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PARENTS ATTENDING A COMMUNITY COLLEGE: A QUALITATIVE
CASE STUDY**

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FOOD INSECURITY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO ARE PARENTS
ATTENDING A COMMUNITY COLLEGE: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

to the faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

of

THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

at

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

New York

by

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Submitted Date March 24, 2022

Approved Date May 17, 2022

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ABSTRACT

FOOD INSECURITY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO ARE PARENTS ATTENDING A COMMUNITY COLLEGE: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

Deborah C. Harte

Food insecurity has been a prevailing issue among college students for a number of years. Over the past decade, studies have been conducted to determine the prevalence rate of food insecurity on college campuses ((El Zein et al., 2019; Gaines et al., 2014; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018; Patton-Lopez et al., 2014; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018; Riddle et al., 2020), and the impact of food insecurity on academic achievement (Gaines et al., 2014; Gundersen & Ziliak, 2015; Stack & Meredith, 2017; Philips et al., 2018).

Although these studies have involved college students, gaps in the research have led to an incomplete profile of students who are parents that experience food insecurity. These students, not only have the responsibility of caring for themselves but they must be concerned with the well-being of their children. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore college students who are parents' experiences with food insecurity while attending a community college. The study was conducted in an urban New York City public college and utilized data from individual interviews of student-participants and administrator-participants, content analysis of outreach and marketing materials, and observation of the on-campus pantry use by students.

Analysis of the collected data revealed three major findings. First, a lack of financial resources contributed to student parents' inability to provide for their families, and the stress of not being able to provide affected their ability to focus in school.

Second, these parents experienced parental trauma, which was couched in their inability to parent their children effectively at times and created feelings of guilt. Third, in spite of the challenges that food insecurity presented, many of these students used the resources that the college offered as motivation to persevere. The implications of these findings revealed food insecurity affected the student-participants who are parents in ways that, without resources and support it would be very difficult for them to progress and complete school.

DEDICATION

I dedicate the achievement to those who supported me through pray and who sacrificed in an effort to help me complete this doctoral dissertation. This document serves as the culmination of my academic and professional achievements, and I could not have made this journey alone.

To my parents and especially my mother, Dorothy, who walked with grace, courage and strength, I am blessed to have had her as my mother.

To my children, Kenneth, Ashantai, and Brandon, and my 12 grandchildren, whom I love with all of my heart. I hope that you know that the greatest job that I could have ever be asked to perform was to be your mom and grandma. I hope that you continue to seek your purpose in life and use this achievement as a guide.

To my family and friends (especially by bestie, Holly) your words of encouragement carried me through in my time of doubt. I am beyond grateful for your love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am forever grateful to all of the students and administrators who participated in this study. They willingly trusted me with their experiences, thoughts, and opinions in an effort to paint a comprehensive picture of how food insecurity affects students who are parents.

A huge thank you to my dissertation committee members: Dr. Catherine DiMartino, Dr. Ceceilia Parnter, and Dr. Stephen Kotok. Each of you has been very instrumental in my doctoral journey. Dr. DiMartino, as my dissertation mentor, you have not only demonstrated your tremendous knowledge of this process, but you have done so with poise, elegance, and grace. Thank you for your guidance. Your support, encouragement, and passion has been a beacon of light for me in those difficult times. Dr. Parnter, your belief and passion for my topic was evident from the first moment I met you and that gave me encouragement to push forward. I will always be grateful to you for that support. Dr. Kotok, thank you for your kindness and generosity of your time and for being patient with me.

I would also like to thank the staff at DAIL who always made sure that I received the emails and information vital to participating in this program.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of this doctoral cohort. I will forever appreciate your support, shoulder, expertise, and encouragement.

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CHAPTER 1

Over the past decade, research has revealed a disturbing trend that showed that college students are going without food at an alarming rate. The prevalence rate has been as high as 52 percent reported on United States college campuses (El Zein et al., 2019; Gaines et al., 2014; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018; Patton-Lopez et al., 2014; Payne-Sturges et al., 2018; Riddle et al., 2020). Food insecurity has taken on different meanings and consequently it has been defined in different ways. For example, Maroto et al. (2015), defined food insecurity according to the United States Department of Agriculture as experiencing high food security, marginal food security, low food security, or very low food security. Whereas, Cady (2014) defined food insecurity as food insecurity without hunger, food insecurity with hunger, and food insecurity. For this study, the researcher defined food insecurity as “the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or the ability to acquire such foods in socially acceptable ways” (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2015, p.3). The problem of food insecurity is further compounded for college students who are parents. These students, not only have the responsibility of caring for themselves, but they must be concerned with the well-being of their children. Research was conducted to better understand the challenges these students face, and to ascertain their perceptions of support programs in the community college setting, so that programs can be more targeted and serve them better. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore college students who are parents’ experiences with food insecurity while attending a community college.

In a report, Coleman-Jensen, et al. (2019) informed that in 2019, 13.5 million households were food insecure. College students make up a substantial portion of this population. Research conducted by the Wisconsin HOPE Lab found in their survey of students at ten community colleges across the country that 52 percent reported being marginally food insecure (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2015). Among those experiencing food insecurity, 26 percent reported that they ate less than they felt they should, and 22 percent reported being hungry because they did not have enough food to eat. Lack of access to affordable food for college students has a very detrimental impact on student success and students experience disparate outcomes including lower GPA and health issues (Gaines et al., 2014; Gundersen & Ziliak, 2015; Stack & Meredith, 2017; Philips et al., 2018).

One of the major reasons for the initial struggle with food insecurity was the lack of financial resources. In their research, Gaines et al. (2014) reported that beyond the physical and emotional effects of food deprivation, 22 percent of students borrowed money to pay for food. The economic downturn during the coronavirus pandemic has added to the inability to access affordable food. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020) reported that the unemployment rate skyrocketed to over 14 percent and affected a staggering 49.8 million people. Among those who were devastated by the high unemployment rate were single parent household. Parents, who were already struggling to make ends meet, find themselves grappling with surviving on very little that unemployment insurance provided, if they were eligible in the first place to apply. The added responsibility of having to pay rent on a reduced income stream left many students who are parents weighing how to balance their priorities. Stack and Meredith, (2017), documented in their study that single parent families are at high risk of financial hardship,

which may influence psychological well-being. The study indicated that isolation, anxiety, depression, paranoia, and suicidal thoughts are all issues that these parents experience. Participants in the study described a deficit in food, and the need to make sacrifices to ensure that their basic needs were met. In some cases, participants went without food and struggled to pay bills. Further, Pinard et al. (2015) informed that food insecurity generally affected all household members in various ways. For example, depression has been linked to food insecurity, particularly among low-income women possibly because low-income mothers, often single female heads of household, are responding to stressors in the environment associated with the experience of food insecurity.

As is noted by Gundersen and Ziliak (2015), individuals who are food insecure are more likely to experience health issues than those food secure persons. Among the non-senior group, the authors stated that health issues such as hypertension (high blood pressure), diabetes, and hyperlipidemia (high cholesterol) were among the worse outcomes on health examinations. Children growing up in food insecure households do not fare any better than adults do. In fact, they fare worse in some cases. Studies have found that food insecurity is associated with increased risks of some birth defects (Carmichael et al., 2007), anemia (Eicher-Miller, 2009; Skalicky et al., 2006), lower nutrient intakes (Cook et al., 2006); cognitive problems (Howard, 2011); and aggression and anxiety (Whitaker et al., 2006). It was also associated with higher risks of being hospitalized and poorer general health.

Given the dire accounting of the state of affairs related to food insecurity on college campuses, clearly college students who are parents are struggling to provide for

their children as well as to ensure that they and their children's health remain intact. Studies that have interviewed college students have supported this analysis (Carmichael et al., 2007; Eicher-Miller, 2009; Gundersen & Ziliak, 2015; Skalicky et al., 2006). College students who are parents face challenges as a result of food insecurity, such as a lack of social safety nets and financial distress, which become barriers to their education. It is within reason that college students who are parents view community colleges as the place where they can obtain the education and skills sets necessary to break the cycle of poverty and provide a decent living for their families. Dealing with basic issues of survival is not easy. For many, community colleges offer the best opportunity for social mobility.

According to Drury (2003) there are nearly 1,100 community colleges in America, enrolling more than 10 million students annually. Community colleges enroll 44 percent of the undergraduate students and 50 percent of the incoming freshmen. Nearly 47 percent of minority students enroll in these colleges due primarily to their open door policy, accessibility, and the focus on students and teaching. Looking beyond the academic success for students, institutions of higher learning have a responsibility to provide support for students who express their concerns around meeting their basic needs such as food.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of food insecurity among community college students who are parents in a community college setting by conducting interviews with both the student population and administrators of the respective community college. By examining the experiences of food insecurity among

this group of students, the parents' feelings, opinions, and lived experiences will be an integral part in helping institutions to understand the unique needs of these students. Understanding the students' needs will help institutions to develop a comprehensive plan, which would provide support systems that would address barriers to these student's education and better prepare the students for the successful attainment of their goals.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was based on the foundational works of Abraham Maslow's (1943) a theory of human motivation, which deals with satisfying basic needs in human beings. Additionally, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (1848) conflict theory, which is closely aligned with social justice theory concerning equity of resources such as food and economic stability, was used, and John Rawls (1971) a theory of justice, which addresses the problem of distributive justice: the socially just distribution of goods in a society.

Maslow (1943) demonstrated in his theory of human motivation that basic needs are essential for the proper functioning of the body. To this extent he discussed Homeostasis, which refers to the "body's automatic efforts to maintain a constant, normal state of the blood stream" (p. 2). For college students this means that eating nutritious meals on a continuous basis is vital to their success in school.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (1848) conflict theory purports that society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. The key elements of conflict theory rest on a few areas: that there is a competition between groups within society over limited resources, that it is used to maintain inequality and the dominance of the ruling class. Further, and Marx and Engels conflict theory sees society

as divided along the lines of economic class between the proletarian working class and the bourgeois ruling class. Students who are parents are usually in the working class, a population that has often struggled to meet their basic needs primarily because the industry where most parents work, does not compensate adequately enough for them to have a good quality of life.

John Rawls (1971) theory of justice dictated that society should be structured so that the greatest possible amount of liberty is given to its members, limited only by the notion that the liberty of any one member shall not infringe upon that of any other member. Secondly, inequalities, either social or economic, are only to be allowed if the worst off will be better off than they might be under an equal distribution. Finally, if there is such a beneficial inequality, this inequality should not make it harder for those without resources to occupy positions of power, for instance, public office. Students, in their quest to take advantage of the society and just system that Rawls (1971) envisioned, seek degree attainment so as to combat the challenges that they experience. Institutions of higher learning, consequently have an obligation to help those students achieve their goal.

Significance of the Study

Prevailing research described the prevalence of food insecurity among community college students (Breuning et al., 2018; Dubick et al., 2016; Goldrick-Rab, 2018, 2017; Paynes-Sturges et al., 2017). Moreover, studies have shown the relationship between food insecurity and academic achievement (Patton-Lopez et al., 2014; Philips et al., 2018). Additionally, researchers have examined the impact of food insecurity on individual's health (Maynard, et al., 2018).

Separately, studies have been conducted demonstrating the effects of food insecurity on children (Carmichael et al., 2007; Cook et al., 2006; Eicher-Miller, 2009; Howard, 2011; Skalicky et al., 2006; Whitaker et al., 2006). Although no studies have researched the impact of food insecurity on community college students who are parents, some studies have addressed the added responsibility that single parents have who are caring for their children (Pinard et al., 2015; Stack et al., 2017).

In addition to the purpose for the study – to examine the experiences of students who are parents, the study explored decisions made by the institution of higher learning to implement policies and or programs which addressed the basic needs of students who are parents in a community college setting. Interviewing Administrators at the institution helped the researcher to gain insight into the awareness of the problem on the campus and the manner in which food insecurity has been addressed. Notably, the institution’s financial investment in direct services for students can only serve to ensure that the student attains the goal of degree attainment.

As Maslow (1943) noted, if the physiological need is satisfied in an individual, all other needs are achievable. Addressing basic needs, such as food insecurity, help students focus on their academics, which could positively impact student success. As noted by Cady (2014), “food insecurity is a threat to student success on college campuses in the United States. It has the potential to impact academics, wellness, and behavior—all factors that have bearing on student retention and graduation rates (p. 265).” Student success is not only good for the student economic status as it allows the student to become gainfully employed, but it is also great for the economy.

Connection with Social Justice and Vincentian Mission in Education

Institutions of higher learning are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that their students have access to academic avenues that support their educational goal achievement. Equally important is the charge of institutions that students who are identified as being deprived of basic needs, such as food, can receive the services that address those needs. As stated in the mission at St. John's University, "wherever possible, we devote our intellectual and physical resources to search out the causes of poverty and social injustice and to encourage solutions that are adaptable, effective, and concrete" (<https://online.stjohns.edu/about-us/mission>). Single household parents represent a growing body of students who struggle with goal completion because of their added responsibility of caring for their children (Pinard et al., 2015; Stack et al., 2017).

Food insecurity as a human right issue has taken center stage since President Roosevelt addressed the issue in his "Four Freedoms" address in January of 1941. Longo (2015) informed us that President Roosevelt not only advocated for, but adopted the "Economic Bill of Rights" whose premise was that no one can be free unless there is economic security and independence. Food insecurity as a social justice issue will not be solved unless there is a collective agreement on the goal to eliminate poverty and hunger. College students who are parents are an especially vulnerable group as they lack the resources to provide for themselves and the needs of their children adequately.

Research Questions

The study examined the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences, related to food insecurity, of community college students who are parents?

2. What is their perception of the role of community colleges in providing supports for students who are parents experiencing food insecurity?

Design and Methods

The study was a qualitative case study (Stake, 1995) of the experiences of community college students who are parents at an urban community college campus. Stake (1995) stated that a case study allows the researchers to gain in-depth knowledge of a particular process. The intent in conducting this qualitative case study was to understand the complexity of the experiences of the participants. Hearing the participants' stories has informed the suggestions of how to address the students' basic needs. This qualitative case study was conducted from October 2021 to December of 2021. The reason for conducting the study during this time period was that the study can be bounded by one specific time to have a definitive beginning and end to the study. In this study, the researcher interviewed community college students who are parents as well as administrators of student-centered services at an urban community college campus. The researcher also conducted content analysis by reviewing sign in sheets and intake forms of pantry use by the students, marketing strategies such as the use of websites, social media sites, flyers, and emails that informed the students of services that are offered to address basic needs, and observation of the food pantry.

Participants

The participants for this study were chosen from an urban community college setting. The participants were student parents who were currently enrolled at the institution at the time of the study. Students who were chosen were in the caretaking role which is defined as responsible for the full-time care of their children. Additionally,

administrators who are responsible for student-centered services were recruited. There were a total of 19 participants, 17 student-participants and two administrator-participants from the institution. The researcher utilized protocols consisting of open-ended questions for both the students and the administrators during semi-structured, one-on-one interviews. Additionally, the researcher conducted on-site observations of the pantry use at the institution, as well as content analysis.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are used throughout the study:

Food insecurity: the condition assessed in the food security survey and represented in USDA food security reports—is a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food (United States Department of Agriculture, 2020); Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2015).

Low food security: (old label=Food insecurity without hunger): reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake (United States Department of Agriculture, 2020).

Very low food security: (old label=Food insecurity with hunger): reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake (United States Department of Agriculture, 2020).

High food security: (old label=Food security): no reported indications of food-access problems or limitations (United States Department of Agriculture, 2020).

Marginal food security (old label=Food security): one or two reported indications—typically of anxiety over food sufficiency or shortage of food in the house. Little or no

indication of changes in diets or food intake (United States Department of Agriculture, 2020).

Hunger: is an individual-level physiological condition that may result from food insecurity (Cady, 2014; United States Department of Agriculture, 2020).

Basic Needs: the absolute minimum resources necessary for long-term physical well-being (Maslow, 1943).

Underemployed: underemployment occurs when a person does not work full time or takes a job that does not reflect their actual financial needs (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020).

Unemployed: people waiting to start a new job must have actively looked for a job within the last 4 weeks in order to be classified as unemployed (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020).

Caretaker: one that gives physical or emotional care and support; served as *caretaker* to the younger children (Merriam Webster).

Adult learners: students aged 25 and older (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018)

CHAPTER 2

This chapter begins by introducing theoretical framework and continues with the review of research. This section concludes with a discussion of the gaps in the existing research literature, which this study directly addressed.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is from three perspectives which include Abraham Maslow's (1943) a theory of human motivation, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (1848) conflict theory, and John Rawls (1971) a theory of justice.

Food insecurity has a detrimental impact on the human body. It is very difficult to function well and focus when the body is depleted of nutrients. Food insecurity is also caused by the inequities in society. The experiences of food insecurity among students who are parents are impacted by: (a) their physiological needs, (Maslow, 1843); and, (b) social justice issues (Marx & Engels, 1848; Rawls, 1971).

Physiological Needs

Maslow (1943) described the body's physiological need for food, especially in terms of maintaining homeostasis of water, salt, macronutrients, vitamins, minerals, and temperature within the bloodstream. He elaborated that:

Undoubtedly these physiological needs are the most pre-potent of all needs...if all the needs are unsatisfied, and the organism is then dominated by the physiological needs, all other needs may become simply non-existent or be pushed into the background...for consciousness is almost completely preempted by hunger. For the chronically and extremely hungry man...life itself tends to be defined in terms of eating. Anything else will be defined as unimportant. What this means

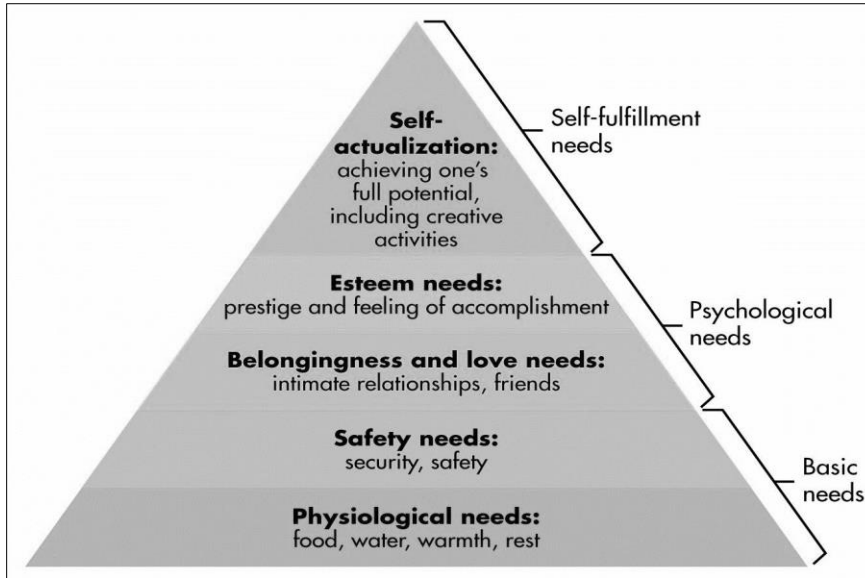
specifically is, that in the human being who is missing everything in life in an extreme fashion, it is most likely that the major motivation would be physiological needs rather than any others. A person who is lacking food, safety, love, and esteem would probably hunger for food more strongly than anything else (p. 3).

The first level of Maslow's pyramid of human needs encompassed securing physiological requirements for breathing, food, water, shelter, clothing, and sleep. For decades, discussions about why some undergraduates leave college without degrees have neglected to consider whether any of these basic functional needs are being met. In instances where students are able to connect to services that help them to meet their basic needs, they oftentimes perform better academically. College students who experience food insecurity usually find it very difficult to focus on their academics which ultimately leads to them not achieving their goal of degree attainment.

As seen in the figure 1, Maslow puts food as one of the most basic of needs for proper human functioning.

Figure 1

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Social Justice Issues

The term social justice has many uses and interpretations, but in its most basic and universal sense, social justice is a philosophical construct, a political theory or system of thought used to determine what mutual obligations flow between the individual and society. In the Manifesto, Marx and Engels (1848) posit that:

in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which it is built up, and from that which alone can be explained the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently the whole history of mankind (since the dissolution of primitive tribal society, holding land in common ownership) has been a history of class struggles, contests between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes; That the history of these

class struggles forms a series of evolutions in which, nowadays, a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class – the proletariat – cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class – the bourgeoisie – without, at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinction, and class struggles (p. 8).

Marx and Engels (1848) argued that changes in the modern industries with the introduction of machinery have created conditions that have negatively impacted the working class. They write “the various interests and conditions of life within the ranks of the proletariat are more and more equalized, in proportion as machinery obliterates all distinctions of labor, and nearly everywhere reduces wages to the same low level (p. 19). This reduction in earning capacity continued to these modern times. The implication being that if one cannot earn a livable wage, it is almost impossible to meet their basic needs such as food.

According to Kalil and Ryan (2010):

Mothers in fragile families make ends meet in many ways. Public programs, particularly those that provide in-kind assistance, do successfully lessen economic hardship in fragile families. Single mothers also turn to private sources of support—friends, family, boyfriends—for cash and in-kind assistance. But though these private safety nets are essential to many mothers’ economic survival, private safety nets are not always consistent and dependable. Thus, assistance from private sources may not fundamentally improve mothers’ economic circumstances (p. 39).

In the final analysis, students who are parents need to have consistent, sustainable ways in which they can provide for themselves and their children.

In his book, *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls (1971) proposed two principles of justice that should be applied to the basic structure of a well-ordered society. He suggested that:

First, each person is to have equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty of others. Second, social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all (60).

In further examination of the second principle, Rawls specifically spoke of the distribution of income and wealth. He stated that, "while the distribution of wealth and income need not be equal, it must be to everyone's advantage..." (p. 61). Further, Rawls (1971) posited that the principle of fairness dictated that "a person is required to do his part as defined by the rules of an institution when two conditions are met: first, the institution is just (or fair)..." (p.111). To the point of fairness as an operational principle of an institution, colleges are bound by the duty to provide care in an equitable fashion to their students. Students who experience barriers to their education in the form of food insecurity need to have the confidence that they will be provided with resources by their institutions to address those barriers.

In summary, the combination of these theoretical frameworks: Maslow's (1943) a theory of human motivation, Marx and Engels (1848) conflict theory, and John Rawls (1971) a theory of justice, converge under one basic understanding – that all human beings have basic needs that must be satisfied and that it is a human rights issue that those basic needs are addressed. As it related to college students who experience food

insecurity, these theories provided the framework by which the study had been guided to examine and understand the experiences of students who are parents suffering from food insecurity. The use of these theories have supported the notion that in order that students are academically successful, they require two concepts to be in sync: the ability to have access, through a just society, to affordable food, and the consumption of nutritionally balanced meals.

Review of Related Literature

The research reviewed came from peer-reviewed journals, national reports, articles, educational textbooks, and websites. The findings from the literature have been organized into the following three themes: 1) The prevalence and impact of food insecurity among community college students, 2) The experiences of adult learners in colleges, and 3) The role of community colleges in addressing needs for college students who are food insecure.

Prevalence of Food Insecurity among Community College Students

Examining the prevalence of food insecurity among community college students is important to the researcher's study as the establishment of the prevalence provided the base for the researcher's study. Studies have shown that community college students struggle with food insecurity at an alarming rate and the issue of food insecurity has escalated over the past ten years (Blagg, et al., 2017; Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2018; Freudenberg et al., 2011; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2015; Vasquez et al., 2019).

Blagg et al. (2017), conducted a national study to assess food insecurity among America's college students. The study examined food insecurity among college students

in both two-year and four-year institutions. The researchers used the December Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS, 2015) as it was the source for the official measure of food insecurity, as reported by the US Department of Agriculture. The survey measure was based on self-assessed responses to a series of 18 questions.

The researchers reported that the levels of food insecurity among households with students in four-year colleges and vocational education were 11.2 and 13.5 percent respectively, in 2015. These rates were largely similar to national levels. However, households with students enrolled in two-year colleges were more likely to be food insecure in the period after the 2008 recession, with average rates of food insecurity of 21.2 percent during 2008–2014. Estimated rates were even higher among some groups. For example, African American students in two-year colleges had a food insecurity rate of 28 percent.

Broton and Goldrick-Rab (2018), conducted one of the largest studies on food and housing insecurity among undergraduates, examining, among other issues, the prevalence of food insecurity. The authors used data from four survey studies, conducted by the Wisconsin HOPE Lab representing the experiences of more than 30,000 two- and 4-year college students attending 121 colleges and universities across 26 states. The authors found that among community college students, approximately half were food insecure, and recent estimates by Broton and Goldrick-Rab (2018) suggested that at least 20 percent of two-year college students have very low levels of food security which is defined as multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake. Additionally, at least one-third of two-year students were housing insecure, including up to 14 percent who were homeless, whereas between 11 percent and 19 percent of 4-year

students were housing insecure. Most of these students work and receive financial aid, but only a fraction receive public or private assistance to help make ends meet.

Freudenberg et al. (2011), examined the issue of food insecurity specifically among City University of New York (CUNY) college students, located in the largest urban center in the country. The study utilized a survey instrument which was conducted in the summer and fall of 2010 with two samples of CUNY undergraduate students. In the first survey, a little over 1000 students responded and over 1100 students responded in the second survey. The survey questions asked students about the experiences with food insecurity, housing instability, and psychological problems in the last 12 months. The findings indicated that of a sample population of students from all CUNY schools, 39 percent identified as being food insecure. As of 2010, there were approximately 250,000 students enrolled in the CUNY system and 100,000 of them were identified as being food insecure. In addition, 45 percent of students worried about becoming food insecure, and 22 percent said they had felt hungry recently because of a lack of adequate food. Among those receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, 63 percent of current recipients said they were food insecure despite this benefit.

To gain an understanding of food insecurity, Goldrick-Rab et al. (2015), conducted a study to assess the food and housing insecurity among undergraduates. A survey was distributed to the students of the community colleges. The survey was designed to capture information regarding the food and housing needs, and student mental health, which co-varies with food and housing insecurity. Although 48,000 students were recruited from the enrolled list of students at the institution, the final survey response rate was nine percent or over 4,000 students at 10 community colleges.

The findings indicate that the most prevalent challenge facing community college students appeared to be their ability to eat balanced meals, which research suggested may affect their cognitive functioning. In addition, 39 percent of students said that the food they bought did not last and they did not have sufficient money to purchase more. Twenty-eight percent cut the size of their meals or skipped meals at least once, and 22 percent did so on at least three days in the last 30 days. More than one in four respondents (26 percent) ate less than they felt they should, and 22 percent said that they had gone hungry due to lack of money. The data confirms a strong relationship between food insecurity and mental health problems. More than half (55 percent) of respondents indicated very low levels of food security also report symptoms of probable clinical depression, 52 percent report severe levels of anxiety, 16 percent report symptoms of a probable eating disorder, and 20 percent report serious thoughts of suicide in the past year.

Goldrick-Rab et al. (2017) conducted a study to examine the prevalence of food and housing insecurity among community college students nationally. The study included more than 33,000 students at 70 community colleges in 24 states. The authors created an online survey instrument and asked colleges to administer it at their schools. The survey was sent to all students enrolled in that semester.

The findings revealed several important data about these community college students, which, although it cannot be generalized, offer insight into the experiences of community college students who experience food insecurity. For example, the findings indicate that 67 percent of students were food insecure and of those experiencing food insecurity, 33 percent experienced very low levels of food insecurity. Moreover, more

than five percent of the respondents were unemployed. Further, 28 percent of students in this study had children, and of those 63 percent were food insecure and barely five percent received any childcare assistance. Community colleges with greater proportions of students of color and those receiving the Pell Grant were more likely to have higher rates of food insecurity.

Vasquez et al. (2019), conducted their study to focus on the experiences of men of color in community college and the challenges that they experience with meeting their essential needs in order to succeed. Data were collected via focus groups that were conducted at one of four community colleges in the Western region of the United States. The qualitative study sought to better understand the lived experiences of male students of color in community college. The findings revealed three interrelated thematic categories: food instability, unstable living conditions, and financial strains while balancing their responsibilities as students and primary caretakers. The findings also illustrated the role that institutions played in helping students temporarily cope with hunger. Paramount among the information that was captured was the revelation that lack of finances greatly contributed to the inability to access food on a daily basis. In the instances where some participants had dependents, they tended to their children's needs before their own. This often meant sacrificing their own physical and mental health for the well-being of their family members. One of the participants shared, "I tend to not worry about myself as far as eating, I make sure that my son has enough, more than myself, so beginning of the semester usually money is very tight" (p. 300).

In summary, the preceding studies have presented data that demonstrated that the prevalence of food insecurity among community college students have been a constant

threat to students achieving their academic goals. Some of the threats, the connection to mental health issues and health concerns, have been highlighted and presents cause for continued exploration. The study conducted explored the experiences of student parents to ascertain the impact of food insecurity on their academic success.

The Experiences of Adult Learners in College

Low-income adults, dislocated workers, and other non-traditional learners often face a unique set of circumstances upon entry into college programs. The challenge of balancing the demands of their personal lives with the demands of their coursework can feel overwhelming. Many non-traditional learners have children or parents they care for and are working full or part time in low-wage, low-skilled jobs. Adding to this, most are eligible for financial aid only if they are taking six or more credits. Students enrolled in noncredit classes that fall outside approved programs of study are not eligible for aid at all (Buckwalter & Togila, 2019). Typically, adult learners are defined as students aged 25 and older. They make up nearly half of all students currently enrolled in colleges and universities according to the National Center for Education Statistics, 2018. Looking at undergraduate students alone, the Lumina Foundation reports that about 37 percent are older than 25, more than 25 percent are raising children, and about 58 percent work while enrolled in college. Most of these students are single female parents. In 2016, households with children headed by a single woman (31.6 percent) had the highest rate of food insecurity in the U. S. (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2017). As a result of the myriad responsibilities, many of adult learners struggle to make ends meet and as a result suffer from food insecurity at an alarming rate. The experiences of food insecurity has a devastating impact on their academic success (Maroto et al. 2014; Patton-Lopez et al.,

2014; Philips et al., 2018) as well as their physical and mental health (Maynard, et al. 2018).

Impact on Academics. To examine the connection between food insecurity and student achievement, Maroto et al. (2014), employed a study that used a cross-sectional, intercept survey designed to assess the food security status. A convenience sample of 301 students over the age of 18 attending two different community colleges in Maryland were surveyed for the study. The survey contained questions about student GPA; self-perceived energy and concentration levels; and demographics (gender, age, race/ethnicity, living situation, and income). The study found that not only were 56 percent students identified as food insecure, but these students also had a lower GPA (2.0-2.49) than those peers who did not identify problems with obtaining food. This study suggested some causation between being food insecure and success within a community college setting. The authors wrote, “If in fact, food insecurity is a hindrance to optimal academic performance, students’ struggles with food might also be impacting college retention and completion rates” (p. 523).

Patton-Lopez et al. (2014), conducted a study to address the gap in the literature by analyzing the prevalence of food insecurity and identify correlates of food insecurity among students attending a rural university in Oregon. The study used a cross-sectional non-probability web-based 40-item survey which was distributed via e-mail to all 5,438 students attending the university. A total of 354 students completed the survey. The findings revealed that food insecurity affected 59 percent of students. Twenty-seven percent of those students participated in food assistance programs, such as food pantries and soup kitchens and income less than \$15,000 was the strongest correlate of food

insecurity among this sample of students. Moreover, 40 percent of the students surveyed who reported being food insecure were found to have a GPA less than 3.0.

Philips et al., 2018, distributed an online survey to examine student financial wellness with a focus on basic needs of the students and whether students were able to meet that need on a regular basis. A random sample of 5,000 currently enrolled undergraduate students of all class ranks at a large, urban, public, mid-western university in November 2014 were surveyed. The findings indicated that African American students were more likely to be food insecure than students of other races or ethnicities ($p < 0.05$). First generation students, non-traditionally aged students (24 or older), more advanced students, students carrying current debt, students who were financially independent, students with children, and off-campus residents were more likely to be food insecure (all $p < 0.01$). Students who were financially responsible for other(s) (e.g., spouse, children) had 4.89 times greater odds of being food insecure. Students experiencing food insecurity had 3.42 times greater odds of reporting neglecting their academic studies due to the money they owed than food secure students. Food insecurity is associated with lower GPAs, such that being food insecure was associated with a 0.17 points lower GPA than food secure students.

Correlates of Food Insecurity. In relation to the physical and mental health of adult learners, Maynard, et al. (2018), qualitative study focused on surveying students to investigate perceptions and experiences of food insecurity, including perceived contributing factors, strategies for managing food shortages, and perceived implications for health and academic success. Recruitment and data collection were conducted between November 2015 and May 2016 at the University of Waterloo. Students were

recruited using flyers posted on campus and distributed at the campus food bank. The flyers included a link to an online screening questionnaire. In total, 128 students completed the online screening questionnaire and 52 were eligible to participate. Participants completed a single semi-structured interview. The findings informed that mental health implications described during the interviews predominantly included feelings of anxiety and worry about the food supply; these worries existed on top of the stress they already experienced due to school responsibilities. Emma described the experience as “stress plus stress” and explained, “I got so many things to do on my to do list, and I still need to worry about my food.” Kelly explained the impact of relying on poor quality foods, “you start a downward spiral, right? ’Cause you’re stressed out...then you run out of more money, and then you don’t feel good ’cause you’re eating bad food.” Most participants reported their general health and mental health as “good” or “very good” (10 and 11, respectively). However, the majority either reported their physical health as “fair” (6) or “poor” (3). Most students (12) reported that their average day was “a bit stressful” or “quite stressful.”

The preceding studies have demonstrated that adult learners who have the added stressors of caring for others, such as their children, do not do well academically. Usually, as a result of experiencing food insecurity, their GPA is lower and their physical and mental health suffer.

The Role of Community Colleges in Addressing Basic Needs for College Students

Several researchers in the area of food insecurity have hypothesized that the reason for higher food insecurity among undergraduates than the general population is the lack of a social safety net for students (Carr, et al., 2020; El Zein, et al., 2019; Hickey, et

al., 2019; Twill, et al., 2016;). These positions and studies have highlighted the unique position that community colleges are placed in to provide services for students who experience food insecurity. Many institutions have opted to open food pantries and provide food vouchers to address the issue of food insecurity, yet others have provided assistance to students to access government programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Carr, et al. (2020), used university institutional records to conduct analyses of program utilization among 3,726 students from 2012 to 2017 and tracked longitudinally some basic student outcomes. Data from the internal service provider included all services provided between fall quarter 2012 and fall quarter 2017. This yielded 21 quarters (including summer) of program utilization data. Student enrollment data was extended through spring of 2018 in order to assess subsequent retention of students who used the services. The authors relied on longitudinal data to provide an important detailed description of how the program was being used and by whom, how often students return for services, and whether they continue at the university. The five most common student needs were financial hardship, general assistance, food insecurity, mental health, and medical issues.

The findings indicated that between fall 2012 and fall 2017, 48,440 undergraduate and graduate students were enrolled in the university for at least one quarter, and 3,726 of them (7.7 percent) had used the support services at some point. The program services increased dramatically over this 5-year period, with the program serving fewer than 100 students per quarter for the first year and more than 800 in fall of 2017. The authors

acknowledged that the ongoing growth of the program could be due to increased awareness of the program but may also be due to increased need. Among the 3,726 students who used this support program, there were 5,917 visits. Students received a combined 19,799 different supports. Some of these supports were offered directly by the program social workers and others were provided through referrals to other campus offices. The most common supports included assistance with financial aid, housing office referral, clinical health referral, tutoring referral, pantry bags, and grocery store card. The authors stressed the importance of awareness of services that addressed food insecurity. They said, “although very few students (49) expressed interest in CalFresh (food supplemental program) during their intake, a much larger share (507) signed up for the program after being informed about it during a visit or workshop, demonstrating the importance of raising awareness for this program” (p.5). It is not surprising that the one group that stood out in terms of retention is students who enrolled in CalFresh. They were consistently retained at higher rates than other program services students, and in many cases these students were retained at rates better or equivalent to the campus average. Whereas the campus retained 92.1 percent of all first to the second year, 93.1 percent of all first CalFresh enrollees were retained to their second year. Likewise, 93.5 percent of all students who enrolled in CalFresh in their second year were retained to their third, and 95.2 percent of all students who enrolled in CalFresh in their third year were retained to their fourth.

Moreover, El Zein, et al. (2019), conducted a cross-sectional study among 855 first-year students across eight U.S. universities to determine a number of factors, including food insecurity and to get a sense of how many students were aware of campus

pantry. The food security status was assessed using the U.S. Department of Agriculture Adult Food Security Survey Module. Participants completed questions related to meal plan enrollment and utilization of on-campus food pantries. Of the participating students, 19 percent were food-insecure, and an additional 25.3 percent were at risk of food insecurity. Students were asked to report whether a campus-based food pantry existed on their campus. Subsequent analysis of the awareness of the food pantry was assessed by calculating the number of students affirming the existence of a food pantry on their campuses when a food pantry was operating at the time of the assessment. For those affirming that their school had a food pantry, they were asked whether they utilize the pantry to obtain food. The preference for the pantry location was assessed. The three response options included ‘in the center of the campus’, ‘in the center of the campus and hidden’ and ‘on the outskirts of campus. Finally, while half of the students, 56.4 percent, with an on-campus pantry were aware of its existence, only 22.2 percent of food-insecure students endorsed utilizing the pantry for food acquisition.

Further, Hickey, et al. 2019, conducted a cross-sectional study to examine perceived hunger, which may result from food insecurity, and its effect on academic and athletic performance in students on a liberal arts college campus in New Hampshire. The study also examined how students compensate for hunger and their preferences for different types of resources to address hunger perceived. A mixed-method approach was utilized to collect data and allow for the triangulation of the results. Research Assistants visited classes, after obtaining permission, to administer the survey regarding hunger to 380 students. Ultimately, 371 students completed the survey in spring of the 2018 semester. According to the authors:

The survey was filled out while the research assistants were in the classroom and could answer questions, and the research assistants stayed until all students completed the survey. No student was excluded from taking the survey, and each student was asked to complete the survey only one time. There were no instances where the survey was filled out in a non-face-to-face manner (p. 2).

The survey questioned students about their awareness of different resources [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), local community kitchens], which type of resource they would rather use, and whether there was stigma associated with any of these resources. The results indicate that students perceived that hunger affected their ability to perform academically and athletically. When asked the survey question “has hunger caused you not to perform as well in a class as you otherwise could have?” 36.4 percent of students somewhat or strongly agreed. Thirty-six percent of students with meal plans and 37 percent without meal plans also indicated that they somewhat or strongly agreed with this question. Furthermore, 39 percent of first-year students, on required, unlimited meal plans, responded that they somewhat or strongly agreed that hunger affected their academic performance. When students were asked regarding willingness to utilize resources, they were more likely to opt for on-campus resources. A higher percentage of students reported that they would possibly use, likely use, or definitely use on-campus resources over SNAP, hot meals at local community meal programs, or off-campus food pantries.

According to Twill, et al. (2016), faculty and staff from a university in southwestern Ohio formed a partnership and opened a campus food pantry to serve

enrolled students. To determine that a food pantry was needed on campus, a preliminary survey was done to assess food insecurity experienced by enrolled college students. A convenience sample of students from student government, the honors program, an English 101 course, and social work majors were asked to fill out an online questionnaire about the need for a pantry on campus. Nearly 150 students responded. Forty-eight percent of respondents had experienced food insecurity as a student, whereas 64 percent knew of a friend or classmate who had. Ninety percent agreed or strongly agreed the campus had students experiencing food insecurity. When asked about future patronage if the campus had a pantry, 60 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they would use the pantry if they needed to, and nearly all, 94 percent, would refer others. During the first 25 months of pantry operation, there were 870 records of pantry usage. Of those 870 visits, 51 percent were repeat visits.

As indicated by the previous studies, on campus resources offered to students have a great impact on students who are food insecure. Community colleges have a role in identifying barriers and addressing those barriers with resources that will help students to succeed. But even with the encouragement to open food pantries, administrators must content with the barriers for use. El Zein et al. found in their study that, the main impediments to using the food pantry were social stigma and embarrassment (36.8 percent), insufficient information on how the program works and what determines eligibility (33.8 percent), self-identity, or the feeling that the food pantry was not for them (17.6 percent), and inconvenient hours of operation (11.8 percent). Half of those reporting social stigma, insufficient information, and inconvenient hours as barriers reported being food insecure (p. 9). The proposed study will target experiences from

students in relation to use of resources on the campus and the benefits that students receive through structured questions.

Conclusion: Gaps in the Literature

Findings from the literature review provided critical insight into the experiences of college students. Although some research on students facing stressful life events, such as food insecurity, included community college, overall the literature on students who are parents attending a community college and experiencing food insecurity, was minimal. Students who are parents who attend community college are more likely to be older, more likely to work laborious jobs to provide for dependents, and are more likely to enroll part-time (Vasquez, et al., 2019). Other characteristics that impede students who are parents to succeed are due to external forces and responsibilities that create barriers for engaging with faculty members, attending office hours, and participating in extracurricular activities or student-based organizations. The study gathered data which provided a deeper lens into challenges that impede the academic success for students who are parents by shedding light into vulnerable situations that are often overlooked.

Moreover, in reviewing the literature, it became very clear that an abundance of research has been conducted in the area of prevalence of food insecurity among students on the college campuses. There did not appear to be as much research conducted on community college students who are parents and their unique circumstances. The literature selected for inclusion of the literature reviewed met the criterion set by the researcher. The inclusion criterion mostly centered on students attending community college who experienced food insecurity. Additionally, the methodology used in many of

the studies was applicable to the study. In conducting a qualitative study, the researcher's plan was to use existing data sets to learn how the relationship of food insecurity impacted college students who experience food insecurity. This aspect was conducted using individual interviews, content analysis, and observations. The intent for focusing on community college has to do with: 1) access to the sample population; and, 2) most of the studies that have been done in regards to food insecurity has been on college students as a whole and not specific to the sample population. The researcher made every effort to exclude literature on studies that were conducted solely at four-year institutions.

CHAPTER 3

This chapter aims to provide information about the methods and procedures for data collection and analysis for this study. This study was a qualitative case study (Stake, 1995) with the purpose of examining the experiences of college students who are parents at a community college that experience food insecurity. The study was bounded by place and time as it took place at a community college from October 2021 to December 2021. The researcher chose a case study because it allowed the researcher to gain in-depth knowledge from the participants and used multiple methods of data collection. Further, Stake posited that case studies allow that “there will be important coordination between the individual studies” (p. 3), and “opportunity to learn is of primary importance” (p. 6). Stake (1995) stated that the case researcher “recognizes and substantiates new meanings. Whoever is a researcher has recognized a problem, a puzzlement, and studies it, hoping to connect it better with known things” (p. 97). The researcher collected the qualitative data through individual student-participant and individual administrator-participant interviews, observation of the food pantry on the study site, and content analysis of documents related to the service provision and notification of services to the students. The study's qualitative research approach is detailed in this chapter along with the methods and procedures for data collection, coding, and analysis. The data collection and analysis identified in this chapter provide the basis for the findings and conclusions detailed in Chapter 5 of this study.

Methods and Procedures

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study.

1. What are the experiences, related to food insecurity, of community college students who are parents?
2. What is their perception of the role of community colleges in providing supports for students experiencing food insecurity?

Setting

The study was conducted at an urban community college: Culper Community College (CCC). The name has been changed to protect the confidentiality of the participants. This community college was deliberately selected for this study because it was best suited for the study of college students who are parents in a community college setting.

Mukigi and Brown (2018) inform us that “there are populations that are disproportionately affected by food insecurity and these include: Black and Hispanic Households (25.1% and 26.2%), low income households with income below 185.0% of the federal poverty guidelines (34.5%) and single-female households with children (36.8%)” (p. 128). The site was chosen because the demographic and socio-economic status of the students fit the profile articulated in the aforementioned study. The site was also chosen because it is located within the urban community of New York City and is easily accessible. Further, the site was chosen because of the unique opportunity to conduct a purposive sampling as this site enrolls students who are disproportionately

affected by food insecurity. Etikan et.al. (2016), indicated that "purposive sampling technique is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses" (p. 2).

The Culper Community College (CCC) is an urban community college located in New York City. The total number of students for the fall 2019 semester was 25,500. The student population is reflective of the population that is most disproportionately affected by food insecurity. For example, they are mostly females and students of color. In this particular institution, the student breakdown into the following major groups: 6,567 first-time freshman, 13,900 continuing students, 1,641 readmitted students, and 1,848 transfer students (Office of Effectiveness and Analytics, 2019). Table 1 illustrates the enrollment data for Culper Community College.

Table 1

Fall 2019 Enrollment Data at Culper Community College

Ethnicity	Number of Students	Percentage
Asian	3,060	12%
Black or African American	6,630	26%
Hispanic/Latino	11,220	44%
White	2,550	10%
Two or more races	510	2%
Non-resident Alien	1,530	6%
Total	25,500	100%
Females	14,535	57%
Males	10,965	43%
24 years and under	18,360	72%
25 and older	7,140	28%
Full time status	17,850	70%
Part time status	7,650	30%

As indicated by CCC, a review of the demographic data revealed that 78 percent of students were fully eligible for Federal Assistance (Pell) and 59 percent were eligible

for State Aid (TAP). Students who are eligible for the maximum in financial aid must have a family income at or below at the poverty line ((NCES, fall 2019). The median income of the student population is \$20,000 a year. The community in which this college resides consists of 17,134 residents with 50 percent males and 50 percent females. The ethnic breakdown of the residents are: white at 78 percent, Asian at 10 percent, Hispanic at 5 percent, and African American at 2 percent. The Median income is \$210,069 a year with 64 percent of the households making \$150,000 a year (NICHE, n.d.). The students who attend this college commute from other communities.

Participants

The participants for this study included 17 students who were parents and two administrators from an urban community college. All of the student- participants were enrolled at the institution at the time of the study. This study used purposeful and deliberate sampling to select the urban community college and the participants. The reason for this purposive sampling is the easy access to the research site and the professional interaction between the participants and the researcher. Of purposive sampling, Creswell and Poth (2018), stated, "it is a purposeful sample that will intentionally sample a group of people that can best inform the researcher about the research problem under examination" (p. 148). Moreover, Etikan et al., (2016) pointed out that this technique allows the researcher to "decide what needs to be known and sets out to find the people who are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge and experience" (p. 2). The sample student participants represented age, gender, marital status, number of children and age of children (Table 2). The sample administrator-

participants represented the age, gender, marital status, number of children, age of children, and years of experience. Table 2 is a description of the participants.

Table 2

Description of Participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Marital Status	# Children	Age of Children	Years of Experience
Students						
Mary	26	Female	Single	2	2 and 4	
Amera	34	Female	Married	2	8 and 6	
Betty	34	Female	Single	1	6	
Barbara	43	Female	Separated	2	11 and 7	
Shannon	26	Female	Married	2	11 and 1	
Brittany	32	Female	Single	2	13 and 10	
Edith	32	Female	Single	3	12, 8, 2	
June	35	Female	Single	2	17 and 2	
April	33	Female	Single	2	7, 1 mth	
Joanna	46	Female	Single	1	17	
Lola	32	Female	Married	2	7 and 5	
Dana	31	Female	Single	1	15	
Shirley	39	Female	Single	1	3	
Chyna	42	Female	Married	1	16	
Lauren	26	Female	Single	2	5 and 3	
Farah	25	Female	Single	2	6 and 2	
Jody	30	Female	Married	2	4, 8 mths	
Administrators						
Judy	60	Female	Married	0		20
Jessica	55	Female	Married	1	24	3

The researcher used several modes of communication to recruit the students. For example, with approval from the institution’s administrators, flyers were placed on bulletin boards around the campus. Additionally, the researcher worked with the administration to send electronic mail (Appendix D) to students who were enrolled in the fall 2019 and ongoing semesters along with the informed consent and flyer (Appendix C and Appendix E). Student-participants who were in a caretaking role, responsible for the

full time care of their children, and who expressed interest in participating in the study, were chosen to participate. Additionally, administrators who were responsible for student-centered services were recruited. All participants took part in either student one-on-one, semi-structured interviews or administrator one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. The interviews were utilized in order to provide more depth regarding themes that emerged out of the initial rounds of coding and data analysis.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews, observation, and content analysis were the main sources of data collection. Qualitative methods were utilized in this study because qualitative techniques allow for the exploration of a topic concept through the use of detailed information and are most appropriate for answering "how" and "what" research questions (Creswell, 2013). Through the interviews, the researcher learned about food insecurity experiences for college students who are parents at Culper Community College. Table 3 illustrates the data collection methods.

Table 3*Data Collection Methods to Research Questions*

Questions	Interviews with students	Interviews with administrators	Content Analysis	Observations
What are the experiences, related to food insecurity, of community college students who are parents?	Open-ended questions, in a semi-structure manner so as to obtain information about their experiences regarding food insecurity	Open-ended questions, in a semi-structured manner to obtain information about their knowledge of food insecurity on the campus		Observe students use of the on-site pantry. Reflect on location of pantry, distribution of pantry bags, students' non-verbal communication.
What is their perception of the role of community colleges in providing supports for students experiencing food insecurity?	Open-ended questions, in a semi-structure manner so as to obtain information about their perception of services provided by the institution	Open-ended questions, in a semi-structure manner to obtain information about the supports that are provided	Review emails, websites, social media, and marketing material to gain information about how services are marketed.	

Individual Interviews

Seventeen student-participants and two administrator-participants' interviews were conducted. Individual interviews were chosen to allow the researcher to have an "understanding of the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of their experience" (Seidman, 2019, p. 9). The interviews allowed for the deeper examination of the students' experiences with food insecurity. The researcher followed a

semi-structured protocol that included major questions, sub-questions, and follow-up questions to obtain detailed and in-depth answers (Seidman, 2019). Semi-structured interviews are often used in case studies and allows the researcher to explore issues and topics that emerge, during the interview, with follow-up questions and immediate clarification (Seidman, 2019). Moreover, Stake, (1995), posited that “the design of all research requires conceptual organization, ideas to express needed understanding, conceptual bridges from what is already known, cognitive structures to guide data gathering, and outlines for presenting interpretations to others” (p. 15). Individual interviews took place from October 2021 to December 2021. Because of the current health crisis in which we are operating, it was conceivable that face-face interviews would present a hardship. As a result, the researcher conducted the interviews remotely through a Video-conferencing platform. Interviews were approximately one hour in duration and permission was obtained to audiotape the interviews for easy transcription. Working with participants who are parents allowed the researcher to analyze the experiences of students in relation to food insecurity.

Content Analysis

The researcher also conducted content analysis related to the print documents and other electronic communication that were retrieved as these documents provided background and context to the study. Bryman (2017) stated that qualitative content analysis is "probably the most prevalent approach to the qualitative analysis of documents" and that it "comprises a searching-out of underlying themes in the materials being analyzed" (p. 392). More specifically, he defined qualitative content analysis in the following way:

An approach to documents that emphasizes the role of the investigator in the construction of the meaning of and in texts. There is an emphasis on allowing categories to emerge out of data and on recognizing the significance for understanding the meaning of the context in which an item being analyzed (and the categories derived from it) appeared (Bryman, 2017).

The content analysis provided the researcher a method for describing and interpreting the documentation pertaining to the research topic. The documents that were used as the source of data collection, helped to shape and tweak the questions and triangulate the data. Documents added another dimension to the study by clarifying information or raising additional questions. Documents, such as sign in sheets for the pantries, food distribution forms, and intake forms, completed within a specific timeframe, were analyzed to examine the experience of the participants within the study. The website of the college was examined as well as electronic media, to give the researcher a sense of how services were marketed to the students in the study via websites and social media sites. According to Bowen (2009), "document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic. Document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge" (p. 2). The collection of the documents were completed from October 2021 to December 2021.

Observation

The researcher conducted observation of the food pantry on the research site for the purpose of understanding how students used the services. The researcher observed students using the pantry from October 2021 to December 2021. The observation was

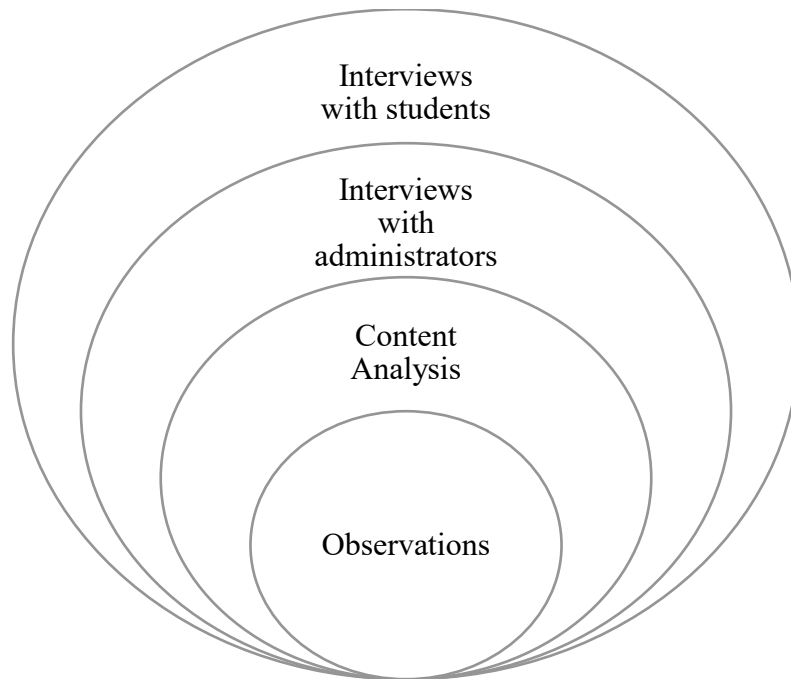
done in person on three occasions for one hour duration, adhering to all safety precautions as a result of the pandemic, which include social distancing rules. The researcher observed the pantry use at varying times of operation to gain information about the optimal time of distribution, the staffing of the site, and the confidentiality of the site. The researcher observed the non-verbal communication of the participants. Kawulich (2005) stated that "observation methods are useful to researchers in a variety of ways. They provide researchers with ways to check for nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and check for how much time is spent on various activities" (p. 3). However, Kawulich (2005) noted that "a researcher must understand how his/her gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and theoretical approach may affect observation, analysis, and interpretation" (p. 5).

During the observation, the researcher took notes of what was occurring. The field notes were used as a support for the participant interviews. Sutton & Austin (2015) stated that "field notes allow the researcher to maintain and comment upon impressions, environmental contexts, behaviors, and nonverbal cues that may not be adequately captured through the audio-recording" (p. 2). The primary purpose for the use of observation was to increase the validity of the study.

Figure 2 demonstrates the relationship of data collection methods. The collection of data was done using three methods: audio-recorded interviews with students and administrators, review of outreach and marketing documents, and observation of the food pantry at the study site. These three methods allowed the researcher to examine data and to determine how the information was connected.

Figure 2

Relationship among Data Collection Methods



Trustworthiness of the Design

Triangulation, where multiple sources of data are utilized to substantiate claims, were used in the data analysis portion of this study in order to ensure trustworthiness (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 1995). According to Bowen (2009), “by triangulating data, the researcher attempts to provide a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility. By examining information collected through different methods, the researcher can corroborate findings across data sets and thus reduce the impact of potential biases that can exist in a single study" (p. 28). The researcher conducted interviews with college students who are parents and administrators who supervise student-focused services, observed students utilizing the food pantries on the site, as well as conduct a systematic review of documents.

Member checking, where a copy of the interview transcripts were given to each respective participant so that they can review the transcripts, was conducted after the transcript of each individual participant interview. This was done so that each participant had an opportunity to review what was said, add more information if they wanted to, and edit what was said (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Research Ethics

After receiving approval from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and approval to conduct the participant study from the study site, electronic correspondence was sent to volunteer participants to recruit for the study. Participants who were interested were contacted and received an informed consent. Prior to conducting interviews, the researcher ensured that the participants fully understood the nature of the study. Kawulich (2005) stated, "when the researcher meets community members for the first time, he/she should be sure to inform them of the purpose for being there, sharing sufficient information with them about the research topic that their questions about the research and the researcher's presence there are put to rest" (p. 9). All of the participants were requested to sign a consent form, requesting their consent to record the conversations via Video-conferencing and transcribing using the *REV* Recorder recording system. The researcher assured the participants that they would be given a pseudonym in order to maintain confidentiality. Kawulich (2005) pointed out that "Another ethical responsibility is to preserve the anonymity of the participants in the final write-up and in field notes to prevent their identification, should the field notes be subpoenaed for inspection. Individual identities must be described in ways that community members will not be able to identify the participants" (p. 9). The collected

qualitative data was stored securely, with password protection, in the computer program Dedoose.

Data Analysis Approach

All qualitative data collected through interviews, content analysis, and observation (field notes) were coded following the model presented by Saldana (2013). First, the researcher transcribed the audio-recordings from the individual interviews. Next, all data including transcripts and documents were uploaded to Dedoose for coding.

The data were analyzed using three rounds of coding. The first round of coding was an initial descriptive coding using attribute coding that logs the essential information about the data and demographic characteristics of the participants (Saldana, 2013). The second round of coding consisted of pattern coding, a way of grouping summaries into a smaller number of sets, themes or constructs to look for themes and identify connections related to food insecurity and the student parents' experiences. The third round of coding involved code weaving, the integration of key code words and phrases into narrative to see how they connect to the research questions in order to develop the themes further (Saldana, 2013). A matrix of the information by source, interviews, content analysis, and observations (field notes) was constructed so that the researcher can have a clear picture of the emerging themes. Miles, et al. (2014), stated that "matrix displays chart or table the data – including codes – for analytic purposes" (p. 88). In particular, the researcher looked to identify themes that illustrate, not only the challenges faced by the participants, but also the opportunities, resources, and other factors that facilitated their intent to persist. Three main themes emerged from the analysis of the collected data, which included lack of financial resources, parental trauma, and perseverance of students who

are parents. This allowed the researcher to draw multiple conclusions and present the findings of food insecurity among college students who are parents attending a community college.

Researcher Role

As the Director of the social service program on the study site which provided an array of support services to students, the researcher brought some biases to the study. Food insecurity has been an integral part of the work that the researcher has done for more than 35 years. In 2013, the researcher began the process to open a food pantry on the campus by first conducting the assessment of the need for the service. The demonstrated need for food was supported by the research (Freudenberg et al., 2011; Maroto, 2013). The researcher produced a strategic plan to address the issue of food insecurity on the campus. Initially, students demonstrating the need for food were provided with food vouchers to be spent at a local supermarket. Simultaneously, students who were eligible, were assisted in the process of applying for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which is a program designed to provide access to food by providing students with SNAP dollars to purchase food. The service provision was brought to scale in 2018 when the food pantry was opened. The researcher was instrumental in developing the best practice model that guided the provision of the food service. For example, in order that students are aware of the availability of the service, the researcher enlisted the use of the communications system to schedule and send email notifications to the students at key points during the academic year. Additionally, the pantry is advertised on the website as well as on monitors around the campus and in newsletters. Moreover, the pantry is open for five of the seven days, from 8am to 6pm.

These operational times allowed for easy access to the pantry by the students. The process to access the food is deliberately made simple, both for the sake of confidentiality and to ease the anxiety that students feel around seeking help.

Students are provided with a short application for the pantry service which captures demographic information but also provides a needs statement. This information is ultimately used to seek donations from partners to provide funding for the pantry. To address the issue of confidentiality and to reduce the stigma around seeking assistance, the pantry bags are packed in unidentifiable bags. Students are provided with nutritionally balanced meals from the five food groups, for three days at three meals a day. Since its inception, the food pantry has provided over 5000 students and family members with food items. Moreover, the researcher supervised the distribution of other food services programs. Some of those programs include supermarket food cards, hot meals program, and cafeteria food vouchers.

Further, the researcher is responsible for the oversight of a number of other support services. Some of those services include financial assistance, tax preparation, legal assistance, health insurance enrollment, and transportation assistance (Metro cards). In relation to the financial assistance, the researcher is responsible for managing over a half a million dollars a year in emergency funds that are provided in the form of grants to students to pay rent and other bills. This provision of service has enabled the researcher to interact with students who have experienced some daunting circumstances. In conducting the study, the researcher was aware of the impact of any bias on the data collection. Creswell (2013) informed that it is important for researchers to identify possible researcher and participant biases that could impact trustworthiness of the study.

To mitigate the biases and increase trustworthiness, the researcher made a deliberate attempt to identify participants through other avenues as opposed to directly recruiting students. The researcher was also intentional in keeping an open mind, avoiding any pre-existing assumptions. The protocol that was developed contained semi-structured questions which allowed for free expression by the participants without prompting or interjecting by the researcher. The experiences were captured in the voices of the students and the administrators, maintaining the integrity of the study.

CHAPTER 4

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore college students who are parents' experiences with food insecurity while attending a community college. Data collection for this case study took place between October 2021 and December 2021. There were 19 interviews conducted in total which included 17 individual interviews of student-participants who are parents, two individual interviews of administrator-participants, as well as observation of the pantry use, and content analysis of marketing or outreach material of services pertaining to food insecurity to students who are parents. This chapter provides analysis of the collected data and presents the key themes that emerged within the context of the research questions.

There were three major themes that emerged from the collected data. The first major theme to emerge was the lack of financial resources. Within this first theme, three sub-themes emerged which included unemployment and underemployment, borrowing money, and insufficient Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. The second major theme to emerge was parental trauma. Within this theme, two sub-themes emerged which included, stress and worry and parenting ability while dealing with food insecurity. The third major theme to emerge was perseverance of the students who are parents. Within this major theme, three sub-themes emerged which included sacrifices made by the students who are parents, motivation to carry on, and hope for a better life. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings according to the research questions of the study.

Table 4

Major Themes and Sub-themes

Major Themes	Sub-theme 1	Sub-theme 2	Sub-theme 3
Lack of Financial Resources	Unemployment and Underemployment	Borrowing Money	Insufficient SNAP Benefits
Parental Trauma	Stress and Worry	Parenting Ability while Dealing with Food Insecurity	
Perseverance of Students who are Parents	Sacrifices Made by the Students who are Parents	Motivation to Carry on	Hope for a Better Life

Findings

The Culper Community College (CCC) is one of seven community colleges within a larger urban City University that houses 24 institutions. Generally, CCC enrolls about twenty-six thousand students in a semester. The college is a two-year institution offering over 50 associate degree programs and students come from all over the world to attend the college. There are students who represent 155 countries and speak 111 language (The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Analytics).

The college offered its students a number of support services both in the academic field and in social services. The social services are offered within the student affairs department and under a one stop model where students can obtain all social service at a single point. The program had a total of 10 full-time and part-time employees and generally employed work-study students to support the office work. Because the nature of the services that are offered is meant to address emergency needs, the only required

criteria was that the recipient of the service is a currently enrolled student experiencing a need. Some of the social services offered to all students include emergency funds, transportation assistance, and food services. Analysis of the emergency funds application and process has indicated that students have the opportunity to request emergency grants of a particular amount. Students have to show financial hardship and provide very specific documentation to support their request for financial assistance. Students use the funds to pay rent and augment the gaps in their financial resources to purchase food. As long as funds are available, all students who apply for funding and provide the appropriate supporting documentation receive funds to help with the challenges that they are facing.

There are a number of food service assistance offered to all students. These services include supermarket gift cards, cafeteria food vouchers and a hot meals programs. Within the context of food services is the food pantry. As a result of requests made by students, the college opened a pantry in 2018 to augment the cafeteria food vouchers and supermarket food cards that were offered to students.

The pantry provided an additional food option for students. Since its inception, the pantry had provided more than 5000 students and their family members with nutritionally balanced food items. Content analysis of the brochure, website and post card reviewed, have indicated that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the pantry operated Monday to Friday, from 8 am to 6pm. The website showed that during the pandemic, the hours and days of operation for the pantry was greatly curtailed to once a week. At the time of the pantry observation, the pantry was operational for five days, generally from 10am to 4pm. During the days that it was open to offer food items to students, they were

able to receive prepacked bags of nutritionally balanced food items. The food items were shelf-stable items from the five food groups: fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy, and protein. To ensure that the student receive a balanced meal, the pantry bags were packed according to the Foodbank for New York, NYC Human Resource Administration, Mayor's Obesity Task Force, and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene "how to pack a balanced pantry bag" chart (2018).

This study focused on the lived experiences of 17 students who encountered challenges with food insecurity and related their stories about how they coped with those challenges. The study also documented the experiences of two administrators who work with students experiencing food insecurity. The following information present the findings of data from the study.

Theme 1: Lack of Financial Resources

A major theme that emerged during the analysis of data was a lack of financial resources. Each participant shared their views on the effect of not having sufficient finances to purchase food and the impact that had on their ability to feed themselves and their children. Within the theme of lack of financial resources, three sub-themes emerged from data. The first sub-theme to emerge was unemployment and underemployment. The second sub-theme to emerge was borrowing money to purchase food. The third sub-theme to emerge was insufficient SNAP benefits. Together, these sub-themes demonstrated that students who are parents experiencing a lack of financial resources struggle with food insecurity.

Unemployment and Underemployment. Findings revealed that all of the student-participants struggled with insufficient funds as a result of unemployment and

underemployment. Student-participants from the individual interviews were asked to provide information of the primary source of income. Almost all of the student-participants revealed that they struggled to make ends meet because of their inability to earn sufficient income. Insufficient income manifested itself through the food insecurity that they experienced.

Of the 17 student-participants, one was unemployed, 12 student-participants received income from part time employment, and four student-participants were on public assistance. Regardless of the source of the income, the participants were clear that they were not making enough money to support their families. April is a 33 year old, part time student, who is a single mother with two children. Her youngest child was one month old at the time of the interview. April stated that she was unemployed when asked about her source of income. She said, “right now I’m unemployed.” Although employed, Mary, who is a 26 year old single mother of two children, attending school on a full time basis, admitted that her primary source of income was, “baby sitting off the books.” The baby sitting income, she said, provided her with extra cash she needed to pay for diapers. Although she was sharing a home with her mom, Mary felt responsible to contribute in any way that she could but admitted that it was almost impossible to do so when she was not earning a livable wage. Similarly, Betty, a thirty-four year old single mother and full time student, explained that she was currently working part time as an Uber driver because it was the only job that she could find. She explained that, “I’m working five days a week, part time. While my daughter was in school, I get two hours of sleep so that I can drive for a few hours to get twenty dollars to buy food.” She further

elaborated that because she was a nursing student, it was extremely difficult to work, study, and take care of her child.

Further, Barbara, a 43-year-old, full time student in her first year of school, has two children ages seven and eleven. Barbara revealed that she was recently separated as a result of a domestic violence situation. But not so long ago, Barbara said her husband would give her between twenty and fifty dollars to feed a family of four. She struggled to purchase adequate food during her pregnancy. She recently started working as a daycare worker which gave her some income but said it was not sufficient as she was in a shelter with no cooking facilities so she was purchasing microwave ready food. This, she stated, consumed most of her pay. To further illustrate the struggle, Dana who is a 31 year old single mother with one child and who is a full time student, responded to the question of her source of income, by stating that she is balancing a lot with trying to save for permanent housing while trying to feed her child.

Even when both parents are employed, the income was not sufficient because of all the other bills to be paid or because the hours worked were insufficient. Participants reported having to cut corners because by the time rent and utilities were paid, there was not enough left to buy the type of food they should be eating. Moreover, many student-participants revealed that struggling through the pandemic, working in service industries that were affected by the pandemic made the issue of food insecurity more prevalent. Shannon summed it up for the group when she said:

The only one who is working is my husband. He works in the service industry making minimum wage. Because of COVID, my husband's hours have been cut

affecting the amount of income that comes into the household and the amount of food that we can purchase for my family.

Student-participants who were on public assistance did not fare any better. In spite of the fact that they may receive some cash assistance, the amounts were so minimal that they were unable to purchase essential food items. Some of the participants were engaged in activities in an attempt to fill the gap. Capturing the sentiments of the students in this group, June said:

I am receiving public assistance and I'm also working in the school as a work study student. That extra money really helps but the prices of food items are so high that I find myself struggling at least one week of the month.

As an Administrator, Judy was responsible for student services. She summed up the issue of food insecurity among students:

I know it's [food insecurity] a very serious issue. I know that students struggle with having enough money to pay for the food and everything else they have to do to support themselves and take care of their family. So I know that it's not only them, it's their families that also need food.

Furthermore, Jessica who has been an Administrator working to provide services for students for the past three years shared an in-depth perspective on the state of food insecurity among the students with whom she interacts:

Some students had to move in with family members during the pandemic because they lost jobs. They don't have money for food. Many were afraid to go to the food pantries, whether on the campus or at their church, out of fear of getting sick. Before the pandemic we gave out vouchers for the cafeteria but was unable to so

during the pandemic because we were working remotely and the cafeteria was closed. These vouchers offered the opportunity to eat the only meal that many of my students would have for that day.

Student-participants were clear that many issues prevented them from providing adequate food for their families. Among the myriad of reasons was the inability to obtain employment that offered a livable income for their current skill-sets. For those students who were employed, they reported that making minimum wage of 15 dollars an hour does not sustain their family when their bills have sky-rocketed.

Borrowing Money. Data showed that students were borrowing money at some point during the month in order that they can purchase food. In some instances, students were running out of money within a three-week timeframe of the month and had to go without food for days before they were able to obtain money to buy food. All of the student-participants from the individual interviews were asked if they borrowed money to purchase food. Most of the 17 participants reported that they borrow money to purchase food. Having to borrow money to purchase food caused many students to feel inadequate as parents and added a layer of pressure as a student.

All student-participants reported that borrowing money to purchase food became a way of life as their income was not sufficient or it did not cover food expenses until the next pay period. Brittany shared that “sometimes my mom will help me out and give me a little funds towards groceries if we’re low by the end of the month. Other times she’ll order pizza for the kids.” Borrowing money or SNAP benefits became necessary when 31 year old part time student, Dana, who became unemployed and was awaiting approval of SNAP benefits. She stated, when asked if she borrowed money to purchase food during

those times, “yes, I would go to a friend and say can I borrow a couple of dollars? Or I would say do you have any SNAP benefits that I could use? It would depend on who I am asking.” Shannon presented this perspective when asked about borrowing money to purchase food:

Yes, from my mom because, not only are we paying the rent and the bills, there is also the car payments and the insurance. My son still wears diapers and those are very expensive. My daughter is a junior in high school and sometimes she asks for five dollars here and there, so she can buy pizza with her friends. But I can’t even afford to give her that.

Lauren concurred that she had to borrow money when she lost her job and was awaiting SNAP approval:

I was working full time so I didn’t necessarily qualify for it [SNAP] but when I stopped working that is when I qualified but during that period between not working and not having SNAP, it was hard. We had a family friend that we would ask to borrow money and even though she said not to pay her back, I felt really bad asking.

The student-participants related that borrowing money took a toll on them because they felt inadequate. Amera stated, “I feel horrible when I have to borrow money. You know, student moms have to concentrate on your books too, and you can’t do that if your children are not getting food to eat. So sometimes it affects me to think about it.” Brittany summed it up this way:

Um, it made me feel like wow, you know, I don't like this. I have to do something to change this situation, you know, nobody should go hungry. No child should go

hungry especially not in the United States of America where there's so many resources, you know, that was a very tough period.

Moreover, findings revealed that addressing food insecurity by borrowing money had a great effect on the student-participants ability to perform in school. Many students stated that they had trouble focusing on their school work. Lauren discussed it this way:

When you have food insecurity it can stress you to a point where it could be distracting. You can feel like, okay, I'm in class but do I have energy for this? Or am I stressing over the bills that I have to pay? Or, on the way I can keep food on the table. I am stressing beyond belief and then you have like the expectations of these professors...they just want the work complete, and sometimes you just feel like a robot.

Similarly, April discussed the difficulty of staying focus on her academics. She said:

If you're not getting to eat all you want you have these mental thoughts. You start to feel lazy. You're not able to think as you should or respond as you should because everything is coming down on you. I was supposed to submit assignments and I thought I did it and I forgot. Please remember your body is living off of whatever you put in it to survive!

Likewise, Shannon summed it up in this manner, "It does affect my learning, because let's say if you don't have food, and you can't really think straight. The things that you need to focus on you can't focus. It's harder."

All of the student-participants who related that they borrowed money expressed concern that going hungry affected their ability to concentrate on school. They revealed that they were stressed about them and their children going hungry.

At the same time that participants shared deep concerns about hunger, it's important to note that the college offered emergency funds. Interestingly, some of the participants did not mention these funds. Analysis of documents showed that there are three main grants listed and all of them indicated that the purpose of the grant is to "provide assistance with the goal of retention and graduation." On the website, the program is listed under "Scholarships and Financial Support." One of the support areas in the Emergency Grant/Loan specifically stated:

The CCC social service program assist students experiencing financial hardship by providing emergency support. Students applying for emergency assistance will be assessed for grants to pay for rent, utilities and other emergencies. Students who are in need of textbooks can apply for an emergency no-interest loan.

The Intake form asked a number of questions that are aimed at gathering information about the service needs of the applicant. These questions include, "what is your employment status?" This question posed six options, full time, part time, freelance, unemployed, disabled (unable to work), or retired. Another question that was asked on the Intake form was "which services and support are you interested in receiving information about?" Among those service options offered was Emergency Funds/Referrals. While all of these supports were available to the student participants, only a few of them mentioned using them even while many of the participants struggled to meet their daily basic needs.

Insufficient Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Benefits.

Findings revealed that all of the student-participants who received SNAP shared that the SNAP benefits were insufficient to meet their needs and as a result they are unable to

provide food for their families for the entirety of the benefit period. Additionally, the students revealed that their focus on school was affected as a result of not being able to feed their families and not having the amount of benefits they need to purchase food. The fact that they did not have sufficient SNAP benefits to purchase food only exacerbated the problem. Participants from the interviews were asked if they received any government subsidies such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and if the SNAP benefits were sufficient to last the entire month. Of the 17 student-participants, nine responded that they receive SNAP benefits. The consensus among the student-participants was that the subsidy they received never lasts for the entire month. The insufficiency of SNAP benefits occurred for many reasons. One such reason was the criteria for calculating the award. The criteria by which SNAP benefits were calculated is not in keeping with the reality of what it takes to meet basic needs. To compound this issue, some members of the student-participants' families receiving SNAP were not part of the budget so that if there were four members in the family, they may only receive SNAP for two of the members. This was the case for Jody. When asked if she received government subsidies and if it was sufficient to last the month she replied:

Oh no. God no. No. I actually get it for myself and the baby. I tried to add my son to my case. He was dropped off at some point and then when I reapplied after I had the baby and then I don't know what happened to him. And they keep rejecting it. And then they're saying that they need letters for my landlord. I already submitted my lease and all my documents, but they're just hassling me and I don't have the time for all this hassles. They make it really difficult because HRA is closed right now, so it's all automated. And I call them and I'm on the

phone on hold until my phone is dying for hours or I get another phone call, it's just, it's something.

Barbara illustrated another point about the insufficiency of SNAP. She said, when asked if she received government subsidies, “I have no cash assistance. They give us food stamps. Because of my immigration status, they don't give us, cash assistance. When asked if the SNAP benefits last for the entire month, she elaborated:

No. Because my youngest, she has some sensory issues. The food that I have to buy for her is kind of more expensive. It was a very hard to do it on my own. We were in a shelter. So, we were eating, microwave, so it was kind of hard, because it was, microwave food is more expensive. So, it didn't last for the entire month.

Betty concurred when she stated, “So recently I was approved for SNAP. I received about \$400 a month for food. But it just been for a few last month.” She added, “Most of the time it [SNAP] only last about three weeks. Dana agreed when she was asked about the length of time her SNAP benefits last:

Um, it doesn't. And now with this inflation it's even worse. It's crazy I would say that, you know, um, maybe the last week and a half maybe two weeks of the month you would have to probably come out of pocket to provide food, you know. I'll figure it out, depending on a person's situation, however, although we just got an increase. It's still not enough like it's so bizarre to me.

At least one student-participant revealed that she received an increase in the SNAP benefits because of the pandemic but was concerned about how she will manage after the increase is no longer received. Edith said, “Yes, I am fortunate to receive a little

more SNAP but the SNAP amount is going to decrease and I know that eventually things will get back to whatever is normal and things may happen again. What do I do then?”

Findings suggested that even when students are eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the program has so many built in barriers that it is not easy to qualify for SNAP. One such notable barrier is the expectation that students would be able to contribute 30 percent of their income toward their food budget. A content analysis of data collected from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities’ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) document indicated:

The SNAP benefit formula targets benefits according to need: very poor households receive larger benefits than households closer to the poverty line since they need more help affording an adequate diet. The benefit formula assumes that families will spend 30 percent of their net income for food; SNAP makes up the difference between that 30 percent contribution and the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan, a diet plan the U.S. Agriculture Department (USDA) establishes that is designed to be nutritionally adequate at a very low cost (June, 2019).

The overwhelming number of the student-participants who receive SNAP indicate that they do not have the 30 percent of the net income to contribute to food.

Consequently, they are either going without or buying sub-standard food to survive.

Further analysis of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities’ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) document showed that “the average SNAP recipient received about \$127 a month or about \$4.17 a day” (June, 2019). This analysis supported data collected from the student-participants that even when they are recipients of the

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program, they do not receive sufficient benefits to support themselves and their families.

To fill the gap of not having sufficient SNAP benefits some students have indicated that they have used food pantries. A review of the collected data showed that some of the students used the college food pantry which distribute bags of pre-packed food items. Edith stated that once she learned of the pantry she was able to get food. She said, “I just learned about the food pantry on the campus, I would say, in August. So yeah, now I do. I have used it twice so far.” The college pantry has also been a source of support for other students who are not receiving SNAP. Amera stated that she does not receive any government subsidies and has to rely on other means to help with her food insecurity. She said, “No, I don't receive any subsidies so I have gone to the pantry on the campus.”

Other student-participants have indicated that because of COVID they attended classes remotely and have not gone to the campus. They revealed that they stayed closer to their place of residence and used pantries that were located in their neighborhoods. One such student is Chyna. She said, “No, I have not gone to the one on the campus, but I visit the one close in my area. I have visited the Food Bank.”

Data from the marketing material collected showed the CCC social service program marketed its support service, such as the pantry on their web site as well as in their brochures. Moreover, data analysis from the observation conducted indicated that the pantry was open to the students, providing prepacked bags of food items which is designed to assist with filling the gap of insufficient food and address the stress that students experience.

Theme 2: Parental Trauma

A second overarching theme that emerged during the analysis of collected data was parental trauma. Each of the student-participants shared their views on not having access to food and being worried about running out of money to buy food. Within the theme of parental trauma, two sub-themes emerged from data. The first sub-theme to emerge was stress and worry. The second sub-theme to emerge was parenting ability while dealing with food insecurity. Together, these two sub-themes encompass the student's experiences of how food insecurity has caused trauma in their lives.

Stress and Worry. Findings demonstrated that parents spent an enormous of time stressing and worrying about how to provide for their family. These feelings have caused student-participants anxiety about their performance in school and their ability to persist. Participants from the individual interviews were asked to share the amount of stress in their lives and to describe their mental health. Most of the student-participants responded that they experienced stress on a daily basis and that they tried to find ways to deal with it. Of the stress in her life, Jody said "I have got a good amount of stress. So if I'm stressed and I'm not managing it properly, then I'm going to be less patient. I might be irritable, I'm withdrawn, just not present, which are all not good things. I do see a therapist, though, so that helps." As a parent, Edith stated that stress rules her life and she related this:

I am overwhelmed with stress these days. And I'm trying to not have it over come me, fully, but it is something that I acknowledge on a daily basis. The amount of stress that I have, I just try to maintain my sanity. Again, I have schoolwork and parenting. Then you feeling overwhelmed that is something that you, as a parent,

we have to think about. They [the children] wake up in the morning, they're hungry. They're hungry, before they go to bed. They're hungry, so that adds to a lot of the stress that I have as a parent and being responsible for them. Because it's, it's one thing being a struggling college student by yourself as an adult, even then you can miss a meal, and it'll be okay. You don't want to see your children missing meals, because that's not okay. So, it adds to the stress level.

Betty's approach to the stress in her life was slightly different. She tried to draw some strength from her feelings of stress. She said, "I learned how to be resilient, and life is all about stress, all about problems that you have to work and solve. So, kind of building a strength in me." But for some students stress is debilitating. Mary dealt with her stress by staying in bed. She said, "Some days are stressful not only about the food wise but everything else. So I stay in bed and when I do I'm disconnected from my kids." She went on to explain that she felt helpless. She said "how can I explain it? It wasn't the best, obviously, because I had to think of something because I have to feed my children, one way or the other. So it's not a good feeling. It's stressful. It's very stressful."

Some of the students related that this level of stress has had an impact on their academics. They are unable to perform in the manner in which they are expected. Joanna stated that "I feel tired. I want to sleep. I don't feel I want to take classes. And Jody explained:

When I'm stressing about food it's even harder for me to focus. I'm irritable. I have a lack of ambition, maybe I just don't want to do things. I just, I just want to be lazy and sleep and not really have to do too much of anything. And so it's

going to affect my academics because I won't do my homework or I will make an excuse to not go to class or I'll be in class but I won't focus.

Findings indicated that in order to address the stress that many students experienced, they were engaged in mental health services. This helped them to deal with their stress and continued with school. June stated:

I see a Psychologist and then I also have a therapist. I speak with the Psychologist once a month and my therapist once a week, every Saturday for half an hour.

Sometimes, 45 minutes depends on how much time she might have. If I did not have them, I'm not sure I would be able to continue in school.”

Similarly, Barbara felt the need to get therapy because she was concerned about the effects of all of her experiences, including food insecurity, on her and her children. She said, “We had to go to therapy to get better.”

Content analysis of data collected from the website indicated that the institution provided a number of resources to support students who are experiencing mental health issues. On the web page under Student Support Services, there were a number of services that were available to students, most notable was the Counseling Center. On its website the counseling center informed that:

...Counselors assist students in addressing psychological and adjustment issues (i.e., depression, anxiety, and relationships) and problems or issues including stress/time management that can negatively impact academic performance, student retention, graduation rates, and quality of life.

The college seemed to make particular effort at responding to students who were experiencing stress as a result of food insecurity. Judy, an Administrator related that “it is a priority of the institution to address the students’ needs.” She elaborated:

I think that the college recognizes that you can't be a successful student If you're hungry and you can't be expected to come to class, if you have to make a decision about, am I going to feed my family, am I going to eat or am I going to pay for my Metro card? So there's a lot of choices that students have to make. And I think we're very aware of what those choices are so we are, I guess proactive is what I would say.

Most student-participants expressed that they experienced stress at not having adequate food for their family and the impact on their studies was felt when they were engaged in school. The analysis of the collected data, which included marketing materials through websites, revealed that resources were available for students to address the problem.

Parenting Ability while Dealing with Food Insecurity. Data revealed that many of the student-participants struggled to parent well while attending school and dealing with food insecurity. Student-participants from the individual interviews were asked to describe how food insecurity has affected them parenting their children and what support systems they had in place. Many of the students related their experiences about parenting and dealing with food insecurity. Jody said, “I'm a lot shorter with my temper with them [the children], fussing more than I did. Um, and catching myself after and having to apologize a lot more to them. Because it's not necessarily their fault.” Balancing school and family obligations was very hard for some of the student-participants. Lola was very

emphatic when she said, “oh yeah, yeah, you know, because I go to school I sometimes have my homework. I think I always lose my temper. When my kids try to ask me something, I yell at them.” Betty elaborated on this point when she said:

It affects because I didn't have enough time to do homework with her. I was always thinking about how to provide, how to support, how to manage life, and it's very difficult when you are a student, and a single mom.

The effects of food insecurity and parenting are felt differently by other students. Shannon stated that she felt guilty about parenting. She said, “When I'm not with my son, I feel bad because other things are in the way.”

Data collected showed that some of the students had some supports systems in place which helped them to cope with the stress of parenting and attending school. To the point of support systems, Edith said:

I try to implement self-care now. Again therapy helps. I threw myself into a lot of groups in terms of support groups: I'm in a women's group. I'm in a parenting group now, and therapy, weekly, so those supports help as well. That helps a lot with my stress level because it's an escape during the week and to kind of take my mind off of certain things. So while it is a high stress time, it can be overwhelming. I also take steps to not have a full break down in the stress of what is happening. It's also good to have a strong, I say village. Some weekends if I have a lot of homework, I'll ask my mom can you take them for the weekend. And she doesn't mind. And then I get things done in peace.

Lauren agreed that it is important to have supports in place. She said “my mom is my support system. She just tells me things could be worse. She's somebody I can lean on.”

But for other students there were very little supports available. “Betty reported that her support system was very sparse, “I’m a single mom here by myself in America, and so I have no relatives. I do it all by myself.” And Farah admitted, “My mom is in California. I don't have too much family or support, it's pretty much just us.”

In addition to the mental health counseling, food services, and emergency funds, the content analysis revealed other support systems are available for the students who are parents. The Early Childhood Center advertised this on their website:

The Early Childhood Center (ECC) Parents Club is a wonderful resource, giving parents a chance to meet and chat with other parents as well as ECC staff. We have weekly meetings on Wednesdays between 2 and 4 p.m. in the Early Childhood Center and serve coffee, tea and some snacks.

At least one student-participant stated that she is involved with a parent support group at the ECC.

It is important to note that student-participants were juggling a myriad of activities at the same time. They are mothers, wives, caretakers of other family members, and students. Coupled with these responsibilities is the issue of food insecurity. As a result, many of the student-participants have reported dealing with stress and parenting as additional challenges. Navigating how to manage all of these responsibilities was challenging for many of the students. As Brittany said, “doing my coursework wasn’t my main focus.” And Amera summed it up when she said, “Sometimes you have a divided mind. You have to get a stable mind on your books.”

Student-participants were clear that they were dealing with a number of factors that were challenging in their lives. Although they viewed their role as a parent as very

important and they wanted to be the best at parenting, many acknowledged that having to deal with food insecurity affected the manner in which they interacted with their children.

Theme 3: Perseverance of Students who are Parents

The third overarching theme that emerged during the analysis of collected data was perseverance of students who are parents. Each of the student-participants shared their views about managing the competing priorities of being a student, a parent, and a wife in some instances. Within the theme of perseverance of students who are parents, three sub-themes emerged from data collected. The first sub-theme to emerge was sacrifices made by the student parents. The second sub-theme to emerge was motivation to carry on. The third sub-theme to emerge was hope for a better life. Together, these three sub-themes provided data that, in spite having to deal with food insecurity, students found ways to persevere and progressed with life.

Sacrifices Made by the Students who are Parents. Findings from the collected data showed that student-participants made tremendous sacrifices to ensure that they were balancing family obligations and school life. Student-participants from the individual interviews were asked to describe their experiences if they had to cut the size of their meals because there was not enough money for food, how many days that occurred, and how it made them feel. The majority of the students stated that they were often the last person to eat, ensuring that their children's needs were addressed.

In addressing the issue of cutting meals, Amera admitted that she had cut meals. She said, "Yes, I do because I take no food for myself. I don't think about myself. What I want is for them to feel okay so even if I have to sacrifice myself, I go ahead and do that for them." She elaborated that eating less was directly tied to the amount of hours that she

worked. In instances where she had worked less hours because she had to care for her child, she had less money to buy food. Joanna agreed that she had cut meals several days a month. She said “usually by the 20th of the month, I see no food in the refrigerator. And then the rest of the month I have problems with the food. I get my SNAP on the 7th of the month. I feel sad those days, during that time.” And Betty related:

I would have to think before I cook something like Buckwheat, my Russian dish. It’s like oatmeal but Russian. And before I cook I think okay so I needed for two times so I’m going to cook exactly for two times not more, not less. So I was trying to kind of calculate how much do I need to last? Sometimes I was not able to bring food [to school] so I would just skip it and I would not eat all day.

Edith had this to say about cutting meals, “the children were younger, so they didn’t understand. But, yes, it sounds crazy you have to say, okay, I’m going to feed them. I’ll have crackers. Or I’ll split their plate. Because you know, they don’t need too much. This occurs between seven to 10 days out of the month.” Some students were baffled that they even had to deal with food insecurity. Chyna said that she had cut meals “four to seven days a month.” To the question of how it made her feel, she responded “no descriptions. No words to use, you know. Even though we are in a blessed nation, even though we are in a country that is known for its richness. A lot of people are suffering.”

Jody summed it up this way, “I literally just don’t eat and then call it a day.”

Data collected showed that students who cut meals were very concerned about the impact on them and their children. One student was particularly concerned about the message that she was sending to her daughter when she had to deny a specific food that she wanted. Shannon stated, “I feel so bad because the last time I went to buy food, my

daughter wanted a specific food but I couldn't get it. It was ribs. It was too expensive. I hated that she had to experience that.” Edith related this story:

I feel like I was failing. I feel like I am repeating a cycle. I also grew up in a single parent household. And now that I think back on it my mother never received SNAP and things like that and she was a home health aide, our whole lives. And there wasn't a lot. We were always in Catholic school so I know that things were bad. I'll say all the time if it's tight for me I know it was tight for her. And I think of the nights that we had oatmeal for dinner, instead of dinner or cornflakes with warm milk or cream of wheat and things like that. I know that this is not how it's supposed to be.

Other students also worried about the future impact. Lauren said, “It feels terrible and worrying. I'm an adult but my children, I worry if that's gonna affect them in the future. The way they view money, the way they view themselves.” The administrator-participant, Judy, worried that students may not be requesting services soon enough. She said, “I think they come to us very late. They see us as a provider of education not services.”

Student-participants expressed a number of emotions as result of having to deal with food insecurity. Many sacrificed their own health and mental well-being to ensure that their children were cared for. The reoccurring message was that they were willing to sacrifice themselves as long as their family did not have to feel the effects of food insecurity.

Motivation to Carry on. Data revealed that student-participants were determined to move forward even in their most challenging times. Most students viewed

their children as their source of motivation. The resources that were provided by the institution also served as a motivation for them to carry on. Student-participants from the individual interviews were asked to describe the financial assistance, food assistance or mental health intervention that the institution has provided. Thirteen of the 17 student-participants indicated that they have utilized some form of resource from the institution. Many suggested that these resources served to help them to persevere. April said, “The emergency grant came at a time that I was really concerned that I would not have money to pay some of the bills that were coming in. She added:

I found the counseling to be helpful also. The whole thing was a lot more for me, because on top of getting advice, I got encouragement. She [the counselor] basically said I believe in you. Keep your head up high. She provided me with direction because I felt like dropping out, but I'm like I can't do this. I gotta come out of this situation. I can't be in this for long. I can't give up. I got kids now they don't deserve to stay in this situation. I tell myself if you don't want them to be where you are right now, you got to make this happen. You have to get your education.

Part of the struggle that student-participants experienced was being able to get back and forth to school. Dana related that she received transportation assistance. She said, “I received the metro card that helped me a lot.” Other students were able to take advantage of a myriad of services. Barbara stated:

Oh well, besides the food that I get from you guys, since I just moved, I got some resources like, blankets, a jacket for my daughter, and little items for the kitchen. They gave me some financial resources to help me pay some of my bills. I was

able to get some Metro cards. So it has been a great help. My daughters were able to stay at the Childcare Center.

Some of the student-participants reported that the financial assistance was especially helpful as that meant that they could focus on other areas such as school.

Brittany thought the extra financial support made things a little easy for her. And June said:

The thing that was most helpful about the resources, was mostly the rent. Okay, the money spent on rent, and the bills. It was very helpful because of the fact that it could have kept me from going to school.

Analysis of the administrator-participant interview showed that the college made efforts to help students to success. Judy, an administrator said of resources offered to students:

An organization, which was serving the First Responders at the start of the pandemic connect with a community college to provide meals to students. We were able to set up food distribution where hot meals from restaurants were distributed to students. And that was really nice because a quality of food matters, not just that we're giving them food but this was like a treat for them. And whenever possible we gave them more than one meal. So it wasn't just them who could eat they could also feed other family members so it was really a great project. Students also go to the pantry and pick up food there.

Jessica concurred that the college had many resources but expressed some concerns that the college may not be doing enough. She stated, "There should be line items in the overall budget to assist students with food and transportation and not have us so dependent on private funding."

Data showed that prior to the pandemic, the college provided students with meal tickets if they were on campus. Students could go to the cafeteria and pick up a complete meal. Moreover, food was distributed at most events on the campus. Students attending workshops, special events, and clubs were able to get a meal. Student-participants who were aware of resources offered at the college and took the opportunity to utilize those services reported that they were able to get through school because of the supports that they received.

Hope for a Better Life. Data showed that students were very determined to persevere through their challenges of food insecurity in the hope that they would complete school and be on the way to a better life. Student-participants from the individual interviews were asked to describe their experiences on how food insecurity impacted their academic expectations. All of the student-participants responded reflecting on the progress they made even though they struggled with food insecurity. Of the 17 student-participants 10 were either in their last semester preparing to graduate or in their last year of school. Many of those preparing to graduate have expressed relief that they had come this far. In speaking of her accomplishments, Mary said, “I’m a senior and I should be graduating next semester, I got one more class to take so I’m almost there.” She added, “The struggle is real but I am determined to succeed for my children.” With elation, Shirley agreed, “I’m actually graduating. I’m graduating. I just finished. After this, I’m done. But I do know this, if you’re hungry it makes it really hard to get here.” And Edith tells the story of her journey when she said:

I am a senior in my last year. I mean, if I think about like high school. I wasn't the best student. I wasn't as enthusiastic about education at that time. But now, it's a

lot different because I have more reasons to be a better student. I have more reasons to finish. I have more children. Then I didn't have any children. When I started college the first time I wasn't a mom yet. So now, having way more responsibility, it's like, get it done.

Some of the student-participants wanted to make the point of how food insecurity affected their school journey. Lauren, who is in her final semester said, “although when you have food insecurity it can stress you to a point where it could be distracting, I think of my daughters and the life I want them to have.” Lola agreed with the point and said, “This is my last semester but it was hard. If you do not have enough food then it affects the academics because you feel hungry.” She continued, “Graduating means getting a better life.” And Brittany stressed the same point when she expressed:

I'm going to be graduating next semester, but I would say that at times when things were really tough, doing my coursework wasn't my main focus to be honest. I went off a little bit with that too. Yeah I wasn't staying on top of my schoolwork when that period was around. That was a very tough period, but a new better way was coming in and it won't last forever so I just remain optimistic.

And you know, I worked through the situation that I was in.

Chyna summed up the sentiments in this manner, “this is my last semester. I am working hard to get my degree, something that will get a salary that I will be able to support my family.”

For some students who still have a little way to go before they are finished, recognizing the challenges and finding ways to cope became important. Amera, who is in her first year, said of food insecurity and her academic expectations:

Like, if within the week you don't know where food is going to come from, you think about it. And sometimes you have a divided mind to learn because you have to think about how to provide for your children. And you have to think about how to learn, so it's like you don't have a stable mind on your books. You have to, like, divide your attention on how you're going to get food to feed your family. But I psych myself out, and I read my Bible and I motivate myself to keep going, each and every day.

Shannon highlighted her commitment to her education and was staying focused on her purpose for wanting a degree. She said, “It does affect my learning, because if you don't have food, and you can't really think straight. Like the things that you need to focus on you can't focus. It's harder.” She added, “I keep my family in mind. My motivation is my family. I want to do so much.” Representing the overall thoughts, Barbara who is a freshman said, “I am focusing on my education because I'm trying to teach my daughters that education is the only thing you have for yourself.

In spite of the challenges created as a result of the student-participants experiencing food insecurity, many were enthusiastic that completing school and gaining a degree would be the answer to their struggles. Many remained positive and hopeful about what the future held for them.

Conclusion

The first research question in this study investigated the experiences, related to food insecurity, of community college students who are parents. The analysis of the data found that food insecurity affected the lives of the student-participants in a variety of ways. Many of the students felt that not having financial resources to take care of their

families greatly affected their quality of life and their experience with school. Student-participants were clear that not having a livable wage or sufficient Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits contributed to their inability to provide adequate food for their families. Further, the students felt that having to borrow money to fill the gaps added a layer of stress that transferred to their ability to parent their children effectively. Many of the students expressed concerns that they felt guilty about not being able to be with their children for activities that should be normal, like doing their homework with them. Other students were concerned about the lasting effects of food insecurity on their children. To that end, student-participants expressed that they were determined to persevere and get their degrees so as to not only set a good example for their children but also to provide a better life for their family. The Administrators also expressed awareness of the challenges that students experienced with food insecurity and related that the college offered support services that helped students to address those challenges. Additionally, the analysis of data revealed that the college promoted services that helped to address the challenges of food insecurity among students who are parents.

The second research question in this study investigated the students' perception of the role of the community college in providing supports for student parents experiencing food insecurity. The analysis of data showed that there were a number of resources and support services that were offered at the college. Some of those resources included financial assistance in the form of cash emergency grants to pay for rent, food, and other bills, as well as Metro cards to assist with transportation. Additionally, the college offered other support services to address the challenge of food insecurity. These services include food vouchers to be used at the campus cafeteria, supermarket gift cards, a hot

meals program as well as food items from the campus pantry. Combined data from the sign in sheets indicated that over 40 students visited the pantry on the days that the researcher observed the pantry use. On average each student took two pre-packed pantry bags of food items.

In spite of the fact that resources were available at the college, some of the students revealed that although they were aware of the services provided at the college, they oftentimes did not use them. Some of the students who did not use the services stated that it was difficult to get to the campus during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the reasons offered was fear of becoming ill during the pandemic as getting sick would further affect their family as they would not be able to work or care for their families. Other students revealed that they had never gone to the campus because they were taking classes remotely because of COVID. Yet other student-participants stated that they did not use the pantry services in particular because they wanted other less fortunate students to use the services.

However, when the students did use the resources, they reported that it helped to address their needs. Many of the student-participants revealed that they applied for and received emergency grants that helped to pay for food and other living expenses because of the difficulties they experienced during COVID. Some of the students stated that they became unemployed or was collecting wages that were very low and this created difficulty in them providing for their families. Moreover, for those student-participants who did go to the campus, they expressed that they obtained pre-packed pantry bags from the food pantry at the college and this helped to fill the gap when they ran out of food and did not have the resources to purchase food. The Administrators informed that the

college made very deliberate efforts to provide food in addressing food insecurity. They stressed that in addition to the pantry, the college provided food vouchers that were used in the school cafeteria and meals at meetings and special events.

Moreover, student-participants revealed that, in order to deal with their feelings of worry and stress, they utilized the Counseling Center for mental health counseling which provide them with coping techniques to manage their stress.

CHAPTER 5

Food insecurity is a major issue for college students. The problem is compounded for students who have children because these students have the added responsibility of caring for them as well as other members of the family. Further, the student-participants were dealing with competing priorities such as employment and childcare. Although these students chose to attend school because they viewed school as the ultimate answer to address the quality of life that they want, school was also a competing priority. They needed to make time to study and complete assignments and that was sometimes a difficult task.

Student-participants in the study revealed that they struggled to fulfil their obligations because of a lack of financial resources. The students experienced stress and worry about not being able to provide for their families. This level of stress oftentimes affected their ability to focus in school. Moreover, many of the student-participants were from single headed households and did not have support systems such as child care or adequate financial resources in place. For the students who did have some level of support, they agreed that the resources available to them were instrumental in helping them to persist.

This qualitative case study explored college students who are parents' experiences with food insecurity while attending a community college. This study addressed two research questions. The first question inquired about students who are parents' experiences with food insecurity. The second research question examined the perception that student parents have of the supports that the community college provide in relation to food insecurity.

Data analyzed in this study consisted of student-participants and administrator-participants interviews, content analysis of outreach and marketing material, and observation of the campus pantry. Analysis of the collected data revealed three major findings. First, that a lack of financial resources contributed to student parents' inability to provide food for their families and the stress of not being able to provide affordable and adequate meals affected their ability to focus on school. Second, that these parents experienced parental trauma which was coupled in their inability to parent their children effectively at times and created feelings of guilt. Third, that in spite of the challenges that food insecurity presented, many of these students used the resources that the college offered as motivation to persevere. This chapter will discuss the major findings, from the analyzed data, to address each of the two research questions, as well as, connecting the findings to the existing literature, that was reviewed in chapter two.

Implications of the Findings

The first question inquired about students who are parents' experiences with food insecurity. The analysis of the data found that the student-participants were concerned with the lack of financial resources which contributed to their inability to provide adequate and affordable food for themselves and their families. This lack of financial resources remained one of the major reasons for the initial struggle with food insecurity. Maslow (1943) demonstrated in his theory of human motivation that basic needs are essential for the proper functioning of the body. Of the basic needs, food is at the very base of the pyramid. Students' ability to feed themselves and their families was directly tied to the manner in which they were able to function in school. Students reported having to go without food or eating less because they wanted to ensure that their children

were fed. Other implications of food insecurity were the emotional strain that it caused. Students reported suffering from anxiety and having to figure out specific ways to cope on a daily basis.

In the area of insufficient financial resources, three negative consequences emerged through the analysis of the collected data from the student-participant interviews. The first negative consequence was the inability to earn a livable wage through employment. The second negative consequence was that students oftentimes had to borrow money in order that they can fill the gap of not having sufficient money to purchase food. Students in the individual interviews stressed about having to borrow money and how that affected their perception of themselves and their ability to care for their families. The third negative consequence was that, if eligible for government subsidies such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), it was oftentimes not sufficient to support families for the entire period for which it was allotted. Student-participants from the individual interviews were frustrated with the system that did not seem to account for inflation in calculating the amount of SNAP benefits that were awarded. Rawls (1971) theory of justice spoke to the inequalities of the society and in an attempt to ensure that they are better able to provide a better life for themselves students persist to degree attainment. Community colleges provide an excellent opportunity for students who are parents to obtain the education and skill-sets needed to obtain employment which sets them on the path of breaking the cycle of poverty. Understanding the basic needs of the student population, helps the institution to better prepare the student for economic success.

The second research question examined the perception that student parents have of the supports that the community college provided in relation to food insecurity. The analysis of data found that although the college offered a number of resources, some student-participants did not use the resources. For example, during the time of COVID-19, students were concerned with using the public transportation system as they feared becoming ill. Moreover, many of the student-participants took advantage of the opportunity to participate in remote classes as a result did not need to come to the campus. Speaking generally and regarding resource availability as a whole and food accessibility in particular, students struggled to understand why food was not readily accessible to them. The perception that we live in a very wealthy society and consequently we should not have to be competing for basic needs such as food, was one of the concerns expressed by some of the students. Students were concerned with the notion that this competition for limited resources contributed to the inequality they experienced (Marx & Engels, 1948). Additionally, Marx and Engels (1848) posited that if one cannot make a livable wage, it is almost impossible to meet basic needs. The experiences of many of the participants were that they were receiving incomes far below the poverty line. It is important to make a note that Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (1848) conflict theory, which is closely aligned with social justice theory concerning equity of resources such as food and economic stability, was viewed by some as anti-capitalist. In the larger system under which the student-participants reside, resources such as food have not been easy to obtain. Although institutions cannot be compared to the larger system, they still have a responsibility to respond to challenges faced by students and provide needed resources.

In relation to the students' perception of the resources provided by the college, many of the students indicated that they were aware of the resources and some took the opportunity to use some of the resources. Students who visited the department offering services were assessed for overall need. As an example, students who indicated that they needed assistance with transportation, oftentimes also needed food. Consequently, they were provided with pantry bags, supermarket gift cards or cafeteria food vouchers in addition to a Metro card so that they can get to school. Similarly, when students expressed that they were struggling with mental health issues, they were referred to the counseling center. Many of the student-participants expressed that having a professional with whom they can speak and express their concerns, helped them to cope with their anxieties. The consensus among those students who used the resources was that it helped them to address their immediate emergency need.

Although this particular college provided some resources to students outside of the classroom to help them with their challenges, it is important to note that in order that these resources are provided, there are a number of things that must be in place. Oftentimes, institutions have to partner with external resources for the funding to be able to provide the services. This dependency is detrimental as funding is always contingent on availability of funds. It is contingent on the institution to consider the ramifications of not being able to obtain funding and consider ways to continue to provide resources to its students.

Relationship to Prior Research

This study utilized data from prior research which helped to inform about the issue of food insecurity among college students. The findings from data collected from this research will be linked to the literature in chapter 2. The following are the main findings.

Lack of Financial Resources

The first major finding of this study was that a lack of financial resources negatively affected the student-participants in a number of ways. Students reported unemployment and underemployment, having to borrow money, and receipt of insufficient SNAP benefits as the major reasons why they were challenged to provide food for themselves and their families. In relation to the employment issue, many students reported that not being able to find and maintain work that provided a livable wage was problematic. This study supported existing research literature by revealing that students were working in jobs that were not financially sound and consequently they were not earning enough to support their families (Stack & Meredith, 2017; Buckwalter & Togila, 2019). Additionally, students reported having to borrow money to fill the gap of not having sufficient money to buy food. In some instances, borrowing money became a way of life (Gaines et al., 2014; Goldrick-Rab, 2015; Kalil & Ryan, 2010). This study affirmed existing literature by showing that students oftentimes survived because they were supplementing their income with supports from other individuals. Moreover, for those student-participants who received SNAP benefits, they stated that it was usually not sufficient to last the entire month of the benefit period inadequate (Freudenberg et al. (2011). This study supported existing literature by revealing that the amount of SNAP benefits that the students were receiving was insufficient to support themselves and their

families. The inability to adequately provide food for their families caused students stress and affected their ability fully focus in school.

Parental Trauma

The second major finding from this study was the parental trauma that many of the students experienced. Students indicated that stress and worry about how to provide for their families and their ability to effectively parent their children while dealing with food insecurity were the two major concerns. Related to stress and worry, students reported feelings of anxiety, sadness, and frustration at not being able to provide for their children (Goldrick-Rab, 2015; Maynard, et al., 2018). This study supported existing literature that when students are unable to provide food for themselves and their families, they are in a constant state of stress. Further, stress about not having sufficient food and trying to be successful at completing school obligations affected the manner in which students interacted with their children. Many of the students were single parents who struggled with balancing all of their responsibilities (Pinard et al., 2015; Stack et al., 2017; Buckwalter & Togila, 2019). This discovery affirmed existing research literature that students who are parents carry the additional responsibilities that interfere with their ability to parent their children effectively.

Perseverance of Students who are Parents

The third major finding from this study was that students who are parents persevere through the challenges of not having sufficient food to feed themselves and their families. Students reported that they were able to progress through school because of a number of reasons. Chief among those reasons were the sacrifices that they made and the strength that it took for them to deal with the challenges of food insecurity. Although

some of the students expressed that the supports that they received from the college was important and provided the motivation for them to carry on, other students revealed that although the college had many resources, they did not take advantage of using them because of the inconvenience or fear of getting to the campus. Yet a few of the students mentioned that they were unaware of the resources. This highlighted the issue of how the services were being marketed to the students. Finally, the students were elated that, in spite of their struggles with food insecurity, they were progressing through school and some had expectations of graduating. In relation to the sacrifices that these students who are parents make for their families, data analysis showed that students confirmed that they oftentimes left themselves last in ensuring that they ate when there was not sufficient food for the family (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2018; Pinard et al., 2015). This study supported existing research literature that student parents made a number of sacrifices in order that their children and families would survive. Moreover, students persevered because they received vital supports that helped them to manage the challenges of food insecurity. For many of the students, without these supports they were uncertain how they would have persisted (Carr, et al., 2020; El Zein, et al., 2019; Hickey, et al. 2019). This study supported existing research literature that when students are aware of on campus resources and they use them, they are better able to manage the issue of food insecurity. Further, students were emphatic that they will persist and succeed in spite of the challenges that they faced with food insecurity. Many of the students pointed to the fact that they were in their last semester and preparing for graduation. Although some studies focused on the impact of food insecurity and academics (Maroto et al., 2014: Patton et al.), none of the studies reviewed for this study highlighted the persistence of

student parents challenged with food insecurity. To that that end, this study identified or filled gap in the existing research literature.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited in its scope because of the size of the sample and because it was a single case. Due to the nature of a qualitative, single-case research study, the small sample size may limit the external validity of the findings. Yin (2018) explained that the external validity of the case study analysis is an apparent inability to generalize the findings because the goal is to study what makes a particular group or circumstance unique. Further, he explained that like single experiments, single case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations (Yin, 2018).

The original plan for the study was to do a collective, qualitative case of two urban New York City community colleges but as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher was unable to gain access to the second site because there was a state-wide closure of schools and there was limited number of students that were allowed to attend classes. In changing the methodology to a single case study, the researcher increased the number of participants, doubling the number of student-participants and administrator-participants, and included additional documents from other departments such as the Counseling Center and the Center for Childcare to provide a deeper and richer analysis of the case study.

Another limitation was that the sample was chosen through purposeful and deliberate sampling. The sample chosen for this study was purposeful and deliberate, as the participants were either currently enrolled students or they were Administrators with responsibility for student-centered services. The researcher was employed at the study

site. And since the researcher was the Director of the food service, it may have had an influence on the participants' responses. However, the participants were fully aware that they were not going to be penalized or disciplined for the responses or their unwillingness to participate in the study.

A third limitation is that the study took place over the course of two months during the 2021 school year. Many factors contributed to the short timeframe including the closure of the campus with the exception of a limited number of students who were allowed to take in-person classes. Since students were not available to utilize the resources as easily as they would if they were on campus and since the manner of how the services were provided changed, the findings of this study may be limited to this one particular circumstance.

Recommendation for Future Practice

The prevalence of food insecurity has been a major concern on college campuses for a number of decades. Many institutions of higher learning have grappled with ways to address the issue of insufficient food for their students. The present study revealed three themes regarding student parents who experience food insecurity. These themes included a lack of financial resources, parental trauma, and perseverance of students who are parents. Table 5 outlines targeted suggestions on ways each stakeholder group can support students in this category.

Table 5

Suggestion for Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Suggestions
Board of Trustee	Review current application for admission and include questions which specifically ask about basic needs of students.
College	Use data from the admission application as well as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to develop a profile of the students who present with immediate need for services such as food.
Department	Negotiate line item budgets for food and transportation services so that students who are eligible can receive those services
Staff and Faculty	Conduct assessments to determine basic needs of students who are parents and make appropriate referrals for services
Students	Engage in support groups with students who are parents so as to have a network of resources that are available.

The first finding of the study exposed the first major theme that students experienced a lack of financial resources which interfered with their ability to care for their families and had an impact on their experiences with school. In many instances, student's inability to pay their bills and purchase food can be barriers to their education. The college should work with the appropriate government entities, such as Human Resource Administration (HRA) to establish partnerships to assist in the processing of benefits application, thereby making the application process easier. In instances where students are eligible for SNAP, programs should be funded to fill the gap of the items SNAP does not permit to be purchased. For example, SNAP does not purchase personal and household items but they are no less essential.

The second finding of the study revealed the major theme that these parents experience trauma because they are concerned about filling the gap of not having sufficient to take care of their families. This trauma manifest itself in mental health

issues that interfere with school. The college should strength the mental health services that are provided to students but more importantly, implement programs that address stigma which may allow students to engage in mental health services.

The third finding of the study showed the major theme of perseverance where students used resources offered by the institution as motivation to persist. Institutions, working with stakeholders should create specific programs targeted at students who are parents. These programs would offered very particular services that are unique to student parents. For example, some of the services would include referrals to childcare centers, mental health services, respite care so that students can be provided with time to practice self-care.

Recommendations for Future Research

The first major finding of this study was that a lack of financial resources negatively affected the student-participants in several ways. Students reported unemployment and underemployment, having to borrow money, and receipt of insufficient SNAP benefits as the major reasons why they were challenged to provide food for themselves and their families. In relation to the employment issue, many students reported that not being able to find and maintain work that provided a livable wage was problematic. Educational institutions may want to consider the impact of student's inability to make a livable wage or the student's ability to perform well in school. Employment opportunities should be made available to students through several mechanisms. Studies can be conducted to determine what skill sets are needed to help students succeed in school and beyond.

The second research question examined the perception that student parents have of the supports that the community college provide in relation to food insecurity. The analysis of data found that although the college offered several resources, some student-participants were not particularly aware of all of them and did not use many of the resources. Regarding the use of the resource, it may be helpful to conduct a study to understand why some students are reluctant to use the services. In the case of food insecurity, understanding what role stigma plays in students' reluctance to access food, even when available, can lead to providing services in a manner that encourage the use of resources.

Conclusion

The findings in this study revealed, not only the experiences of student parents who experience food insecurity, but also their perception of the resources that are offered to them by the institution. As the recommendations for future practice suggests, these findings highlighted the need for educational leaders to incorporate a strategy to obtain vital information from students early on in their admission application process, which could help to identify services to address basic needs. The recommendations also suggested that institutions and stakeholders may want to develop programs that are targeted specifically for this student parent population.

Overall, food insecurity has had a devastating effect on students as a whole and student parents in particular. As a result, students have grappled with stress and worry, feelings of inadequacy parenting their children and doubts about their ability to take care of their families. Although the research on the effects of food insecurity on college students exist, research which highlights the specific struggles that students who are

parents face, is limited. Of the research studies that do explore specifics about food insecurity and student parents, they mostly focus on the prevalence of food insecurity. The inclusion of student parents' experiences with food insecurity addresses the gap in the existing research literature.

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL



Federal Wide Assurance: FWA00009066

Jul 19, 2021 3:32:01 PM EDT

PI: Deborah Harte
CO-PI: Catherine DiMartino
Ed Admin & Instruc Leadership

Re: Expedited Review - Initial - **IRB-FY2021-469** *FOOD INSECURITY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO ARE PARENTS ATTENDING COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A QUALITATIVE, COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY*

Dear Deborah Harte:

The St John's University Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for *FOOD INSECURITY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO ARE PARENTS ATTENDING COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A QUALITATIVE, COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY*. The approval is effective from July 16, 2021 through July 15, 2022.

Decision: Approved

PLEASE NOTE: If you have collected any data prior to this approval date, the data must be discarded.

Selected Category: 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Sincerely,

Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD, ABPP
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Professor of Psychology

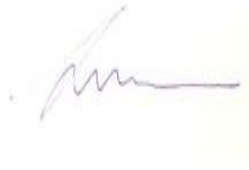
Marie Nitopi, Ed.D.
IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX B: STUDY SITE APPROVAL

To whomsoever it may concern

This is to certify that Ms. Deborah Harte is authorized to conduct her research as per a valid IRB protocol from St Johns University. She has approval from student affairs to survey students for *FOOD INSECURITY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO ARE PARENTS ATTENDING COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A QUALITATIVE, COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY*

Thank you

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Deborah Harte", written over a light yellow rectangular background.

MS-2020-001

APPENDIX C: LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT FORM (STUDENT)



School of Education
Department of Administrative and Instructional Leadership

Title of Research Topic: Food Insecurity Among College Students Who Are Parents Attending Community Colleges: A Qualitative, Collective Case Study.

Researcher: Deborah C. Harte

Institution: St. John's University, Queens, NY

You are invited to participate in a study that explore the experiences of food insecurity on college campuses. This study will be conducted by Deborah C. Harte, a third year doctoral candidate at St. John's University. As part of this study the researcher will be interviewing student parents and administrators about food insecurity on the college campuses. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of food insecurity among community college students who are parents while attending community colleges. By examining the experiences of food insecurity among this group of students, the parent's feelings, opinions, and lived experiences will be an integral part in helping institutions to understand the unique needs of these students and provide suggestions for implementation of targeted policy and program changes around food insecurity that would address barriers to these student's education and better prepare the students for the successful attainment of their goals.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview. The interview will consist of a series of open-ended questions provided by the researcher. The session should take approximately one hour and will be audio and video recorded using a digital video conferencing platform (Zoom) at a designated date and time.

There are no perceived risks involved with participation in this study beyond those of everyday life. However, I will be asking you to give up some of your valuable time. The benefit of participation in this study will be that your perceptions and experiences will help institutions to understand the unique needs of student parents and provide suggestions for implementation of targeted policy and program changes around food insecurity that would address barriers to these student's education and better prepare the

students for the successful attainment of their goals. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or penalty. Refusal to participate or discontinue participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your identity as a participant will remain confidential. Your name and the name of your school building will not be disclosed or included in any forms, transcription, data analysis, or research findings. Pseudonyms will be utilized. This consent form is the only document identifying you as a participant. It will be stored securely by the researcher and data collected will be destroyed at the end of the study. If you are interested in securing a copy of the results, you may contact the researcher. Aggregated results may be published in academic venues to inform educational researchers and practitioners with understanding how to improve services to students who are parents.

If you have questions about the purpose of this research study, you may contact the principal researcher, Deborah C. Harte at 917-254-2146 or Deborah.harte17@my.stjohns.edu. If you have questions concerning your rights as a human participant, you may contact the University's Human Subjects Review Board at St. John's University at 718-990-1440, specifically Dr. Raymond DiGiuseppe, 718-990-1955, or disgiuseer@stjohns.edu, or the researcher's committee mentor, Catherine DiMartino, at 718-990-2585 or dimartic@st.johns.edu. Your participation in this research is voluntary.

Agreement to Participate

Your signature acknowledges receipt of a copy of the consent form as well as your willingness to participate:

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

**APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT E-MAIL TO PARTICIPATE IN FOOD
INSECURITY STUDY (INTERVIEWS)**



**ST. JOHN'S
UNIVERSITY**

Dear Participant:

My name is Deborah Harte. I am a doctoral candidate at St. John's University seeking volunteers to participate in a study to explore the experiences of food insecurity among community college students who are parents while attending community colleges. I would like to interview volunteers for one hour sessions, through a Video-conferencing platform, and using a recording device.

By examining the experiences of food insecurity among this group of students, the parent's feelings, opinions, and lived experiences will be an integral part in helping institutions to understand the unique needs of these students and provide suggestions for implementation of targeted policy and program changes around food insecurity that would address barriers to these student's education and better prepare the students for the successful attainment of their goals. Please contact me at 917 254 2146 or e-mail me at Deborah.harte17@my.stjohns.edu if you are interested in participating in this study. Thank you.

Deborah C. Harte

APPENDIX E: RECRUITMENT FLYER



**VOLUNTEERS
NEEDED FOR
RESEARCH**

I am a doctoral student looking to interview students for a study which explores their experiences with food insecurity. If you are:

- ✚ A student who is also a parent
- ✚ Currently enrolled in school

Please contact Deborah C. Harte at
deborah.harte17@my.stjohns.edu or 917 254 2146

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (STUDENT)

Opening:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview concerning experiences of food insecurity among college students who are parents in a community college setting. Your participation in this interview supports my research on how food insecurity affects students academically, socially, and physically. The goal of the interview is to discuss your perspective on food insecurity. If you decide at any point during the interview that you no longer want to participate, please let me know.

Overview:

During the interview I will ask some questions. The interview session will be about an hour and will be audio recorded so that an accurate account of what is said can be captured. The only people who will know what is said are the two of us on this Video-conferencing platform during the interview. The discussion and transcript from the interview are completely confidential. When the results of the interview are shared your names will not be included. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions:

1. Please answer these preliminary demographic questions.
 - a. What is your student status?
 - b. Are you a full time or part time student?
 - c. What year of your program are you in?
 - d. What is your age?
 - e. What is your marital status?
 - f. What is your primary source of income?
 - g. How many children under the age of 18 are in your care?
 - h. What is the age of the youngest child?
2. Please tell me about your living arrangements
 - a. Do live with your children alone?
 - b. Are there other family members who share your residence?
 - c. If other members live with you, do they share the expenses (e.g. rent, utilities?)
3. Please tell me about your financial resources.
 - a. Do you receive any government subsidy (e.g. SNAP)
 - b. If you receive SNAP, is it sufficient to last the entire month?
 - c. Do you visit food pantries on the campus? How frequently?
 - d. Do you borrow money to purchase food?

4. Can you think back on any experience you had when you did not have access to food?
 - a. Please describe that experience.
 - b. Please tell me how it affected you.
 - c. How did it make you feel?
5. Was there a time within the last 30 days that you were worried that you would run out of food before you got money to buy food?
 - a. How did that make you feel?
 - b. What did you do to obtain food?
6. Can you please tell me if, within the last 30 days, you and your children were able to eat nutritionally balanced meals?
7. Can you please tell me if, within the last 30 days, you have cut the size of your meals because there was not enough money for food?
 - a. How many days did this happen?
 - b. How did this make you feel?
 - c. How did eating less affect your health?
8. In general, how would you describe your overall health?
 - a. Please describe your mental health.
 - b. Please describe your physical health.
 - c. Please describe your child/children mental and physical health.
9. How did food insecurity impact your learning/meeting academic expectations?
10. Thinking about the amount of stress in your life, how would you describe most days?
 - a. How has the stress affected you parenting your children? Please describe.
 - b. What, if any, support systems are in place?
11. What resources has the institution provided for:
 - a. financial assistance
 - b. food assistance
 - c. mental health intervention
12. What did you find most helpful about the resources? Why?
13. Are you aware of the network of services that are offered to college students

who are parents experiencing food insecurity? What are some of them?

14. How did the institution market the services to you?

15. How do you prefer the institution to communicate with you?

16. In terms of food access, how has the pandemic affected you and your children? Please describe.

Closing:

Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences of food insecurity among college students who are parents in a community college setting. Your feedback is invaluable and will help support my research study as well as to influence decisions made by institutions of higher learning to implement policies and or programs that will address the basic needs of students who are parents.

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (ADMINISTRATOR)

Opening:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview concerning experiences of food insecurity among college students who are parents in a community college setting. Your participation in this interview supports my research on how food insecurity affects students academically, socially, and physically. The goal of the interview is to discuss your perspective on food insecurity. If you decide at any point during the interview that you no longer want to participate, please let me know.

Overview:

During the interview I will ask some questions. The interview session will be about an hour and will be audio recorded so that an accurate account of what is said can be captured. The only people who will know what is said are the two of us on this zoom during the interview. The discussion and transcript from the interview are completely confidential. When the results of the interview are shared your names will not be included. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions:

1. How long have you been an administrator responsible for student-centered services?
2. What are your major responsibilities?
 3. What is your perception of food insecurity on the campus?
 4. Can you give me examples of services or programs that you have developed to address basic needs, such as food insecurity, of students?
 5. How do you hear from students about their basic needs, such as food insecurity?
 6. What are some of the requests that students make as it relates to food insecurity?
 7. How are services that address basic needs, such as food insecurity, marketed to students?
 8. What marketing strategies are particularly effective?
 9. How is food insecurity a priority in your institution's strategic plan?

10. How are budgetary decisions made to address basic needs, such as food insecurity?
11. What policies do you have in place that affect the provision of services to students who suffer from food insecurity?
12. What challenges do you experience in service provision to the students?
13. What stories are you hearing from students about their challenges with Remote Learning?
14. How have students indicated that they have been coping with food insecurity in the remote environment?
15. What issues are students relating regarding food insecurity and their academic progress?

Closing:

Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences of food insecurity among college students who are parents in a community college setting. Your feedback is invaluable and will help support my research study as well as to influence decisions made by institutions of higher learning to implement policies and or programs that will address the basic needs of students who are parents.

APPENDIX H: OBSERVATION ANALYSIS PROTOCOL

Observation Analysis Protocol: The purpose for the observation is to “take field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

1. Gather relevant information
 - a. Name of site
 - b. Time of observation
 - c. Date of observation
 - d. Field notes
 - i. Descriptive notes such as the physical setting
 - ii. Reflective notes such as impressions
2. Develop an organization and management scheme.
 - a. Upload to Dedoose to store and manage all data.
3. Explore content
 - a. Data Analysis through multiple rounds of coding
 - i. Attribute coding
 - ii. Pattern coding
 - iii. Code weaving

APPENDIX I: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS PROTOCOL

Document Analysis Protocol – adapted from O’Leary (2014)

1. Gather relevant texts
 - a. Culper Community College Brochure
 - b. Culper Community College Post Card
 - c. Culper Community College Intake Form
 - d. Culper Community College Initial Pantry Intake Form
 - e. Culper Community College Follow-up Pantry Form
 - f. Culper Community College Pantry Bag Items Form
 - g. Culper Community College Emergency Food Request
 - h. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities’ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
2. Develop an organization and management scheme.
 - b. Upload to Dedoose to store and manage all data.
3. Assess authenticity of documents.
4. Make copies of originals for annotation.
5. Explore documents background information.
6. Ask questions about the documents:
 - a. Who produced it?
 - b. Why?
 - c. When?
 - d. Type of data?
7. Explore content
 - a. Data Analysis through multiple rounds of coding
 - i. Attribute coding
 - ii. Pattern coding
 - iii. Code weaving

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