling in college with not only feeding themselves, but feeding their household. Participants in the study related that while in college, they might have to pick and choose how they spend their money. Students told me that they might have to choose between feeding their families and animals or taking care of their own dietary needs. Some students shared that they had to sometimes skip meals in order to feed their families. One student shared that could not find enough time in the day to accomplish all that she needed to do and stated that “When it comes down to finding food or going to class, I’m going to do the food.”

Broton and Goldrick-Rab (2018) found that students who max out their student loans and find employment can still experience food insecurity. With the high cost of going to college, a student shared that they could not buy healthy food, and another student shared that they bought just enough to not starve. When COVID-19 hit the United States, times were even tougher for the students as their children were now home during the day. Families that got lunches given to them at school now had to find the money to feed their families lunch.

Theme Four: Food Insecurity as a Barrier to Social and Socioeconomic Wellbeing

During the times that interviewing took place, COVID-19 was at its peak. Students and their partners were losing jobs or having work hours cut, and families had to make decisions about how to use limited resources – paying mortgages or car payments, or purchasing food, while also paying for college. I have learned that students in such predicaments were making too much money, according to their tax returns, to qualify for most low-income resources. Due to COVID-19, a new social economic issue arose with students who had made enough money to remain food secure in previous years but were now struggling to provide food for their families. These families were not qualifying for resources such as receiving food from food pantries that lower income families were afforded.

Baker-Smith et al. (2020) found that students who work more hours than other students experience basic-needs insecurity. Linda shared that they had to move back into her parent's home after she filed for bankruptcy. She and her partner worked and made too much money, so they didn't receive any scholarships. They felt as if they were in a Catch-22 situation.

Theme Five: Necessary Student-Support Services Discussion

One overarching conclusion identified from the research is that a food pantry is helpful for food-insecure students. What starts as a source of food goes on to become a source of

belonging and mattering to the food recipients, which results in a variety of long-reaching benefits. The campus-based food pantry shows the students that they, and their academic success, matter to their college. By providing healthy, nutritious food, students will not have to “hunt” for the food. With less anxiety surrounding the budgeting for and finding of food, students report that they have more time and enthusiasm for the course work and class attendance. Additionally, in receiving this food, students can feed their bodies with healthy nutrients so that they can remain focused on coursework completion and class attendance.

Students who have a good sense of belonging feel that they have self-worth, feel connected to their institution, and feel they are of value to others (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). Additionally, these students have higher levels of persistence and success in college (Strayhorn, 2013) and are more likely to seek out the campus resources that can help them become successful at college (Yeager et al., 2016; Strayhorn, 2012). Further, having a sense of belonging can alleviate students’ stress and improve their mental health (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). As found in the literature review, students with food insecurity are less likely to perceive a sense of belonging or seek out student-support services to help them address their needs (Wood et al., 2017). Broton and Goldrick-Rab (2016) found that students report an increased sense of belonging when colleges help with things such as offering a food pantry.

All the students in this study when interviewed felt a food pantry was a necessary student-support service. They also shared in the interviews that while there are many stressors for college students, food insecurity is one of the main causes of stress. They maintained that if the institution can provide a student-support service in the form of a food pantry to supplement students’ dietary needs, it might alleviate some of that stress. In turn, if stress is alleviated, students might experience better overall health, including mental health.

Providing students with a food pantry on campus can be the first step in helping students build a sense of belonging to the institution (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2012); however, the help cannot stop with just the food pantry. Students who have a sense of belonging in part due to the provisions of the food pantry, might then reach out to other services such as counseling or emergency grants to help them balance their budgets for the month. In providing food, counseling, and emergency grants, the institution may make the difference in helping these students persist and graduate from the institution (Cooper, n.d.).

One participant shared they might steal if they cannot find food and another student said they might “do things to get access to food that you shouldn’t do.” These students’ comments align with Hagedorn and Olfert (2018) who found that food-insecure students might engage in unhealthy coping strategies to find food. In providing food to food-insecure students, the college may be preventing that student from going to jail and keeping them in college as a result. Further, having a campus food pantry might cause the students to feel more welcomed on campus and to see that campus services can be effective in helping them address their needs (Dominguez-Whitehead, 2015). Meeting student needs enhances students’ ability to feel respected, valued, accepted, and cared for. This, in turn, can lead to a sense of belonging that has been identified as a potential lever to promote success, engagement, and well-being in college (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017).

When talking about a campus food pantry the student shared that a food pantry can help alleviate some of the money concerns, so that all family members can eat, including the student. When discussing if a food pantry should be viewed as an essential student service, one student said it is “just as valuable as that water fountain and the bathroom down the hall.”

For the participants, necessary student-support services mean that students are suffering if not given adequate student-support services to help them while they are in college. Participants were asked what they felt were necessary student-support services on campus. All participants answered that a food pantry is a necessary student-support service. Other necessary support services mentioned were tutoring, counseling, crisis-grant funding, and a math lab. Additionally, participants were asked if a food pantry can help with maintaining health, well-being, classroom attendance, along with the coursework.

Having a food pantry on campus can help alleviate physical- and mental-health issues, which can result in persistence and better graduation rates for the institution. Additionally, providing a food pantry without qualifying criteria supports a college's DEI initiatives in making the process of obtaining food as seamless as possible, with the result that participating students are now better able to focus and complete coursework. Equally important, in providing needed food to students, the college creates social support for students, a sense of community, and evidence of concern for their wellbeing.

Implications

Students in this study shared that they are suffering from food insecurity. However, the colleges might not fully recognize the level of food insecurity on their campuses. Considering the academic and health-related impacts of food insecurity on college students, it is imperative to fully understand the level of food insecurity on college campuses. Additionally, it is important for college students to feel that they matter and belong to that college community.

Implications for Theory

The current study explored Baumeister and Leary's theory of the Sense of Belonging (previously described in the third tier of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, "Love and Belonging");

Morris Rosenberg's theory of Mattering; Schlossberg's theory of Mattering and Marginality; and Tinto's Framework of Student Departure. It was through these frameworks that the current study connected a student's basic need of food and a sense of belonging along with a sense of mattering. With the sense of belonging and a sense of mattering, the current study explored the degree to which regularly accessible student-support services such as a food pantry could foster health and possibly lead to greater percentages of student persistence, completion, and graduation from students' programs.

A Sense of Belonging. Students who have a good sense of belonging feel that they have self-worth, feel connected to their institution, and feel they are of value to others (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). Additionally, these students have higher levels of persistence and success in college (Strayhorn, 2013) and are more likely to seek out the campus resources that can help them become successful at college (Yeager et al., 2016; Strayhorn, 2012). Further, having a sense of belonging can alleviate students' stress and improve their mental health (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). As found in the literature review, students with food insecurity are less likely to perceive a sense of belonging or seek out student-support services to help them address their needs (Wood et al., 2017). Broton and Goldrick-Rab (2016) found that students report an increased sense of belonging when colleges help with things such as offering a food pantry.

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Participants in the study related that while in college, they might have to pick and choose how they spend their money. Students told me that they might have to choose between feeding their families and animals or taking care of their own dietary needs. Providing a campus food pantry can help alleviate some of the money concerns that students expressed in the interviews, so that all family members can eat, including the student. When discussing if a food pantry should be viewed as an essential student service, one student said it is “just as valuable as that water fountain and the bathroom down the hall.”

Providing students with a food pantry on campus can be the first step in helping students build a sense of belonging to the institution (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2012); however, the help cannot stop with just the food pantry. Students who have a sense of belonging in part due to the provisions of the food pantry, might then reach out to other services such as counseling or emergency grants to help them balance their budgets for the month. In providing food, counseling, and emergency grants, the institution may make the difference in helping these students persist and graduate from the institution (Cooper, n.d.).

One participant shared they might steal if they cannot find food and another student said they might “do things to get access to food that you shouldn’t do.” These students’ comments aligns with Hagedorn and Olfert (2018) who found that food-insecure students might engage in unhealthy coping strategies to find food. In providing food to food-insecure students, the college may be preventing that student from going to jail and keeping them in college as a result. Further, having a campus food pantry might cause the students to feel more welcomed on campus and to see that campus services can be effective in helping them address their needs (Dominguez-Whitehead, 2015). Meeting student needs enhances students’ ability to feel respected, valued, accepted, and cared for. This, in turn, can lead to a sense of belonging that has

been identified as a potential lever to promote success, engagement, and well-being in college (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017).

Mattering. Academic institutions regularly invest time and money in student-retention and student-completion initiatives. Underlying my research is the belief that students themselves are the best source of information about what needs “fixing” to retain our students. Schlossberg (1989), in his theory of college students’ mattering, suggests that first-year college students often feel marginalized and unimportant to their academic institutions (Rayle & Chung, 2007). These students could “experience greater levels of academic stress and increased dropout rates” (Rayle & Chung, 2007, p. 23). In two of the interviews, participants shared that they were first-year students. Of these two, one did not know the college had a food pantry and shared concerns about the college, stating that many times it was difficult to find answers to questions.

Unfortunately, during the semester with COVID-19 present, many of the student-support services were being maintained virtually, and this contributed to the student feeling she did not matter to the institution. After she learned during the interview that her college offers a food pantry on campus, the student appeared relieved and said that it would save her time in not having to go to the community pantry, waiting in line for food and sometimes missing class trying to find food for her family. Just sharing with this student that the institution has a food pantry seemed to change her feelings and belief about the institution’s interest in her well-being.

According to Schlossberg (1989), there are five aspects associated with mattering that include attention, importance, ego extension, dependence, and appreciation. I believe that by providing the campus food pantry, the institution is showing students that they are being noticed and that they are important while providing other benefits, such as having more time for their studies. Students may not have to work as many hours to pay for food. They may save time in

not having to wait in long lines at community food shelves, as one student described, in the “hunt” for food. If the institution provides a campus-based food pantry, students will not only have the nourishing food to feed themselves and their families, to help their bodies and feed their dependents, but may also have more time to focus on their schoolwork, which can lead to increased student retention. Students’ temporary dependence on the institution to help meet physiological needs (Maslow’s first tier, Hierarchy of Needs) will lead to lasting appreciation for the institution with a multitude of benefits, including engagement and persistence, all the way to graduation and beyond.

When students feel that they matter, they also feel that they belong in their communities. Hagerty et al. (1992) expressed that having a sense of belonging allows the person the “experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of the system or environment” (“Abstract”). As contributing members of society providing services to their communities, students may feel a sense of belonging to not only to the institution but also to the communities that they serve. Further, students may feel that their efforts are appreciated by family members, as they are better able to provide for themselves and their families.

One additional effect of using a narrative inquiry, especially on the topic of food insecurity – listening to students’ concerns and needs, in a non-judgmental supportive atmosphere – may be an increased sense of belonging and mattering, for student participants. By taking time to meet with them to hear their thoughts and struggles, I was telling the students that they are important and that they matter to the college. If a student feels that they matter, they may be retained and graduate from the institution.

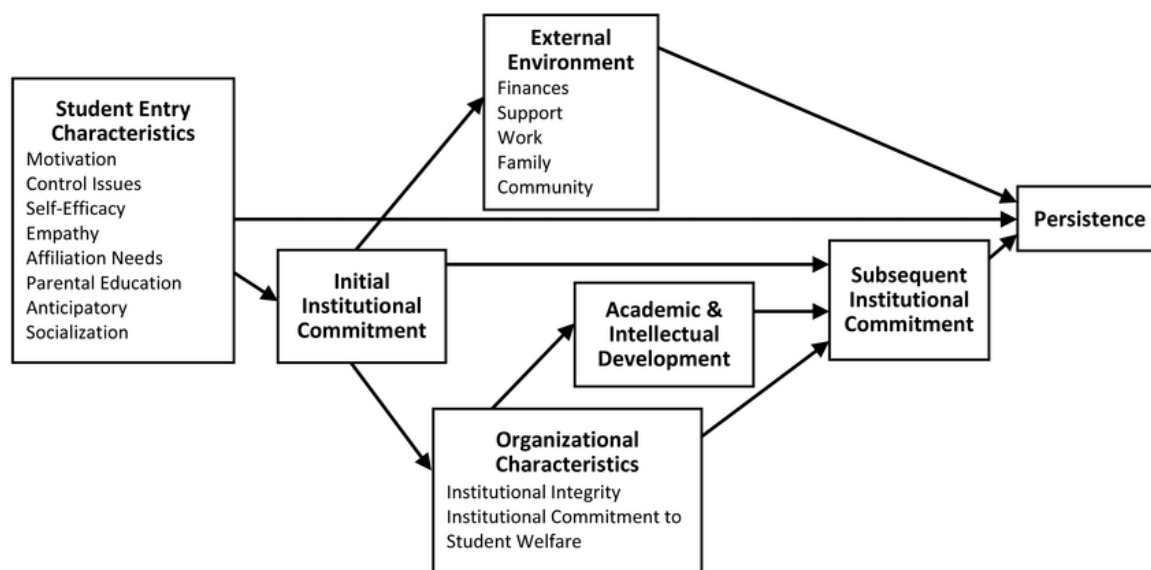
Student Integration, Student Departure, and Institutional Departure. Tinto's three theories of Student Integration, Student Departure, and Institutional Departure, identified three relevant elements: (a) an institutional commitment to the student, (b) the student's commitment to the college, and (c) the student's commitment to the social and educational community. I agree with Cabrera et al.'s (1990) interpretation of Tinto's theory in that the persistence of a student results from a match between the student's motivation and academic ability and the institution's academic and social characteristics. According to this theory, the student's hope is that the college or university will provide institutional integrity and institutional commitment to student welfare (Braxton & Hirschy, 2005; Berger & Milem, 1999). This interpretation echoes Berger and Milem's (1999) finding that students want to know if their institution is committed to student welfare. Institutions that are committed to student welfare are concerned with students' growth and development (Braxton & Hirschy, 2005). The institution's assumption is that when students come to their institution, they will attend class and keep up with their homework. The institution expects that the students will be motivated to persist, and ultimately will complete their degrees. As shown in Figure 1 it is through the student entry characteristics combined with the initial institutional commitment and subsequential institutional commitment coupled with the organizational characteristics and academic and intellectual development that students can be led toward persistence.

When further exploring student persistence as presented in Figure 1, I identified the items tied into students' ability to persist and ultimately complete their college degrees. One of these is student-entry characteristics, such as students' control issues – dealing with the stress of meeting the demands of work or home life while also needing to maintain some order and control in their own personal lives. Other factors linked with student persistence include self-efficacy, empathy,

affiliation needs, and having a sense of belonging, parental education, and anticipatory socialization, such as forming early expectations for college (Braxton & Hirschy, 2005). Additionally, the external environment, including such elements as finances, support, work, family, and community, can help or hinder student persistence. Further, the institution that has healthy active-learning communities and a healthy institutional environment, in such areas as cost, institutional integrity and institutional commitment to student welfare – can help with persistence (Braxton & Hirschy, 2005).

Figure 1

Student Entry Characteristics and Organizational Characteristics that Lead to Persistence



Note. Adapted from Braxton et al. (2004)

I believe that if an institution is concerned with student welfare, it will provide excellent student-support services. With many years' experience voluntarily serving in leadership roles within student programs on our campus, I believe that if college students are not provided with student-support services to help them be successful, the students might struggle and be forced to

drop out of school. According to the interviews conducted with students at this two-year institution, the support services that students feel are essential include tutoring, counseling, on-campus and available support staff, crisis-grant funding, math and writing labs, and a food pantry. I believe these student-support services together working in tandem to meet student needs can help students be successful.

To function at their best in the college setting, students often need a variety of support services that operate holistically and interdependently, to assist them in their journey. Providing food-insecure students with a food pantry will give them additional time, as they don't have to "hunt" for food or stand in long lines. One student shared that they had to drive 40 minutes to the nearest church that offered a meal. Another time this student was in line for two hours to access a food pantry. Giving two hours back to students could allow them to meet with a tutor to study for a test or complete the necessary reading. Linda, an interview participant, shared that often she has to spend time in lines at community food pantries and working to provide food for her children and animals. If students are pulled in too many different directions, they do not have the time to attend class or complete homework. If food-insecure students are tired from working and taking care of their children, coupled with not eating nutritious food, they may lose their motivation to complete college. Perhaps counseling is needed, and with hunger pangs alleviated, the student can next focus on other issues that have been neglected.

In order to support students' academic persistence, there must be a match between the student's motivation and academic ability, and the institution's academic and social characteristics (Cabrera et al., 1990). Students need to be healthy and eating nutritious foods to keep up their motivation for class attendance and homework completion, both of which can be alleviated by having a campus food pantry.

Utilizing Tinto's (1993) Module of Institutional Departure, persistence happens when there is a match between the student's motivation and academic ability and the institution's academic and social characteristics (Cabrera et al., 1990). Based on my findings, I believe that essential to students' motivation is a sense of belonging and mattering that has been communicated to them through the social support and services of a student-centered college. Further, students aim to create a sense of self and self-worth, as demonstrated by the initiative they have taken in enrolling in college to obtain a degree and a new skilled occupation. When these elements come together, the likelihood of student success greatly increases.

This discussion naturally brings to mind Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, according to which a sense of belonging can only be achieved when one first has access to basic needs such as food and water. Researchers such as Strayhorn (2013) have addressed sense of belonging as a basic human need located in Maslow's framework. As students feel this sense of belonging, success, engagement, and well-being in college can occur (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017). When students do not feel a sense of belonging, the literature suggests that they can have a sense of low self-esteem (Hagerty et al., 2002). This was evident in my study as well; in the students' stories, they tended to internalize blame for the predicament, asking, "How have I gotten myself into such a bad situation?"

Ahmed (2017) found that college students' sense of belonging, relating to their academic success and emotional wellbeing, increases when food needs are reliably met. Additionally, Hurtado and Carter (1997) and Strayhorn (2012) both found that addressing food insecurity is a powerful step toward building students' sense of belonging, leading to positive impacts on students' cognition, affect, and behaviors.

Implications for Practice

As presented in Chapter 2, food insecurity has implications for academic performance. As students struggle with psychological health issues due to food insecurity, they might experience a decreased ability to focus on academics (Meza et al., 2018), have a difficult time concentrating in class, have trouble studying for and focusing on exams, and difficulty completing assignments (Farahbakhsh et al., 2017). Students might worry about money and experience deep shame, desperation, and humiliation in telling administration that they need help obtaining food (Heimbaugh, 2020). Some students might even lash out at the college for not providing enough resources for food-insecure students (Meza et al., 2018, para. 9).

I believe that college administrators, and the college as a whole, need to be concerned with students' welfare, and let them know that they matter to their college. When an administration is taking care of the student's substantive needs for food, peripherally, they are improving the student's academic performance, and may also be instilling a sense of belonging and mattering to the institution, yet another factor for academic success. Institutions rely on having students who are physically and mentally healthy and who are socially engaged. The campus-based food pantry benefits students in all these areas, according to 100% of the students interviewed for this study.

Students should be regularly reminded, in their contacts with faculty, staff, and administration, that they are more than an ID number and a source of tuition payments; students are respected members of a college community that aims to meet their needs. I believe it is the responsibility of the college to help these students achieve their dreams by helping them to remove barriers standing in the way of their persistence toward college completion. Patton et al. (2016) and Stebleton and Aleixo (2011) agreed that in order to address student success at the

college level, higher-education professionals need to look at the whole student – physical and mental health, family wellbeing, and social and socioeconomic issues, all of which impact academic performance and persistence. A campus-based food pantry offers an ideal opening to provide food recipients with printed literature about other available services, including counseling, emergency funds, available scholarships, accessibility, and academic support, to name a few. It is another way colleges can show students that they are invested in their overall wellbeing. Additionally, when college students are reaching out for other help with counselors and success coaches, it provides an opportunity to check in with students and make sure that their food needs are being met. If students feel that they matter, their feeling of marginality may diminish (Rayle & Chung, 2007).

I also believe that the stigma behind being food insecurity needs to be addressed and eliminated from the college, as many students might be too proud to ask for food. A food pantry implemented on a campus should be celebrated and marketed to students in a way that says it's "normal" to be a "broke college student" and that the food is for all. This is the best way to get the needed food to students who are silently suffering from food insecurity. One idea for removing the perceived stigma is to invite faculty to promote the food pantry, perhaps by taking an entire classroom to the pantry for food at least once. The instructor could tell the class that if they don't "need" the food, they can give it to a neighbor or someone else who does need it. In this way, the college could present the food pantry as a source of community-building and service.

Implications for Academic Performance. As evidenced by previous research, food insecurity has implications for academic performance (Cady, 2014; Camelo & Elliott, 2019). As students struggle with psychological health issues due to food insecurity, they might not feel

good about themselves, resulting in a loss of zest for life or the high energy needed to confidently face the challenges of gaining a college education (Zinger, 2011). These students might experience a decreased ability to focus on academics (Meza et al., 2018), have a difficult time concentrating in class, have trouble studying for and focusing on exams, and have difficulty completing assignments (Farahbakhsh et al., 2017). Students might worry about money and experience deep shame, desperation, and humiliation in telling administration that they need help obtaining food (Heimbaugh, 2020). Some students might even lash out at the college for not providing enough resources for food-insecure students (Meza et al., 2018, para. 9).

In the study, I found the participants suffered from trouble concentrating in class, trouble studying for and focusing on exams, trouble in the classroom focusing on classroom discussion, and difficulty completing assignments. The participants did worry about money and one participant shared her humiliation in telling administration that they needed help. Additionally, one participant shared that at times she did not go to class as she had to go on the “hunt” for food for her family.

It is important for institutions to help their food-insecure students in order to support their academic performance and success. While they are taking care of the student's substantive needs for food, peripherally they are improving the student's academic performance and may also be instilling a sense of belonging and mattering to the institution, yet another factor for academic success. Institutions need to have students who are not only physically healthy, but also mentally healthy and socially engaged, in order for them to be successful in their course work and persistent in their academics. The campus-based food pantry benefits students in all these areas, according to 100% of the students interviewed for this study.

Implications for Retention and Graduation Rates. As presented in Chapter 2, food insecurity has implications for retention and graduation rates. Existing literature suggests that food-insecure students might drop out of college if they cannot “afford basic necessities like food” (United States Government Accountability Office, n.d., p. 1). Further, Silva et al. (2017) found that food-insecure students were more likely to fail or withdraw from courses or fail to register for courses than their food-secure peers. Additionally, if a food-insecure student is struggling with working, taking care of dependents, and schoolwork, that student may have a lower grade-point average, delayed graduation, or may drop out of college to help with the family's needs. As found in this study, one student stated that she had to miss class in order to work and to take care of her family.

This study reveals the necessity of an institutional plan to supplement the food supply of students struggling with food insecurity as part of a larger initiative to increase retention and graduation rates. In the process of ensuring students' access to food to enhance retention and graduation rates, the college might also be instilling a sense of belonging and mattering to the institution, with far-reaching benefits to students and their families, the college, and the larger community they will serve. Institutions need to find ways to help students who are struggling to balance work, family, and school life; a food pantry is one such service which might lead to greater rates of student retention, completion, graduation, and life success.

Limitations

While this study highlighted the issues surrounding food insecurity, its scope was restricted, so limitations deserve reflection as they may have an impact on the findings.

1. The most desirable group to interview would have been students from many different vocational programs. Four out of the five interviewed for this study were female students,

with three of the female students feeding not only themselves, but also their families.

Additionally, four out of the five participants identified as White, which results in 80% of students interviewed being White. The population of the college in this study is 71.3% White students.

2. Due to COVID-19, there was only a small, select group of students attending face-to-face courses on campus who could participate in this current study, which impacted how many students elected to participate. Even though online students were also emailed a request to participate, I have discovered in the past as a Student Senate Advisor that many students do not respond to email requests sent to their student accounts.
3. Three of the students who responded to the interview request were part of the Student Senate and members of the food-pantry committee. Having more students participate in an interview might result in a different outcome, as the three students interviewed from the Student Senate have a vested interest in the food pantry due to their own histories of overcoming barriers to gaining a college education. Having three students from the Student Senate with a vested interest can create a biased result.

Future Research Directions

When I began this research, it was my hope that the results of this study would help to inform college administrators as they decide if a campus-based food pantry for students is worth the time and expense. Administrators may conclude that the food pantry is an essential student-support service after reviewing my study as it revealed that student participants describe how their chronic food insecurity was negatively impacting their academic performance and persistence.

This study was motivated by a desire to see if a food pantry on a college campus can help with students' sense of belonging and sense of mattering to the institution. Previous research reveals that food insecurity affect students' physical health, the results of this study also show that food-insecure students at this technical college are experiencing mental-health problems, food-shortage problems afflicting their households, and social and socioeconomic issues, resulting in struggles to complete homework and attend class. Notably, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has likely further exacerbated all these issues. Participants felt strongly that the food pantry could mitigate these barriers to their health and wellbeing, resulting in greater academic success.

Based on the research, study, and conclusions resulting from the interviews, the following recommendations for further research are suggested below:

1. Increase the Population to Research: Interview more students at this technical college for additional stories and perspectives on food insecurity, sense of belonging and mattering, and the role of a campus-based food pantry. Through increasing the number of students stories are heard the themes found in this study can be further supported as well as reveal additional experiences. Expanding the population ensures that the findings are representative of the population at this institution.
2. Study More Students in the State of Minnesota Two Year System: This college belongs to a two-year student association called LeadMN. I might be able to gain interest in this type of research by talking to this organization to see if members would help market this research. Researching additional students in the state of Minnesota might reveal more of the students' stories and feelings about food insecurity and the role of a food pantry in removing barriers to health while inspiring a sense of belonging and mattering to their

institution. Students who attend two-year schools have different experiences from their four-year counterparts. Knowing more about our two-year students experience in Minnesota will help our system identify more specific food insecurity issues system wide.

3. **Large Scale Quantitative Study:** A quantitative method study aimed to explore the issue of food insecurity on the campus as a whole, not just students who use the food pantry. Taking a survey of students collegewide might provide evidence of significant food shortages.
4. **Expand the Scope of the Research:** Expand the questions being asked of the students.

Chapter Summary and Concluding Thoughts

Chapter 5 has examined the results of this study as it relates to existing literature discussed in Chapter 2. The purpose of this study has focused on the firsthand stories of a group of college students to learn how food insecurity impacts students in such areas as health and wellbeing, family responsibilities, coursework, sense of belonging and mattering, and persistence. Additionally, this narrative study investigated college students' experiences with a campus-based food pantry. The results of this study show that food-insecure students are suffering from physical- and mental-health issues, lack of energy, lack of focus needed for class work, stress, anxiety, poor self-care, and undesirable behaviors such as stealing or other non-ideal methods of obtaining food for survival.

Findings from the students suggest that if food-insecure students are helped by their institution, they may become leaders who want to help other students. This was the case in one story shared by a study participant; after being helped with gas money and food gift cards, the student felt a sense of belonging and mattering; she went on to become a leader on her campus to

help other students. She felt that she mattered to this institution, as it gave her a gas card to drive to her classes, and a food gift card so that she could feed her family and better focus on her college coursework. If a college campus offers a food pantry to its students, it may inspire food-insecure students to have a greater sense of belonging and mattering to their institution with a variety of benefits to the student, the college, and the community.

The study explored Baumeister and Leary's theory of the Sense of Belonging (previously described in the third tier of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, "Love and Belonging"); Morris Rosenberg's theory of Mattering; Schlossberg's theory of Mattering and Marginality; and Tinto's Framework of Student Departure. It was through these frameworks that the study connected a student's basic need of food and a sense of belonging along with a sense of mattering. With the sense of belonging and a sense of mattering, the current study explored the degree to which regularly accessible student-support services such as a food pantry could foster health and possibly lead to greater percentages of student persistence, completion, and graduation from students' programs.

Academic institutions regularly invest time and money in student-retention and student-completion initiatives. Underlying my research is the belief that students themselves are the best source of information about what needs "fixing" to retain our students. Schlossberg (1989), in his theory of college students' mattering, suggested that first-year college students often feel marginalized and unimportant to their academic institutions (Rayle & Chung, 2007). These students could "experience greater levels of academic stress and increased dropout rates" (Rayle & Chung, 2007, p. 23). In two of the interviews, participants shared that they were first-year students. Of these two, one did not know the college had a food pantry and shared concerns about the college, stating that many times it was difficult to find answers to questions.

Unfortunately, during the semester with COVID-19 present, many of the student-support services were being maintained virtually, and this contributed to the student feeling she did not matter to the institution. After she learned during the interview that her college offers a food pantry on campus, the student appeared relieved and said that it would save her time in not having to go to the community pantry, waiting in line for food and sometimes missing class trying to find food for her family. Just sharing with this student that the institution has a food pantry seemed to change her feelings and belief about the institution's interest in her well-being.

When students feel that they matter, they also feel that they belong in their communities. Hagerty et al. (1992) expressed that having a sense of belonging allows the person the "experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of the system or environment" ("Abstract"). As contributing members of society providing services to their communities, students may feel a sense of belonging to not only to the institution but also to the communities that they serve. Further, students may feel that their efforts are appreciated by family members, as they are better able to provide for themselves and their families.

One additional effect of using a narrative inquiry, especially on the topic of food insecurity – listening to students' concerns and needs, in a non-judgmental supportive atmosphere – may be an increased sense of belonging and mattering, for student participants. By taking time to meet with them to hear their thoughts and struggles, I was telling the students that they are important and that they matter to the college. If a student feels that they matter, they may be retained and graduate from the institution.

Dissertation Summary

The first chapter of this dissertation provided an introduction to the study, a background of the study, and information regarding the struggle associated with food insecurity. Chapter 1 provided a statement of the problem, purpose, and significance of the study, along with the methodology, methods, and frameworks used to analyze the data.

Chapter 2 provided a literature review that explores food insecurity among college students and the conceptual/theoretical frameworks used for this study. Chapter 2 considered the negative impacts of food insecurity on psychosocial and mental health with resulting declines in student success and academic performance. Finally, Chapter 2 outlined the evolution of campus-based food pantries, running and funding a food pantry, access of a food pantry, and the impact of a food pantry at a California university.

Chapter 3 outlined the process followed for this study, including methods, recruitment, and selection. Chapter 3 also covered the data-collection methods, data analysis, data authenticity, and trustworthiness. Finally, Chapter 3 described the researcher reflexivity and the IRB process.

Chapter 4 included the findings of the study, setting for the study, and participant demographics. Additionally, Chapter 4 included the data collection and data analysis describing the emerging themes that came from the coding process.

Chapter 5 examined the results of this study as it relates to existing literature discussed in Chapter 2. The purpose of this study has focused on the firsthand stories of a group of college students to learn how food insecurity impacts students in such areas as health and wellbeing, family responsibilities, coursework, sense of belonging and mattering, and persistence. Additionally, this narrative study investigated college students' experiences with a campus-based

food pantry. The results of this study show that food-insecure students are suffering from physical- and mental-health issues, lack of energy, lack of focus needed for class work, stress, anxiety, poor self-care, and undesirable behaviors such as stealing or other non-ideal methods of obtaining food for survival.

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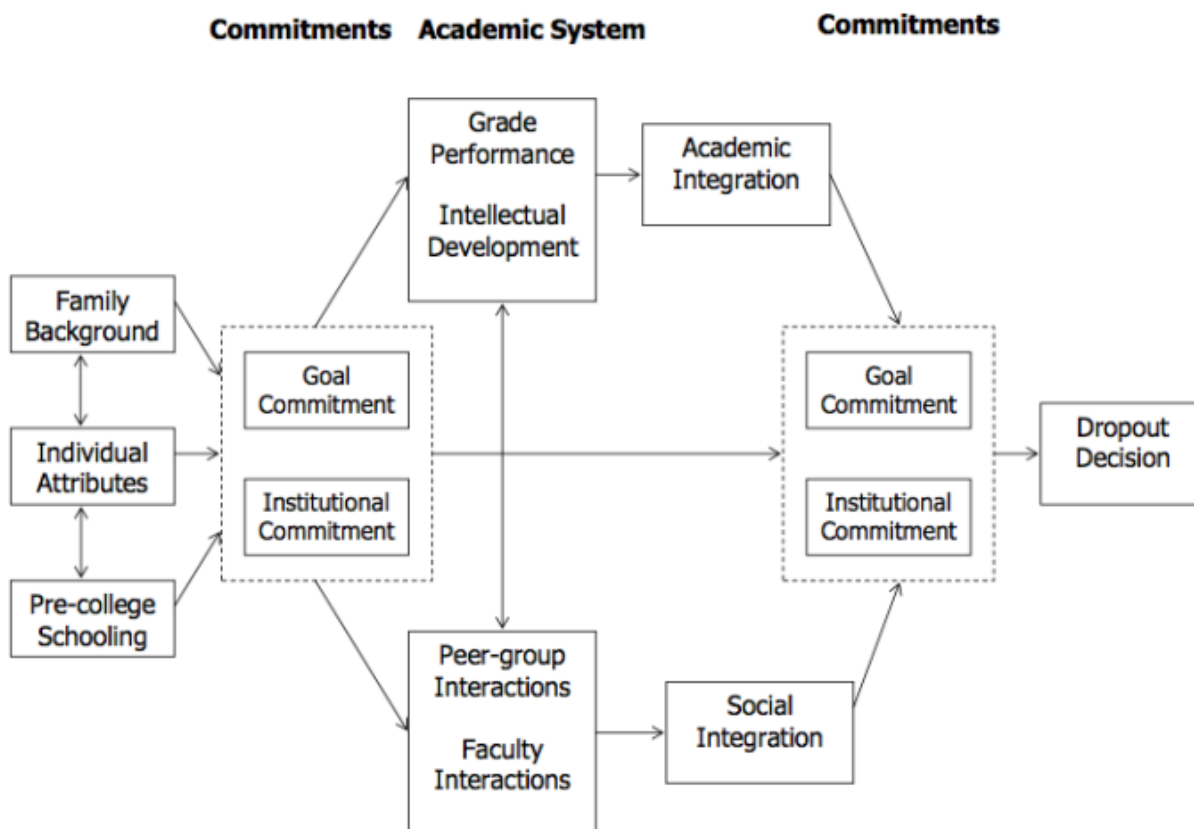
Lab. <https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/food-and-housing-report.pdf>

Zinger, L. (2011). *Psychosocial health* [Lecture outline]. Los Angeles Harbor College.

https://www.lahc.edu/classes/pe/health/health11media/Health_11_Chapter_2_Psychosocial-PDF.pdf

Appendix A: Figure of Commitment Structure

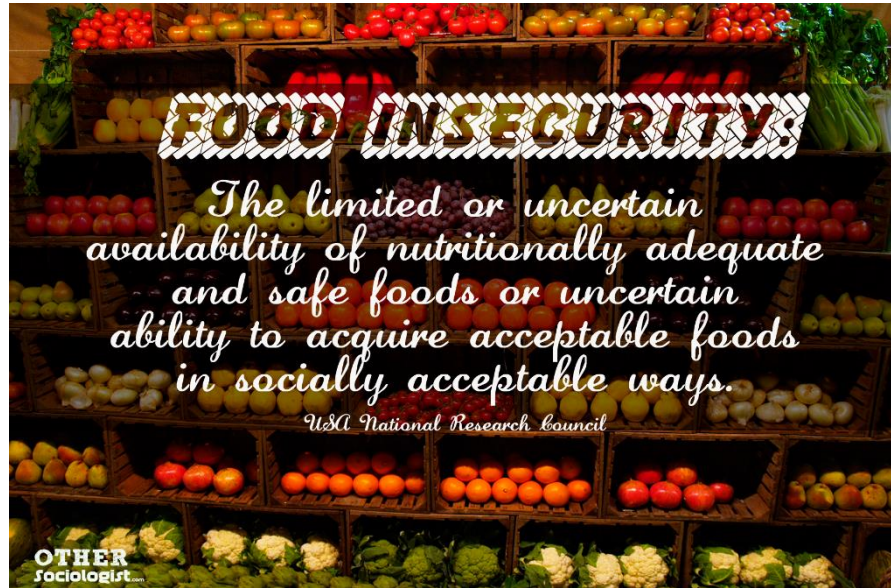
Institution's commitment to the student, the student's commitment to their college and the student's commitment to their social and educational community



Appendix B: Call for Volunteers

Volunteers Needed

Interview with Deb Allen



Do you ever find yourself **too hungry** to study or find that your stomach grows in class? Do you think that being food insecure might be **holding you back** from doing well in your course work, finishing your classes or degree?

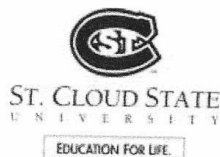
Deb Allen, Student Senate Co-Advisor and Legal Assistant Instructor
Needs Volunteers to be Interviewed to
Help with
Her Doctorate Dissertation on
Food Insecurity

45-60 minutes Interview via Zoom

\$15 Target Gift Card

Email Deb if Interested at dallen@anokatech.edu

Appendix C: IRB Approval



Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South AS 210, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Name: Deborah Allen
Email: Rade0501@go.stcloudstate.edu

IRB PROTOCOL DETERMINATION: Exempt Review

Project Title: Narrative Study: The Impact of Food Insecurity on Student Health on Persistence

Advisor: Jennifer Jones

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

PI is encouraged to store video/audio data in a secure cloud storage platform and work with IT (SCSU or appropriate University) to ensure that raw data is safely stored and deleted from University server in a secure manner.

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).
- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.
- Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.
- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.
- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-4932 or email ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

IRB Chair:

Dr. Mili Mathew
 Chair and Graduate Director
 Assistant Professor
 Communication Sciences and Disorders

IRB Institutional Official:

Dr. Claudia Tomany
 Associate Provost for Research
 Dean of Graduate Studies

OFFICE USE ONLY

SCSU IRB# 2025 - 2634	Type: Exempt Review	Today's Date: 4/12/2021
1st Year Approval Date: 4/9/2021	2nd Year Approval Date:	3rd Year Approval Date:
1st Year Expiration Date:	2nd Year Expiration Date:	3rd Year Expiration Date:

Appendix D: Interview Questions

- Hi, my name is Deb Allen and I am a faculty member at Anoka Tech. I am conducting this interview to help with my dissertation for my doctorate program at St. Cloud State University. My doctorate program is an Ed. D. and I hope with my doctorate to obtain a position in administration.
 - Can you please tell me a little bit about yourself?
 - What program are you in at ATC?
 - Do you have dependents that rely on you for food support?

Prompt #1

- Do you know what food insecurity is?
- Now that I have explained food insecurity, do you think food insecurity effects students' health? How?
- Has food insecurity effected your health?
- Do you think food insecurity effects students' well-being?
- How do you think food insecurity effects well-being?
- Has food insecurity effected your well-being?
- Do you think food insecurity effects students being in class and coursework?
- How do you think food insecurity effects students being in class and coursework?
- Has food insecurity affected you being in a class and coursework?

Prompt #2

- Have you used the food pantry before COVID-19? If yes, what is your experience?
 - What does a normal visit to the food pantry look like?
 - Who do you see?
 - What do you feel?
 - What is your overall experience with the food pantry?
- Have you used the food pantry after COVID-19 appeared? If yes, what is your experience?
 - What does a normal visit to the food pantry look like?
 - Who do you see?
 - What do you feel?
 - What is your overall experience with the food pantry?

Prompt #3

- What do you think are essential student support services for ATC?
- Do you feel that a food pantry is a necessary student support service?
- How can a food pantry help you with maintaining your health?
- How can a food pantry help you with maintain your well-being?
- How can a food pantry help you with being in class and your coursework?

Wrap-Up

- Is there anything I should have asked about that you'd like me to know?
- Do you have any questions for me?