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Understanding Poverty: Food Insecurity in Gettysburg, PA

Fiona G. Cheyney
Gettysburg College

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Abstract

This study informs on Gettysburgians' experiences with health, nutrition, and the class structure. I conducted an ethnographic study based on a twelve-week volunteer experience with the food pantry in Gettysburg at the Adams County branch of South Central Community Action Programs. Experiencing the pantry for a 3-month period informed my understanding of nutrition and poverty in town. Extensive field notes and reflections were compiled to show the strength of the Gettysburg food pantry staff and community support system. This study also reflects on the limitations of the food pantry based on staff feedback and observation. The food pantry is much more than just monthly groceries for local families; the SCCAP pantry allows residents a place for support, love, and access to phenomenal resources to help families during hardship.

Keywords

food insecurity, poverty, food pantry, community support

Disciplines

Anthropology | Food Studies | Social and Cultural Anthropology

Comments

Written for ANTH 323: Field Methods in Cultural Anthropology

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Gettysburg College

ANTH 323: Field Methods of Cultural Anthropology

Understanding Poverty: Food Insecurity in Gettysburg, PA

Final Paper

Submitted By:

Fiona Cheyney
cheyfi01@gettysburg.edu

Submitted On:

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I affirm that I have upheld the highest principles of honesty and integrity in my academic work and have not witnessed a violation of the Honor Code.

Introduction

This anthropological research dives into studying the economic strain that faces Gettysburg, Pennsylvania and how the community responds. Food insecurity is a pressing issue across many countries, including The United States of America. Even with extreme pockets of wealth in this nation, about 40 million Americans are enrolled in federally funded food assistance programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP (Dickinson 2020, 2). This research looks at food inequality in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania to observe community support that goes beyond the limitations of federal support.

Gettysburg is historically known as a battle site in the American Civil War. It is also a college town; surprising to some, it was founded 30 years before the Civil War broke out. Understanding the demographics of this town is difficult when college students skew the visual representation of Gettysburg residents. Rather than observing the townspeople in Gettysburg to understand the demographic layout of the town, the US Census provides information on the levels of poverty in this town. Gettysburg, Pennsylvania currently has a population of 7,720 people (“Gettysburg, Pennsylvania Population 2021”). 3.2% of these people are filed for unemployment which is approximately 247 people (“Unemployment Rate in Gettysburg, PA” (MSA)). However, this number does not represent the number of people who receive food assistance because the statistics for those living under the poverty line are much higher. As of 2019, the poverty rate of Gettysburg, 21.3%, is higher than the national average of 12.3% (“Data USA”). These statistics confirm the importance of this research. By analyzing economic inequality from an anthropological lens, the Gettysburg community can better respond to the needs of others.

My research question is “how does Gettysburg food assistance programs benefit those living in food insecurity?” This study informs on Gettysburgians’ experiences with health, nutrition, and the class structure. I present information about residents who are economically stressed to understand how they eat and what realistic avenues they have to find food. Focusing on food insecurity from an anthropological lens sheds light on important issues that many Americans fight to overcome. Bringing attention to the struggles of fellow Gettysburgians can lead to positive social change and beneficial legislative action that hopefully, will lead to changes in the aforementioned statistics. Good and ethical research can provide a compassionate lens through which to view poverty. Similarly, this research informs on topics, such as resourcefulness, community support, and access to healthy eating. The large gap between those living in poverty versus in wealth may be negatively affecting the community’s ability to collaborate towards its goals, but action programs like the one studied here work against this. To successfully answer this complex research question, I conducted an ethnographic study through participant observation and interviews. This research is based on my twelve-week volunteer experience with the food pantry in Gettysburg at the Adams County branch of South Central Community Action Programs (“SCCAP”). Experiencing the pantry for a 3-month period informs my understanding of nutrition and poverty in town.

Methods

Through my research, I studied the SCCAP team, their practices, and community members who they help. I can justify my site choice because food pantries are typically for those on the lower end of the socio-economic ladder and may also rely on federal food assistance. This could be through SNAP or WIC programs. Additionally, many pantry volunteers are also reliant on the pantry food for groceries. Some feel guilty for being dependent on food pantries;

volunteering lessens their stress because they can give back and feel a deep community connection. Through this research, I analyzed the pantry as a primary form of food assistance and as a supplemental form to federal help. My overarching research question asks, “how does Gettysburg food assistance programs benefit those living in food insecurity?” I also ask, is the food pantry able to handle and provide for the number of residents in town who need help? And what other programs are benefiting locals?

To collect data on these topics, I practiced participant observation and conducted interviews with community members, including SCCAP workers, volunteers, and families. I contacted the food pantry coordinator, Beth, and created a schedule that worked for both of us. My volunteering and participant observing was weekly on Mondays from 2:00pm to 3:30pm which is the closing shift. The field site was within walking distance from my residential housing, so I walked to and from SCCAP for every period of participant observation. My role in the pantry was checking families in at the main desk. I worked directly with the families and the pantry workers to let them know how much food and what kinds of foods to bag. This position allowed me to see the contextual data of the families and frequency of their visits to the pantry. This empirical information will reflect the importance of having food pantries in local communities.

My Role

To sign families into the pantry, I asked them for their full name and flipped through the pantry book for their name. The pantry requires face masks and with the edition of the plexiglass hanging in front of the main desk, it was often difficult to hear people. Asking many times for families to repeat their names became commonplace. Once I knew the person’s name, I looked in the big black binder that contained an alphabetized spreadsheet of every person who is enrolled

in the pantry. I confirmed their address, the number of people in the household, and then wrote the day's date in the respective month's cell. The contents of the binder are reprinted every six months so, in between January to June and June to December, if there are new families, they are hand-written in the book. Next, I wrote down their name on a separate sheet that is reset daily with the number of each age category in the family, 0-18, 19-59, 60+. While this sounds like a complicated process, I was capable of the basic tasks quite quickly and was independent after the first two shifts. Of course, there were other, more involved tasks at the front desk that I learned as I went.

In addition to participant observation, I also conducted interviews to have a more holistic understanding of the community culture at the pantry and to have real voices inform my research. I learned a great deal of information from the food pantry workers and families. By the pantry's policy, I obtained written consent from the pantry's families when I asked them about their experiences with food inequality. As a student myself, I looked at student participation and attendance at this site. Gettysburg College students come from many different regions of the country and the world with varying backgrounds and statuses that could skew my data. Ensuring residency in Adams County was an important step in my interviews and data collection. I also ensured to collect data from a varying array of identities and positionalities. I was interested in the demographics and age ranges of the families and those with which I worked.

I was transparent about my ethnographic research and gained trust and friendship. To choose my interviewees, I made formal and informal relationships with the community members and chose people that I felt would be responsive. The snowball method is not a reliable tool to find informants, so I avoided this form. For my field data, I brought a small notebook to the field site, and then at the end of every period of participant observation, I reread my jot notes and

wrote field notes proper on my laptop. During my interviews, I used my iPhone's voice memos app to record my conversations with SCCAP workers and community members after I had obtained their consent. To write effectively about the food pantry, I took pictures of the space as references. As shown, I used US Census data about the demographics and economic standings of the residents of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. From this ethnographic research, I saw the statistics turn into real life examples of community members' socio-economic statuses and their relationships with food.

Overall, I think participant observation was an appropriate method of conducting this kind of research. However, one of the drawbacks I noticed over the weeks was the limitations of my role in the pantry. Because I was often busy and focused, it felt like a job. Efficiency and speed are of high importance for the main desk role. Signing people in and getting them their groceries as quickly as possible was a priority. This meant that I did not get as much time with each person as I may have intended. I could not ask people about their lives because there was often a line, and I did not want to be the reason the pantry was inefficient. Similarly, with the exception of a few, I did not have a lot of time with the pantry baggers. They all greeted me when I arrived each Monday and we said our pleasantries but once I got to the main desk, I was focused on signing people in, and the baggers were focused on packing up the food. If I was to redo this project, I would allow for more time at the food pantry, but not necessarily as a volunteer. The volunteer experience was rewarding and allowed me to speak with a lot of people each day but not in an in-depth manner to learn about their lives. The interviews are the times when I made the deepest connections. I became very close with one pantry worker, Sam, and I learned a lot about him through working together at the desk and an interview. My interview with Sam was one of my last and it reflects my improved skills in interviewing. My first one was

an hour-long taped interview with Beth, and I struggled to think of follow up questions quickly. This resulted in my questions being too wordy and unclear. However, my interview with Sam felt a lot more relaxed because I had more experience leading this kind of conversation. I maintained a level of informality and kept a conversational tone for all my interviews because I wanted my interviewees to feel comfortable. They also would not respond well to an overly formal process because it is not how they behave. Rather than a structured interview, talking with them and discussing topics was more appropriate for two of my interviewees because that is how it naturally went. I wanted to be flexible so that they would be comfortable and tell me personal information. The methods I chose benefited this ethnographic research because my interview transcripts, jot notes, and expanded field notes were extremely detailed to review and learn from my experiences.

Description of the Focal Community

The economic and nutritional indigence in Gettysburg is reflected in the need for food assistance programs. The town has structures in place to assist those who need more assistance than the government can provide. This research focuses on the Adams County resources. The food pantry in Gettysburg is a program from the South Central Community Action Programs, also known as SCCAP. This action program-focused nonprofit organization that seeks to help the less fortunate in the greater Gettysburg area. This is an organization with branches in Adams County and Franklin County in Southern Pennsylvania. According to their website, their goals are “to empower families and engage the community to pursue innovative and effective solutions to break the cycle of poverty” (“SCCAP”). SCCAP has a variety of programs that serve the local community including housing assistance, COVID-19 relief, and food assistance.

A note I made within my first few days at the pantry was the importance of word choice. The people who receive food are technically clients to the pantry, but that wording is too formal and treats the pantry like a service, rather than a resource. SCCAP is focused on uplifting community members that need help. This learning process was important to my role at the front desk. I learned that, even if it is just one person, everyone who comes through the pantry is called “a family of (insert number of people in the household)”. The human connection felt at the food pantry reminds me that everyone is trying their best and deserves respect. Another example of this is the Community Service Cans, which is a program where people on probation can donate canned foods to reduce the number of community service hours they need to serve. Similarly, I quickly learned that, while yes, they are clients and yes, they are the probation cans, it is dehumanizing and embarrassing for some. Families and Community Service Cans is what we call them. My last example of word choice is when I say, “families who need help”, which I have already said here. Formally, the people who come to the pantry are below a certain monthly income and therefore, qualify for assistance. However, that explanation is unnecessary and irrelevant. Families come to the food pantry for many economic reasons, but more importantly, they are coming for a little bit of help. These important word choice examples reflect the pantry’s prioritization of putting the families first and not judging based on their past choices or current economic standing. The pantry is truly a judgement-free space and I feel grateful that I was welcomed so warmly by the workers and the families.

The SCCAP website has many personal accounts that reflect the benefits of SCCAP in the community. One of the families said, "This is the life I was given, the hand I was dealt and it's not going to get any better" (“SCCAP”). The food pantry is devoted to showing people that things can change for the better. Accepting help is not ‘being reliant on the system.’ This is a

message I have heard many times when people critique food pantries. They think that welfare or assistance programs allow people to be lazy and not provide for themselves. This argument makes me genuinely angry; of course, it frustrated me before volunteering at the pantry, but even more so now. Every person's life is different, and no one should judge others because they need help. Accepting help is acknowledging what will make your life better and giving back when you can. The pantry is a safe space for people to be genuine and honest about what they need; it is a humbling experience.

A description of the space allows for a better understanding of the food pantry. The pantry is a separate structure from the SCCAP building. It is located behind the SCCAP building; approximately 20 feet worth of asphalt separate the two structures. The pantry is essentially a garage with an edition on it. The main desk is in the single-car garage. The garage door is left open in the summer months but as it gets colder, they shut it and the families use the side door to sign in. The desk is on the side wall of the garage and faces an industrial refrigerator and food shelves. On the back wall of the garage, there is an industrial freezer. Connected to the main desk side of the garage is a door that leads to a room of a similar size is the pantry space where all the food is stored and bagged. Three walls of this room have built-in shelves that go to the ceiling, stocked with non-perishable foods. The last wall has one industrial freezer and two industrial refrigerators. Half of the floor space in the room has what appeared to be home-constructed wooden benches for packing up the food. It is a fairly large space when those are removed but with the benches plus shopping carts with food in them and 3 or 4 workers, it is a tight space. I often had to weave through or wait to enter the pantry if there was not enough space.

Body

As I have explained, the food pantry in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania grants Adams County residents better access to groceries and other domestic needs. The pantry is a monthly pick-up option for families to receive grocery items without cost. There are also often baby items such as diapers, formula, and baby food. The pantry is a lively space with families and pantry employees, or so I am told. The shift I worked was from 2:00pm to close; by then, the pantry is slowing down for the day. Typically, the families I saw were coming straight from their jobs.

Interacting with Food Pantry Clients

I found that most families who use the pantry are comfortable talking about their economic situations. However, first-timers are often quiet and reserved when asking for assistance. It takes probing to confirm that they are new and looking to sign-up for the food pantry. One man came in about 4 minutes before closing and practically whispered that he was there to sign-up. I was surprised by this because he was already inside the garage, so clearly all the SCCAP workers would assume that this person would be there for food assistance. Nonetheless, I mirrored what I learned from Sam, which was to be excited for him, welcome him, and to hand him the starting paperwork on a clipboard. The two papers on the clipboard ask about their monthly income and personal information like phone number, birthdate, address, and who else lives in the household. This is also we must confirm that they live in Adams County. In my first few weeks at the pantry, I was not completely familiar with all of the towns in Adams County, so I continually referred to the sticky note on the desk. As the weeks went by, I became more confident and gained that knowledge.

Unfortunately, one woman was not from Adams County but still insisted that she should be able to sign-up. Being new to the pantry, I asked Beth what to do. She left her office in the SCCAP building and came down to the pantry to talk with the woman. She calmly explained that

she could not sign-up for monthly food, but Beth said that she would make her a bag of food to last her the day. Beth gave her the contact information for a pantry in her county and told her to go there the next day.

Food Pantry Leadership

In all honesty, when I first met Beth, I was slightly intimidated. Her tone over email was straight to the point and not very warm. I tried to ignore those thoughts when I had my interview at the pantry to be a volunteer. Beth's personality was still very salt of the earth, but I could clearly see how much she loved her job and the families. As I built my relationship with her, I learned how kind and passionate she was. In our interview, she described herself as a vegetarian who does not like vegetables. That sentence alone set the tone of our interview, one which was very casual, conversational, and relaxed. She spoke in great depth about her life and her own struggles with food inequality and what changed when she found SCCAP.

I asked Beth to "tell me a little bit about yourself" and she responded, "so, my name is Beth. I'm a mom and a wife". She went on to explain her role as the food pantry coordinator. However, I found it very telling that she began by asserting her motherhood. She commented that her strong maternal instincts come from thinking she was infertile in her 20s. While she does have children of her own, she explained that some of the families at the pantry feel like her extended family. She has worked for SCCAP as the pantry coordinator for 15 years and feels a deep connection to the community. In retrospect, she put a lot of trust in me, a sophomore college student, to responsibly handle the main desk. Beth is an extremely compassionate woman and always advocates to help those around her, even if they are not from Adams County.

Pantry Limitations

Most families are very gracious for what the pantry can give them per month. However, there are some limitations that impede people's satisfaction with their groceries. The pantry pick-up is only once a month, so many families come as soon as they can. Typically, the busiest pantry days are the 1st and 2nd days of the month. Even the employees acknowledge that SCCAP cannot provide families with enough food per month. SCCAP gets some federal funding, but not nearly enough and community donations can only be stretched so far.

Another limitation of the pantry is that many families have dietary restrictions that the food pantry cannot accommodate. Religious and medical needs dictate what people can eat. A woman who I became close with named Sherry came up to the desk one day; I greeted her and asked if she was picking up. She said that she was but needed to ensure that all the food was unprocessed because her son had a bad reaction to something that was put in her bags last month. I apologized and told her that I would forward that information to the baggers. After I signed her in, I continued my normal task of calling back, "I have a family of three up front with me" so that the baggers know how many brown paper bags to fill. However, this time I also explained the food restrictions. Melissa, a bagger, was slightly confused. A lot of the perishable and non-perishable foods that the pantry gives out are processed. The crew of baggers tried their best to find options for the family. Sherry is on the autism spectrum and is specific about her preferences and restrictions. I think she was genuinely trying to protect her son, but she also often looked through the bags given to her and removed items that she did not want and put them on the open shelves in the garage space with the main desk. SCCAP legally cannot re-bag goods once they leave the pantry. Sam and I have explained to her that we cannot re-bag those items for other families and it would be better if she donated it to her neighbors or loved ones who need it, but she was unwavering in her decisions. When employees and volunteers are required to bag

groceries for the families, food is wasted because the pantry cannot give those items to a different family.

COVID-19 Disruptions

Those same families with allergies, food preferences, and religious dietary restrictions do not benefit from the COVID-19 set-up of the pantry. In the pre-COVID world, the pantry was a self-serve facility. The families would sign in with the main desk worker, same as now, but then would get a shopping cart to go into the pantry, walk through, and personally select what they wanted. The number of items they could take was determined based on how large the family was. Beth explained that if a family wanted 20 cans of corn, so be it, but the COVID set-up does not give families choice. She and Sam dislike the current way the pantry operates because having baggers removes the individualism and independence that comes with self-service. Former operations were also more reminiscent of going to the grocery store, and probably more comfortable for families.

I have heard many strong opinions about the COVID-19 vaccine that do not align with the pantry's COVID-19 operations. Although Sam advocates for the pantry's return to self-service, I was initially confused when I had a conversation with him about COVID-19. Sam told me that he is unvaccinated and never intends to get inoculated. I come from the Northeast, so I did not hesitate when signing up for my COVID shot. I learned that Pennsylvanians might not have the same faith that I do in the vaccine. Due to COVID-19, the pantry has gone through changes in service that affect families. Although some SCCAP workers do not believe in the vaccine, they still wear masks in accordance with SCCAP policy. Most pantry workers want to see the pantry be self-serve again, but many are not willing in getting the vaccine to contribute to herd immunity. This gave me serious cognitive dissonance, but I accepted that while Sam was

not going to change his mind, he still wanted to see the pantry families have the best experience possible.

The pandemic has affected SCCAP's operations, but they maintained their ability to provide for families in-person because of the extreme need in the community. Beth proudly smiled when I asked, "so you really stayed in-person this whole time?" She and the team followed extremely tight rules and restrictions to keep the pantry open. Beth explained that most of their families, if they are employed, do not have the luxury of being able to work from home. So, if they were going to work, so was Beth. The pantry saw a change in the number of attendees during the pandemic. In an unintentionally leading interview question, I asked Beth how the pantry reacted to the higher number of unemployed people from the pandemic. She responded that the pandemic actually reduced the number of families that came every month. With the government providing more relief and more aid on EBT cards during the pandemic, the number of pantry attendees was in a decline at the height of the pandemic. With more money on EBT cards through SNAP, families could afford to go to the grocery store themselves. The number of families that come to the pantry is now rising again as the pandemic continues and there is less aid being given.

Community Building

There are a lot of different community-based donations that are dropped off at SCCAP. Religious groups often bring car-loads worth of non-perishable items. Donations run by local churches also bring in small items that the pantry does not typically provide like makeup, coffee, and lotion. I asked Claire, a retired bagger, what those items were when I first saw them on the shelves in the garage. She explained how those items should not be considered luxuries for the families; little things often provide the most joy and those items could change a person's outlook

on their day, month, or year. I asked about menstruation products out of curiosity because they can be so expensive, but Claire said that she had not seen those at the pantry in at least a year. This being ethnographic research, I did not want to insert my opinions too often, if at all, but I wish the pantry was able to provide those kinds of items for the community members who need them.

As mentioned earlier, Community Service Cans are canned goods brought in that reduce probationary hours. Eight cans are the equivalent of one hour of service. It took many weeks, probably up until my last week at the pantry, to realize the importance of the community service cans. A person who I had never seen before approached the front desk. By the 12th week, I thought I had seen just about everyone who would come to the pantry, but this man proved me wrong. Oscar stood with his feet more than shoulder width apart with a large smile under his mask. I could tell because he is the type of person who smiles with their entire face. He announced that he had a donation to make. His happiness was infectious, so I smiled back and asked if they were Community Service Cans, as I had been instructed to ask. He responded by saying that he did not know but he wanted them “to count”. I assumed he meant for his service hours, so I asked Sam to help me. Sam oversaw all donations, where to put them, how to track them for the pantry, and especially, how to get that information back to the appropriate people to log it for the community member. Once Sam met him outside, he assisted him in getting the cans from his car and bringing them inside the SCCAP building from the backdoor. Oscar stuck around a little longer, talking with Sam about his Star Wars themed face mask. About half an hour later, I left for the day and realized he was still there chatting with other families and workers. He had made new connections in that short period of time. I now pull directly from my field notes proper after my period of participant observation on December 6th.

I had a realization about the community service donations today. I thought it was just a way to get probation people to give back to the community but I realized it is also community building. A man dropped off cans today and had a lively, spirited conversation with a few pantry workers. It made me realize that simply coming to the pantry can benefit the community and strengthen people's feelings of responsibility to each other.

This made my heart very warm, and I see SCCAP's ability to bring the community together.

SCCAP prioritizes local engagement and benefiting the greater Gettysburg community. In addition, individual donations are always welcomed as well at the pantry. Gettysburg College clubs, like Greek organizations and sports teams, also donate to SCCAP. I have seen many groups come to the pantry to drop off food. A worker from Servo, the dining center at Gettysburg College, came to the food pantry to ask if they could bring in sealed containers that were never used at the College.

Many people who use the pantry give back to the community by cooking the volunteers and workers meals after they get a bulk supply of one type of food from a pantry giveaway. Giveaways do not happen often, but if there was a bulk donation that is perishable, it will be up for grabs without signing into the pantry. Similarly, a lot of the people with whom I have spoken mentioned their struggles with food insecurity in years past (or presently) and to show their gratitude, they volunteer at the pantry. As mentioned, these are proud people who do not want hand-outs, they just need a little bit of help.

The Gettysburg community has a strong support network for everyone in town. I asked Sam about community projects apart from the pantry and his responses confirmed my trust and belief in the inherent good in people. Many townspeople create small food shelves right next to their mailboxes with food that they do not intend on using, or sometimes homemade items. Sam mentioned that some people put their surplus of fresh eggs, hunted game meat, homegrown

produce, and fresh bread on their shelves for others to take as they need. People leave thank you notes at the home shelves to show their gratitude and dedication to community building.

Other SCCAP Offerings

I learned quickly that SCCAP was much for than the food pantry. It seems apparent that families do not know that they have other resources than just the pantry. SCCAP runs holiday drives that help families during November and December by giving out whole frozen chickens, hams, grocery store gift-cards, and coupons. I assisted in signing people up for the Turkey Tuesday Drive that happened just before Thanksgiving. The Christmas Drive has similar objectives in providing gifts for families to give to their loved ones or children for Christmas.

The SCCAP workers and volunteers work very hard to ensure that families know all their options. Beth still does not think people take full advantage of them though. She said that sometimes food assistance is enough, but others really need all-around help but do not know about it or how to accept it. One program that I know is utilized well is the Gleaning Project. The Gleaning Project is a fresh produce option for all community members that I have found just as important as the food pantry. It provides fruits and vegetables for free, donated from local farms that refuse to sell those items. Either the produce is slightly underripe or slightly overripe, to the point where they cannot sell it, so it becomes a donated item that the Gleaning Project workers pick up weekly (sometimes daily based on what kinds of produce it is). It is projected that 20% of produce harvested is thrown away before it gets to grocery stores; the Gleaning crew reduces food waste (“SCCAP”).

The Gleaning Project is technically available for everyone in Adams County; however, most people only take if they need it. I have found that residents without economic stress do not take from the Gleaning Project. This allows access to fresh, nutritious foods for those who

cannot afford it otherwise. A lot of the Gleaning options are stored in the garage by the main desk, on the shelves and in the large refrigerator. Volunteers at the pantry are urged to say, “take what you think you and your family can use”. There are also breads and grains kept on the garage shelves. Some families just come to the food pantry to look at the Gleaning options.

Interestingly, there is a sign that specifies that the bread is for human consumption, not for pets. However, if there is bread left on the shelves by Friday afternoons, families can take some for their animals. I had never thought about this; if you cannot afford food for the humans in the house, the animals are also going hungry. This was a small detail I noticed very early on in my time at the pantry, but I looked at it many times and thought about it often from then on out.

I formed a close relationship with Justin, the leader of the Gleaning Project. He is a retiree who described himself as “a hunter who doesn’t do a lot of finding”. Justin always asked me about how I was doing and how school was. Given my name, Fiona, he often referenced the movie, *Shrek*, or the TV show, *Shameless* when talking to me. At one point, he even called me “princess”. I did not take it as a sexist remark immediately and I would like to think that it was a tool he used to remember my name (it did take him at least a month), but I suppose dealing with a bit of sexism comes with anthropological research.

As for the SCCAP programs that are not used to their full advantage, Beth described the options in great detail to me. Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) helps mothers provide for their families with a credit card that works similarly to EBT. With this card, families can purchase baby food and formula. WIC is a federal program, but SCCAP provides information to families and helps them sign up for the cards. Those who schedule appointments in the SCCAP office are typically presented with their eligibility options and what programs would work best for them. WIC is a very popular one for families with young children because it can relieve some

stress. The best baby formula brands are often the most expensive, such as Similac. Just because a family is not financially independent, does not mean their family should not get proper nutrition. Weatherization is different program that helps families protect their homes through the changing seasons. SCCAP hires people who will come to fix gutter systems, help re-roof houses, and other structural issues on homes to prevent large scale damages to homes that could displace families. Another beneficial program is rent assistance that helps families, especially during COVID-19 because it covers up to twelve months of backed up rent payments.

Politics

I discussed, rather listened, to the political opinions of many families and SCCAP workers. There was a lot of agreement politically, given the place (rural Pennsylvania) and the age demographic (older retirees) where and with whom I was working. I am a naturally political person and have somewhat strong opinions in the political realm; after all, political science is my minor. Going into this anthropological research project, I knew I needed to leave my opinions at the door and listen openly. I did not want to ruin any of my relationships at the pantry by stating my opinions too aggressively. There were times when Sam would bring up the vaccine and politics with me. He wanted to know how the campus felt about different political issues. I tried to be as informative and honest about those things as I could without sharing my opinions on the topics. However, Sam wanted my thoughts. I shared some of my opinions with him but tried to not let it affect my relationship with him. He was always kind during our talks; we often agreed to disagree.

Religion

I found religion to be much more important in this research project than I had anticipated. In my political conversation with Sam, he also brought up religion many times. He is a very

religious Seventh Day Adventist. He explained that he originally was hesitant to join mainstream religion because he did not like the commercialization of it, but in 2018 he found comfort in it. He never made this correlation, but this was also around this time that Sam filed for bankruptcy. I never found it appropriate to ask if those were related to each other. One day, he asked if I wanted to attend a church session in town. Out of curiosity, I attended two of the sessions from Pastor Godfrey Chundu. I have no intention in becoming a Seventh Day Adventist, but I took interest in something Sam was passionate about, and it enabled me to learn about Sam's life and motivations a little bit deeper. The seminars were fascinating from an anthropological lens.

Religion is a large motivating factor for many SCCAP workers and volunteers. In an interview with Carla, an SCCAP office administrator, she told me that many people learn about SCCAP through their churches. Beth also explained to me that she is very involved in her church and advertises SCCAP programs on her church's message boards. One church-goer drove a homeless man to the pantry so that he could sign up to receive monthly food. Some even offer to let the person live with them until they can get back on their feet. Therefore, an important form of community building is seen through local churches and religious groups.

Conclusion

This participant observation-based ethnographic research project provided me with information about the Gettysburg community and how SCCAP is supporting those who need it. The food pantry and SCCAP do so much for local families and do not get enough credit for all the work they do. Most students at the College know SCCAP exists but most of them use it as a volunteer opportunity to check off their list of requirements for community service hours. I have an on-campus job at Gettysburg College, and it is upsetting to see that Gettysburg College employees need to use the pantry. I have met at least five employees come and talk to me at the

main desk. I hope the recent raise of the College's minimum wage for full-time employees reduces this number. Overall, SCCAP is important to the Gettysburg community, and I feel lucky that I got to be a part of it. It was a very humbling job, and I found a lot of personal value in it.

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