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Public Housing Professionals Perspectives on Mobile Food Unit Location and Accessibility for Children

Antoinette Lashurn Simpson
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Antoinette L. Simpson

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Walden University
2025

Abstract

Public Housing Professionals Perspectives on Mobile Food Unit Location and
Accessibility for Children

by

Antoinette L. Simpson

MA, Liberty University, 2015

BS, Point University, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment.

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human & Social Services

Walden University

November 2025

Abstract

Poor nutrition is a major contributor to death in the United States, and residents of public housing face disproportionate challenges in maintaining adequate nutrition. Public housing is the nation's oldest housing subsidy program, providing more than one million units for millions of residents, many of whom are women, minorities, and unmarried individuals with incomes below the poverty line. The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore public housing professionals' perspectives on using a mobile food unit located within housing communities to help reduce food insecurity. Feminist intersectionality theory provided the framework for this study, emphasizing how overlapping systems of inequality, including racism, classism, and sexism, shape access to resources such as food. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 public housing professionals across five southern states. Thematic analysis produced six key theme findings: (a) Food insecurity exists in public housing. (b) Everyone needs food, not just children. (c) Food subsidy programs are not enough. (d) In addition to income, large family sizes and access to the internet are challenges to accessing food. (e) There are multiple ways people get access to food. (f) Mobile food units are needed to reduce food insecurity. These findings may support social change by guiding nonprofit, human and social services providers, faith-based, and governmental organizations in developing strategies including mobile food units to decrease food insecurity in public housing communities.

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Dedication

First and foremost, I dedicate this dissertation to God for ordering my steps. I would not have completed this PhD without God's guidance and support. Psalm 37:23 states, "The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him" (*New International Version*). Jeremiah 1:5 states, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you" (*English Standard Version*). Thank you, God, for giving me the life of helping people, my purpose-driven life.

I dedicated this dissertation to my mother, Leona Brinson, and my grandmother, Nona Johnson. I was the first to graduate from college and stood on the shoulders of the women before me. I come from a line of strong women. You were my example of women who were leaders and knew how to care for the family and the community. I know you are in heaven smiling, applauding, and praying me through. Just know it was what you two instilled in me that gave me a strong foundation in the Lord. To my father, Abram Brinson Jr., I learned what hard work and sacrifice looked like, and to my grandfather, Havis Johnson (pastor), I learned the importance of teaching and spreading the word of God.

I dedicated this dissertation to Canei Nilinda Simpson. You have blessed so many people in the short time you have lived (past in 2004). I will never forget how you would invite students and fill a school bus of middle school students on Wednesday night for Word Up Bible Study so they can learn about God. But most importantly, you stood by me most when I needed you. You did not leave my side that whole week of losing my grandmother. You were such a blessing in my life. You were such a blessing to many

people that we named the nonprofit after you, Canei Community Development Consortium, to be a blessing to others. God has used Canei Community Development Consortium to bless families and communities.

Then there is my husband, Marvin Simpson, who has been there through the good and bad times. This PhD was indeed a journey (a marathon). You have been with me on this journey for over 5 years. I know you did not sign up for this. Our lives changed a lot, and there were sacrifices we had to endure. You volunteer to pick up house responsibilities and cooking. You stood by me and listened when I had to cry and wanted to give up, but you encouraged me to trust God and keep going. You are set FREE from the house responsibilities and cooking. Thank you because some husbands would have left.

I dedicated this dissertation to my family; I know holidays, Sunday dinners, and family gatherings were not the same. There were times I had to leave family functions early due to homework. There were times I had to miss family functions due to homework. Thank you for understanding and not taking it personally. I want you to learn from this experience that whatever God has for you, through faith and handwork, you can succeed. The bar has been set high; with God, anything is obtainable.

But Matthew Simpson, my youngest son, you were my rock! You would call me to see how things were progressing with my PhD. You always had time to listen, help me see things differently, and give me excellent advice! I would not have returned after taking a break if not for you.

Last, I dedicate this dissertation to all the nonprofit organizations, public housing agencies, and volunteers that work selflessly in serving people, trying to make the lives of others better. The information from this dissertation will help you continue to be a changing agent by putting a mobile food truck in public housing agencies, homeless shelters, community centers and neighborhoods that are food insecure to reduce food insecurity in families.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge Walden University for educating me to gain additional knowledge and to better equip me to serve the public housing communities, which is my God-given vision. This PhD was the most rewarding degree, and I have obtained so much new information that has prepared me to help different public housing communities.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Jim Castleberry (Associate Dean of Human Services and Psychology Department) for having an open-door policy and sharing your support and guidance. I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Tracy Jackson (first chair) and Dr. Dorothy Seabrook, the second member for your support and guidance in completing this journey. Your feedback has been instrumental in shaping my research. To my previous Chair, Dr. Antoinette L. Pigatt, thank you for your support. Your name was my motivation to continue the race (same name). I want to thank my first Chair, Dr. Sarah Mattheny for assisting in the first part of my dissertation. Her vision of expanding my dissertation to cover five southern states has educated me in understanding the needs of the five southern states' public housing agencies, which will help me to become a better social changing agent. I cannot go without acknowledging Ms. Tiffany Jones, my student advisor; this lady is truly a warrior for her students. Thank you for the phone calls to check on my progress in obtaining my Ph.D. In addition, Dr. Andrea Curry, thank you for your support and advice. Last Dr. Kelly Chermack (Qualitative Methodology Advisor), I am forever grateful for your help and support, but most of all your patience.

Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge my friend Jennifer Moreland and the Friendship Community Church family for always sharing an encouraging word.

A Change Agent...

A social justice change agent chooses courage over fear. They know they cannot look around, hoping someone else will lead the change. They refuse to stand by and watch as the people they cherish are excluded and even harmed. They raise issues. They motivate. They stand up and stand out. They speak their truth to power to create greater inclusion and equity in the workplace and beyond. They ask questions to help the organization meet its stated mission, vision, and values. They challenge everyone – including themselves – to do more and to be more (by Dr. Kathy Obear).

“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.”
– Harriet Tubman

Table of Contents

List of Tables	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study	1
Background of Study	3
Problem Statement.....	6
Purpose of the Study.....	7
Research Question	8
Theoretical Framework	8
Nature of the Study.....	10
Definitions	12
Assumptions	13
Scope and Delimitation	14
Limitations of the Study	14
Significance of the Study.....	15
Summary.....	16
Chapter 2: Literature Review	18
Introduction	18
Literature Search Strategy	19
Feminist Theory.....	19
The First Wave: 1848 to 1920	20
The Second Wave: 1963 to the 1980s	21
The Third Wave: 1991 to 2010	22

The Present Day: A Fourth Wave?.....	23
Feminist Theory Intersectional Approaches.....	23
Review of Food Security and Insecurity Matters	26
Food Security.....	26
Food Insecurity.....	26
Who is Experiencing Food Insecurity?	27
People Live in Food Deserts.....	28
Rising Cost of Living	28
Low Educational Attainment.....	29
Health Problems/Disabilities	30
Widowhood	31
The Older Population	32
College Students.....	34
Domestic Violence Victim	35
Severe Mental Illnesses (SMI)	35
Substance/Alcoholic Abuse.....	36
Homelessness	37
History of Incarceration.....	38
Individuals Who Receive Food Assistance	39
Veterans	40
What Predicts Food Insecurity?.....	42
Malnutrition: The Effects of Food Insecurity on Children.....	43

Public Housing and Food Insecurity	47
The Sociodemographic Characteristics of Public Housing Residents	47
Mobile Food Unit -Truck/ Accessibility	49
Summary.....	50
Chapter 3: Research Method	54
Introduction	54
Research Design and Rationale	54
Role of the Researcher.....	55
Sampling Methodology	56
Participant Selection Logic.....	56
Participant Sampling and Saturation	57
Participant Recruitment and Data Collection	58
Data Analysis Plan	60
Research Credibility and Issues of Trustworthiness	62
Summary.....	65
Chapter 4: Results.....	67
Introduction	67
Setting	67
Demographics.....	68
Data Collection.....	69
Evidence of Trustworthiness	73
Credibility.....	73

Transferability	73
Dependability	74
Confirmability	74
Results	74
Theme 1: Food Insecurity Exists in Public Housing	75
Theme 2: Everyone Needs Food, not Just Children	78
Theme 3: Food Subsidy Programs are not Enough	80
Theme 4: In Addition to Income, Having a Large Family and Access to the Internet are Challenges in Access to Food	83
Theme 5: There are Multiple Ways People Get Access to Food.....	85
Theme 6: Mobile Food Units May or May Not Be Needed to Reduce Food Insecurity	87
Summary.....	89
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations	90
Interpretation of the Findings	91
Theme 1: Food Insecurity Exists in Public Housing	92
Theme 2: Everyone Needs Food, Not Just Children	93
Theme 3: Food Subsidy Programs Are Not Enough	93
Theme 4: In Addition to Income, Having a Large Family and Access to the Internet Are Challenges in Access to Food	94
Theme 5: There Are Multiple Ways People Get Access to Food	94
Theme 6: Mobile Food Units May or May Not Be Needed.....	95

Limitation of the Study.....	98
Recommendations	98
Implication for Social Change.....	100
Conclusion.....	103
References	105
Appendix A: Interview Guide	125
Appendix B: Coding Chart.....	128

List of Tables

Table 1. Demographics of the Participants.....69

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The government established public housing to provide decent and safe rental housing for eligible low-income families, older adults, and individuals with disabilities (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD], 2021). The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2021) noted that public housing helps families afford housing and avoid homelessness. Accordingly, a family must have a low income to move into public housing (The Center on Budget and Policy, 2021). As it is, most households benefiting from public housing have incomes below the poverty line, and a person of color heads more than 70% of such households or families (Fischer et al., 2021).

Some families living in public housing report food insecurity, characterized by disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake (Helms et al., 2020). The statistical characteristics of people who live in public housing are: 51.4% are aged 18–44; 70.6% of the heads of household are female; 32% graduated from high school; 31.4% did not graduate from high school; 59.6% have no job; 24% work a full-time job; and 16.5% work a part-time job (Helm et al., 2020).

With approximately 75% of public housing occupants jobless or working part-time, food insecurity is rampant (Helm et al., 2020). It is also highly associated with certain household socioeconomic factors, including low income, low educational attainment, unemployment, and a household's difficulty paying bills. Due to insufficient or outright lack of money and related resources, some households experience food insecurity and the persistent difficulty of providing adequate food for members of their household. This is especially prevalent among single-adult households with children,

single-person households, and households headed by Black or Hispanic individuals (Helms et al., 2020).

Children and residents of public housing who suffer from food insecurity are psychosocially and physically harmed, given that food insecurity is associated with higher stress, more personal problems, higher experiences of physical symptoms, and lower social support (Quintiliani et al., 2021). Food insecurity among children hurts school readiness; children have poor developmental trajectories and worse social skills than food-secure children (Hambrick, 2020). The underlying negative implications for child health and development (e.g., impacts on physical, social, cognitive/academic, and behavioral development) are significant (Gallegos et al., 2021). Public housing directors' perspectives on mobile food unit locations and accessibility for children, intended to reduce or stem the tide of food insecurity, are curious and worth investigating.

The rest of this chapter explores the study's main topic: Can children who live in public housing benefit from a mobile food unit to decrease food insecurity? It also presents the background of the study, which focuses on the success of other mobile food units, such as the federal nutrition programs and other nonprofit organizations that successfully reached children dealing with food insecurity. The problem statement, the purpose of the study, research questions, and an overview of this qualitative study's framework—the feminist theory-intersectional approach—are presented. Following these are the terms and definitions used frequently throughout the study and a discussion of the research's assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance.

Background of Study

Food-insecure households with children and adults often rely on low-cost and unhealthy food. As a result, they adjust their food intake by reducing portions, skipping meals, or going hungry (Dush, 2020). Food insecurity is tied to specific groups of individuals, particularly women, sexual minority, those with low income, and racial and ethnic minorities (Bowen et al., 2019). There is a relationship between race, ethnicity, and food insecurity, which is intertwined with poverty and unemployment. To that end, the socio-economic problems associated with food insecurity are poverty, ill health, and the lack of education (Drewnowski, 2022). Public housing is the country's oldest and largest housing subsidy program. Yet, there are 1.1 million units of public housing operated by over 3,000 local public housing agencies, serving 2.2 million residents (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2019).

Households in public housing neighborhoods face challenges, including heightened levels of poverty, income below the poverty level, food insecurity, and crime (Choi et al., 2022). Seventy percent of these households are headed by minorities, of which 43% are Black, 25% are Latino, and 28% are White (Fischer et al., 2021). However, 74% of these household minorities have women as heads of the household; in terms of employment percentage: 59.6% of head of the house were not working, 16.5% of head of the house worked part-time, 24% and of head of the house worked full-time (Helms et al., 2020). The public housing residents reported food insecurity by race in 2020: Hispanics 42.4%, Black 38.6%, White 28.7%, and Other 34.4% (Helms et al., 2020).

Concerning the effects of food insecurity on households, Hines et al. (2021) posited that food insecurity effects on children are linked to special education services, mental health counseling, and repeating grades. In support, Pathak et al. (2022) and Gallegos et al. (2021) added that children suffering from food insecurity in early childhood can be affected cognitively. Hines et al. described the extent and nature of cognitive impact. Hines et al. found that food-insecure children have lower cognitive skills and mental proficiency, such as lower math and reading scores. They postulated that food insecurity affects the neurodevelopmental processes, brain functions, and energy levels that support social-emotional, self-regulatory, and cognitive development. This impacts children, preventing them from obtaining an excellent education to become self-sufficient and productive. Arlinghaus and Laska (2021) argued that such an impact on the development and cognitive processes of children could lead to another intergeneration of food insecurity, which is higher in minority communities. One of the apparent and prevalent results of food insecurity effects is that children who live in food-insecure households are more likely to drop out of school and have poor academic performance, which contributes to social disadvantage when transitioning to adulthood (Dush, 2020).

As one ameliorative approach to minimizing food insecurity effects, mobile food units have decreased food insecurity among children and their families. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a federal nutrition program, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), served children who received free but reduced breakfast and lunch by transporting or creating Grab-N-Go pick-up locations (Dunn et al., 2020). Two-thirds of

the children's daily nutritional needs were met with school meals, as the federal nutrition program provided nutritional support to children who would have gone through food insecurity (Dunn et al., 2020). Although the federal food program, the SFSP, provides food to children who may be food insecure in the summer, many children who receive free or reduced school meals still go hungry over the summer. Sather et al. (2021) stated that many children could not pick up summer meals at a Grab-N-Go location due to a lack of transportation. The SFSP food program set a goal to meet the demands of children who may be food insecure by implementing a mobile feeding unit.

The SFSP employed drivers to drive vans equipped with and deliver prepared meals to increase the number of participants (Sather et al., 2021). The mobile feeding units arrive at each public housing location simultaneously daily and stay for 30 minutes. The SFSP reached an additional 71% of children who had never eaten at a mobile or SFSP feeding site. While the SFSP's supportive approach may be commendable, Helms et al. (2020) maintained that food insecurity remains an issue among 67% of families living in public housing. More studies on mobile feeding will be required to ascertain the best practices regarding site locations, timing, and food accessibility needed to decrease food insecurity in children (Sather et al., 2021). A wholesome solution is necessary, despite and in addition to the contributing efforts of organizations like Feeding America, which utilize mobile pantries to bring free food and groceries to communities without grocery stores or other food pantries (Feeding America, 2023). The Atlanta Community Food Bank (2023) stated that they opened mobile markets, which are pop-up pantries, to serve underserved communities.

Problem Statement

Whether food trucks and other food security approaches can wholesomely and adequately satisfy the need is yet to be answered. That 36.3% of families reported to be living in public housing continue to experience food insecurity, leaving much to be desired (Helms et al., 2020). It remains that hungry children are sick more often and can suffer from physical, developmental, and cognitive impairments, resulting in lower academic achievement than that of their peers. To that end, food-insecure adults and children have higher rates of mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They are at high risk for chronic diseases (Pathak et al., 2022).

Can these food trucks meet the insecure food problems continually experienced by public housing residents? Are there better management approaches and possible programmatic solutions? Although the food trucks of the SFSP food accessibility program at different sites and locations in the southern states of the United States deliver ready-to-consume food, the program still lacks its goal of minimizing or stemming food insecurity. Public housing professionals have a perspective worth exploring and identifying, which could present solutions that may significantly reduce or eliminate the food insecurity found in public housing. Given the existing incapability of the food truck program to ensure wholesome food security, I examined the different perspectives of public housing directors on food insecurity. There continues to exist a gap in which mobile feeding will be required to ascertain the best practices regarding site locations, timing, and the food accessibility needs of children eating there (Sather et al., 2021).

Purpose of the Study

I aimed to explore the perspectives of public housing professionals on the use of mobile food trucks for children living in public housing units to meet their goals of stemming food insecurity. I examined public housing professionals' perspectives on providing mobile food units to different site locations and accessibility for children in the southern states of the United States in reducing food insecurity. This study may be a changing agent for decreasing food insecurity in children who live in public housing. This study may help produce information that could help reach a population of food-insecure children. The study's outcome on mobile food unit services can help serve a population that does not have access to transportation or individuals living in a food desert. This study can help generate information needed to reduce food insecurity in children living in public housing, as food security helps to improve children's diet and health outcomes (see Woo Baidal et al., 2022). Mobile food units can effectively reduce household food insecurity and help counteract its adverse impacts on school readiness. In addition to the preceding, Children Healthwatch (2023) stated that including high-quality nutrition in the early days of child development is critical in improving low-income children's quality of life and long-term success. This initiative can affect children's chances of receiving the full benefit of high-quality early education if nutrition programs can reach children before they start school and support them outside of school throughout their formative years. This initiative can reduce the need for costly special education placements by supporting children's health and development early in the process. The investigation may yield relevant information and resourceful material to

support the social initiatives and public policies of federal nutrition programs, public housing authorities (HUD), local politicians, and non-profit organizations that serve the communities and churches that care for adults and children to reduce food insecurity in public housing further.

Research Question

What are the perspectives of the public housing professionals on a mobile food unit on-site accessible for children in the southern United States?

Theoretical Framework

The theories and concepts that will ground this study include the feminist theory, which emerged from the struggle for women's rights, beginning in the 18th century with Mary Wollstonecraft's publication of *A vindication of the rights of woman* (Poetry Foundation, 2022). The logical connections between the framework presented and the nature of this study include the feminist theory. The model of feminist theory begins with the belief that systems exist that oppress and work against individuals (Arinder, n.d.). The concepts in the feminist theory are sex, gender, race, equality, and discrimination. I focused on the feminist intersectional approach and viewing it from the feminist perspective suggests that various forms of oppression (e.g., racism, classism, and sexism) are interrelated to form a system of oppression in which multiple forms of discrimination and social inequality intersect (Boundless, 2020; Karmakar, 2022; Nayak, 2021). The feminist theory highlights the barriers that hinder access to food for Black, Asian, and minority ethnic children from low-income backgrounds and informs the processes to redress such inequalities (Morris, 2022).

There is a racial disparity where 14.2% more Black households than White households continue to experience food insecurity (Patterson et al., 2020). In Black communities, women may experience a high risk for food insecurity from oppression due to: (a) women intersecting minority race and gender; (b) Black women experience greater rates of poverty than Black men or other racial groups; (c) Black women make up the highest labor force among all women cultures, but their pay rate is less than other racial groups; and (d) 28% of Black women work in service occupations, which are the lowest-paid positions. Black and Hispanic women are susceptible to food insecurity (Helms et al., 2020; Patterson et al., 2020). The goal of conducting intersectionality research is to validate and create opportunities for social justice; hence, uncovering solutions for changing the systematic oppressive conditions in which individuals, families, and communities exist and endure is a cornerstone of an intersectionality perspective (Few-Demo & Allen, 2020).

The feminist theory has been extensively used in much food insecurity research in the past to provide relevant background and critical details on the subject matter. It is because women are more likely to report food insecurity matters than men. While the reason for who reports what and to what detail remains arguable, Crossman (2021) postulated that such discrimination is based on economic classes (e.g., economic inequality, power, and oppression). The oppressive position may be attributed to unequal treatment in the workplace to the end, according to (Crossman, 2021), that pay differences in men's salaries are higher than women's, and White men's salaries are higher than men of color. The feminist theory considers the lived experience of

individuals with an emphasis on oppression. It also enables the discovery of whether and the extent to which the children in public housing suffer from the effects of the oppression of minority household heads on food insecurity. The feminist theory acknowledges that when oppression is disrupted, advocacy and change can occur (Arinder, n.d). I looked for ways to disrupt food insecurity in public housing to examine if a mobile food truck can change and bring an ending to hunger in children who live in public housing.

Nature of the Study

The specific research design was a generic qualitative study to address the research question of this study. The generic qualitative inquiry is a method that involves skillfully asking open-ended questions of individuals and observing matters of interest in a real-world setting to solve problems (Patton, 2015). This study included open-ended questions and structured interviews with public housing professionals in the southern United States. The structured interview were a dialogue between the public housing directors' and me. The interview included an interview guide with structured questions. Data were collected using the semistructured interview method. I used open-ended questions to explore the public housing professionals' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. The flexible interview allowed for follow-up questions and probes.

I examined professionals' experiences in public housing in the southern United States dealing with children suffering from food insecurity. In the semistructured interview approach, I explored the experiences of the different professionals in public housing in the southern United States through one-on-one interviews. The southern

United States will include New Orleans, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida. In each state, there were two interviews from public housing in urban areas and two from public housing in rural areas. The planned research design will include 20 public housing professionals from the southern United States (e.g., Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and New Orleans). Literature indicates that the southern states have the highest levels of food insecurity (Helms et al., 2020). In each state, I chose two urban properties and two rural properties for individual interviews.

Interview protocols were developed to address the problem of food insecurity and explore if the mobile food unit can decrease food insecurity in public housing communities. The data included responses from the professionals of the public housing authority from urban and rural locations on the need for the mobile food unit, plus the locations and accessibility to reach and meet the children's food insecurity problems. This data collection approach provided details from the professionals' perspectives on reaching more food-insecure children by giving their families easy access to healthy meals. The method used to collect data were a combination of face-to-face interviews and video conference calls.

To achieve trustworthiness in the qualitative research, reflective journaling, audit trails, member checking, and transcript reviews were utilized. Each interview was recorded for accurate information. The in-person meeting was audio recorded, and the Zoom platform included a visual and audio recorder. In the interview, a reflection journal was used to keep a diary of my experiences in this research. A reflection journal allows one to write down what is observed in the interview, such as body language or the room's

contents. Also, the reflection journal allows one to jot down newly revealed information from the interview and to track any bias. Postpartum reflection after each interview provides time to consider what has been shown or birthed (Patton, 2015).

After each interview, transcription software was used. The reflection journal helped fill in any missed information or correct any information transcribed incorrectly. The reflection journal helped to add any additional information that made the research richer. An audit trail was provided for confirmability. The audit trail included each step of the study from the start to the end of the data analysis to show no bias in the study. Each interview was typed out, and all the findings were color-coded to show all the different themes and overlapping themes between the various public housing communities. Member checking was utilized to verify the correction of the interviewer's answers to the semistructured interview questions. After the interview, corrections were made, and the transcribed interview were emailed back to the directors to check for accuracy. More details on the nature of the study will be provided in Chapter 3—Methodology.

Definitions

Food insecurity: Food-insecure households with adults and children often rely on low-cost and unhealthy food and adjust their intake by reducing portions, skipping meals, or going hungry (Dush, 2020).

Food truck: Food trucks are “large-wheeled vehicles from which food is cooked and sold, and which move from location to location, sometimes daily” (Koay et al., 2023, p. 3289).

HUD: HUD is the federal agency responsible for national policy and programs that address America's housing needs, improve and develop the nation's communities, and enforce fair housing laws (HUD, n.d.).

Public housing: Public housing was established to provide decent and safe rental housing for eligible low-income families, older adults, and individuals with disabilities (U.S. Department of HUD, 2023).

Summer Food Summer Program (SFSP): This federal program provides free meals to children in low-income areas through eligible organizations, primarily in the summer months when most schools are closed for instruction (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2022).

Assumptions

The assumptions of this study were based on the following: (a) the factors that cause food insecurity and the principles undergird their solutions or eradication are universal regardless of race or cultural differences; (b) the human development objectives for public housing directors participating in this research study is essential for achieving its desired goals; (c) participating public housing professionals are competent in performing their jobs, know the needs of their communities, and will respond accordingly to the research questions; (d) the public housing professionals are willing to participate in the study; and (e) human development and insecurity eradication processes are knowable, controllable, and predictable.

Scope and Delimitation

The scope of this research included public housing professionals from the southern states of the United States (e.g., New Orleans, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida). The study focused on the experiences from which the public housing professionals can give their perspective on whether a mobile food truck can help reduce food insecurity in public housing. A delimitation of the study was interviewing the directors from the southern states, two in urban areas and two in rural areas in each state, and not the families in public housing. The study looked at the request for help with insecure food communities, whether another source provides food to the community.

Limitations of the Study

A potential barrier when collecting primary data includes professionals' scheduling an appointment to interview. It may have been a barrier to interview the different professionals due to their busy work schedule. Zoom and face-to-face were used for interviewing. I was responsible for the limitations and challenges that can arise in this qualitative study. The researcher has many significant roles in the research. The researcher is the instrument that collects and interprets the data (Res, 2015). As the sole researcher, I have experience working with children in public housing for the past 11 years with children who have experienced food insecurity. To keep the study credible, the data collected was free of the interviewer's personal views. I used a reflective journal to monitor thoughts pertaining to working with children in public housing. To keep the study credible, I interviewed public housing professionals with whom I do not have a personal relationship or with whom I have worked.

There was a limitation in collecting data; the research is only being conducted in the southern states of the United States and not in the Eastern, Western, and Northern States of the United States to get an accurate idea of the true extent of food insecurity and if a food truck will help reduce it, overall. The study will not determine who has the highest food insecurity in rural areas or urban areas across the United States of America. Another limitation of the research is securing personal information. To protect the interviewee's identity, I stored the audio-recorded information in approved data storage.

In addition, the professionals' participation may be a barrier because of HUD. The professionals may fear how the information may be used and if it will negatively affect HUD. In addition, HUD may not allow the professionals to participate in the research. The method of collecting data can have some limitations, such as the audio recording, which could experience some technical difficulties. In addition, member checking will be used to ensure the data interpretation is accurate, and the directors will review the transcribed interview and make corrections to ensure the data are transparent.

Significance of the Study

By identifying factors and experiences through the views of public housing professionals, this study's significance will, in the long term, benefit the children who live in public housing and are food insecure. The results of this study will contribute to social change if the public housing professionals state that a mobile food unit can decrease food insecurity. Social change may be a public policy on human development, and food insecurity could significantly benefit from this study. The information from this study may lead to a better understanding of how to reduce food insecurity for families in

public housing. The results of this study should aid human services practitioners and nonprofit programs in the southern United States in meeting the needs of food-insecure children in public housing. This possible resultant initiative from the outcome of this study can help the children become food secure, which affects the neurodevelopmental processes, brain functions, and energy levels that support social-emotional, self-regulatory, and cognitive development. It should impact children's ability to obtain an excellent education, become self-sufficient, and live productive lives.

Summary

This chapter briefly presented the study's focus on the developmental consequences of children living in public housing in food-insecure homes. Families in public housing report food insecurity, characterized by disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake (Helms et al. 2020). Seventy-five percent of public housing occupants are jobless or working part-time, and food insecurity is rampant (Helms et al., 2020). Children who live in public housing and suffer from food insecurity are associated with higher stress, more personal problems, higher experiences of physical symptoms, and lower social support (Quintiliani et al., 2021). Food insecurity among children hurts school readiness; children have poor developmental trajectories and worse social skills than food-secure children (Hambrick, 2020). The underlying negative implications for child health and development, including physical, social, cognitive/academic, and behavioral development (Gallegos et al., 2021), are significant and can affect the children's educational and future earnings (Gallegos et al., 2021).

The purpose of the study was to give evidence on how a mobile food truck can decrease food insecurity among children and families in public housing. The framework consists of feminist theory. I focused on the feminist intersectional approach. The feminist theory-intersectional approach has benefitted past food insecurity research. The model of feminist theory begins with the belief that systems exist that oppress and work against individuals. The theory acknowledges that advocacy and change can occur when oppression becomes disrupted. The nature of the study will address the research question using a qualitative generic survey. The generic qualitative inquiry is a method that involves asking open-ended questions to the public housing professionals to determine if mobile food units will help solve food insecurity in public housing. While this chapter included the study's definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitation, limitations, and significance, the next chapter will consist of a comprehensive literature review on food insecurity in public housing and mobile food truck-feeding children who are food insecure. It will further describe the gap in the research supported by the feminist theory intersectional approach to food insecurity.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Children bear the worst brunt of food inequality, food insecurity, and malnutrition. Robin (2021) stated that the curses of food inequality and insecurity often get passed down from generation to generation. Economically poor children tend to inherit poverty, health problems, and other social harm from their parents and grandparents. Coleman-Jensen et al. (2019) found that HUD helped more than 4.5 million low-income U.S. households. They also found that families that qualify for housing assistance have minimal resources and are at risk of food insecurity even with housing assistance. Coleman-Jensen et al. further stated that in households with incomes below the poverty threshold reported that 34.9% were food insecure. Food-insecure households were substantially higher in single-parent families that were Black and Hispanic (Helms et al., 2011; Patterson et al., 2020). Since 2022, food has increased by 10.1%, and housing costs have increased more than ever (Community Service Society, 2023). Families with low-income households have reported worrying about where their next meal comes from (Community Service Society, 2023).

Multiple sections of the literature review, including the literature search strategy and keyword finding for food insecurity, the effects of food insecurity, and the pros of mobile food truck units, will be covered in this chapter. It will also present the history of feminist theory's intersectional approach and its significant theoretical propositions for this study. The coverage will continue with a review of food security, food insecurity, who is experiencing food insecurity, what predicts food insecurity, the effects of food

insecurity on children, public housing and food insecurity, and mobile food unit -truck/ accessibility. The chapter will end with a summary.

Literature Search Strategy

The Walden University library was used as the primary resource for literature searches. ERIC, SAGE Journals, SocINDEX, APA PsycArticles, Google Scholar, and multidisciplinary databases helped in the topical research for this study, which is about public housing professionals' perspectives on mobile food unit location and accessibility. Peer-reviewed journals were used when gathering literature from crucial search terms such as *food insecurity, food security, public housing and food insecurity, food insecurity and veterans, food insecurity and homelessness, food insecurity, and substance/alcohol abuse, the effects of food insecurity on children, feminist theory, food insecurity and incarceration, food insecurity and senior, food desert, food insecurity and college students, food insecurity and children aged out of foster care, widow, the rising cost of living, and mobile food unit.*

Feminist Theory

The purpose of feminist theory is to diminish the systems of power and oppression (Falconer Al-Hindi & Eaves, 2023; Few-Demo & Allen, 2020; Karmakar, 2022; Sachs & Patel-Campillo, 2014). While the purpose of this theory is arguably about shifting its focus away from the male viewpoint and dominated systems of power, Arinder (n.d.) clarified that the purpose of using a feminist lens is to discover how individuals interact within such systems and possibly offer social-changing solutions to confront and eliminate oppressive systems and structures. The feminist theory helped

individuals to understand the power imbalances and inequalities related to gender, race, ethnicity, social class, religion, and ability by feminism that pushed back against the dominant White masculine culture by helping individuals to learn about the diverse realities. The feminist theory utilized more inclusive approaches to conceptualize and understand diverse experiences for marginalized groups (Mandalaki et al., 2022).

The feminist theory emerged from the struggle for women's rights, beginning in the 18th century with Mary Wollstonecraft's publication of *A vindication of the rights of woman* (Poetry Foundation, 2022). The feminist theory component includes discrimination and exclusion based on sex and gender, objectification, structural and economic inequality, power and oppression, and gender roles and stereotypes (Crossman, 2021). Feminist theory has made an impact over multiple generations. Each generation made a difference by providing social change corresponding to their period. To this end, and even though feminist philosophy has been viewed both as an intellectual commitment and a political movement, the accomplishments of feminist theory come in four waves.

The First Wave: 1848 to 1920

The first wave of women wanted to achieve political equality for women. For 70 years, women marched, protested, and faced arrest, ridicule, and violence as they fought for the right to vote (Grady, 2018; National Women's History Museum, 2021). The first wave began with 200 women meeting at the Seneca Falls convention to discuss women's rights, organized by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (History, 2020). Women of color, such as Sojourner Truth, Maria Stewart, and Frances E. W. Harper, were also major forces in the movement for all women universally to be able to vote (Terborg-

Penn, 2020). The first wavers fought not only for women's voting rights but also equal opportunities to education, employment, the right to own property, reproductive rights (e.g., birth contraception), and the right to be legally an independent individual, not property of their husbands (Grady, 2018; MasterClass, 2022). In 1920, Congress passed the 19th Amendment granting women of all races the right to vote, but the South made it difficult for Black women to vote. Asian and Chinese women were prohibited from voting (MasterClass, 2022).

The Second Wave: 1963 to the 1980s

The second wave of feminism began with Betty Friedan's *The feminine mystique*, which emerged in 1963 (Grady, 2018). The second wave fought for social equality. The first wave was predominantly White, and middle-class, feminists (Marino & Ware, 2022). The second wave came with the authenticity of women's cultures, which means openly discussing the similarities and differences of women (e.g., oppression according to gender, class, and race and how they interlocked; National Women's History Museum, 2020). Black feminist organizations such as Black Women Organized for Action, the National Black Feminist Organization, and women of third world educated individuals about issues of poverty, health, welfare, and the hierarchical order that is different from but considered less than the other (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006).

Grady (2018) noted that the second wave was successfully approved by the Equal Pay Act of 1969; the Supreme Court gave married or unmarried women the right to birth control and the right to have credit cards and mortgages under their names. The second wave of feminism brought about: (a) educational equality, (b) raised awareness of

domestic violence, (c) built shelters for women who left their abusive husbands, (d) succeeded in legislation against sexual harassment in the workplace, while (e) being entrenched in anti-racist civil rights (Grady, 2018).

The Third Wave: 1991 to 2010

The third wave started with women who were angry about the outcome of the Anita Hill case in 1991 against Clarence Thomas for sexually harassing her at work (Pruit, 2024). The Senate Judiciary Committee was made up of men, who approved the nominee Clarence Thomas for Supreme Court Judge, which led to an outrage and women wanting to be in national leadership roles (National Women's History Museum, 2020; Pruit, 2024). In 1992, 24 women won seats in the House of Representatives, and three women won seats in the Senate; Feminist Rebecca Walker (Alice Walker's daughter) declared the Third Wave (2018).

Early third-wave activism victories involved fighting against workplace sexual harassment and working to increase the number of women in positions of power (Grady, 2018). Kimberlé Crenshaw conceived the term intersectionality to describe how different forms of oppression intersect (Calliste et al., 1995; Falconer Al-Hindi & Eaves, 2023; Few-Demo & Allen, 2020; Marecek, 2016; McGibbon & McPherson, 2021; Patterson et al., 2020). *Intersectionality* is defined as the framework for acknowledging the complexities experienced by individuals with multiple intersecting sociodemographic categories (e.g., sexual orientation, race, class, gender, and health disparities; Crossman, 2021; Patterson et al., 2020).

The Present Day: A Fourth Wave?

The fourth wave is online; feminist Jessica Valenti stated in 2009 that activists meet and plan their activism and debates online (Grady, 2018). Today, feminists are meeting through online platforms (The “#MeToo” tweets) and rallying on the streets at Women’s March, but the fourth wave of feminism is mostly online (Grady, 2018). Pruitt (2022) noted that feminists are turning their attention to the system that allows for wrongdoing regardless of sexuality, race, class, and gender. Like their past predecessors, they also use intersectionality and represent individuals irrespective of race, class, gender, or sexuality to cause social change for the good (Coaston, 2019).

Feminist Theory Intersectional Approaches

The intersectionality approach suggests that various forms of oppression (e.g., racism, classism, and sexism) are interrelated to form a system of oppression in which multiple forms of discrimination intersect (Boundless Sociology, 2020). Age, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, immigrant status, race, sexual orientation, social class, religion, and social location intersect to compound oppression (Boundless Sociology, 2020; Collin, 2015; Few-Demo & Allen, 2020; McGibbon & McPherson, 2011; Morris, 2022; Nayak, 2021). Famous feminist scholars developed feminist intersectionality theory. Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), a feminist sociologist, coined the term intersectionality in legal cases where a group of Black women raised issues of discrimination based on their race for the companies they were employed. Hooks (1990) was a feminist author who recognized social classifications (e.g., race, gender, sexual identity, class, etc.) are interconnected and that ignoring their intersection creates

oppression towards women and other marginalized identities by changing the experience of living in society. Caliste et al. (2000) explored the relational aspects of social difference (e.g., race, class, gender, etc.) and educated individuals on anti-racism regarding the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexual oppression for social justice and change (Brownworth, 2022; Karmakar, 2022)

The feminist theory intersectionality approach has been used in past food insecurity research. Physical health deteriorations were primarily found in food-insecure individuals that were associated with older age, female gender, immigration status, disability, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender status, unemployment, homelessness, living below the poverty threshold, and illicit drug users (Healthy People 2030, 2020; Tran et al., 2023). Patterson et al. (2020) noted that food insecurity affects 1 in 8 American adults annually and is more prevalent in Black and sexual minority women. In 2018, 21.2% of non-Hispanic Black households were food insecure and 9.1% were severely food insecure versus non-Hispanic White households have 8.1% food insecurity and 3.1% were severely food insecure (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2019). Patterson et al. (2020) noted that women who did not receive SNAP, the prevalence of food insecurity would be greater in Black and White women that identify as a lesbian, bisexual or transgender than White heterosexual women. Drydakis (2023) stated the multiple factors that involved those individuals experiencing food insecurity: the first is the macro-level characteristics, which include: (a) socioeconomic events, like economic recession, and (b) government policies, like food stamps); and the second is the individual-level factors, which include: (a) education, (b) employment, (c) income, and (d) demographic

characteristics. They intersect between socioeconomic conditions, where different characteristics connect, compound, and exacerbate each other (Drydak, 2023).

Social inequalities are disparities found where individuals are born, grow, live, work, and age. Odoms-Young and Bruce (2018) stated that race, ethnicity, and food insecurity are intertwined with other established determinants (e.g., poverty, unemployment, incarceration, and disability). Food insecurity in Black and Hispanic households was twice that of White households. Odoms-Young and Bruce found that White household wealth was 13 times the wealth of Black households and 10 times greater than that of Hispanic families. Racial discrimination includes two components: (a) the differential treatment based on race (disparate treatment) and (b) treatment based on factors other than race (e.g., disparate impact). Disparate treatment is gender-based discrimination, and gender stereotypes initiate critical barriers in education and work that cause reduced economic resources. Disparate impacts lead to food insecurity (Drydak, 2023; Odoms-Young & Bruce, 2018).

Shostak (2023) completed research on food and inequality and found food access and the embodiment of intersectional inequalities: (a) sociodemographic characteristics of food insecurity households: households with children, households headed by single adults (primarily women), adults living alone, low-income households, where grocery stores are plentiful, but the price of food is beyond the means of low-income Black and Hispanic households experienced higher food insecurity than White households; (b) food access is food deserts—which means limited access to food, are found in predominantly lower-income neighborhoods of color and less likely have access to the fully stocked

grocery store, whereas food households which functionally equivalent to food deserts and lead to food insecure homes. I evaluated the perspective of advancing the understanding of food insecurity among children living in public housing using mobile food trucks to reduce food insecurity. I interviewed the professionals of public housing in the Southern states to get their perspective on a food truck providing meals to decrease food insecurity in the children who live in public housing communities.

Review of Food Security and Insecurity Matters

Food Security

Food security is when an individual or a household can access adequate and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs for a healthy life (Arteaga & Wilde, 2023). Frontiers in nutrition suggests that food security is the product of food availability, food access, stability of supplies, and biological utilization (Oluwole et al., 2023). Simelane and Worth (2020) stated the dimensions of food security are: (a) availability means regularly having enough food to eat; (b) food access ensures people have adequate access to food through own-grown produce, earning sufficient income, or food aid; (c) ensure food supplies are consistent over time and circumstances; and (d) utilization is the physical and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs to lead a healthy and productive life.

Food Insecurity

More than 10 million children in the United States suffer from food insecurity (Hines et al., 2021). Poor nutrition is the fourth leading cause of death in the United States (Simon & DeBrew, 2021). According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture

(USDA,2024) food insecurity is when households do not have access to consistent food for a healthy lifestyle. The characteristics of an insecure household can be linked to poor nutrition, increased hunger, and malnutrition and harm to health and quality of life (Canton et al., 2022; Helms et al., 2011; Hines et al., 2021; Odoms-Young & Bruce, 2018). A child suffering from food insecurity could be hindered by physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development (Hines et al., 2021). Gallegos et al. (2021) reported that households are categorized as food secure if they have high food security (e.g., no anxiety, consistently able to access food) or marginal food security (some anxiety about accessing adequate food but no changes to food intake).

Households are categorized as food insecure if they have low food security. This is where food quality is compromised, but quantity and eating patterns are not altered. They may also be categorized as having deficient food security, which is the case where some or all members of the household have disrupted eating patterns, and this reduces the quantity of food consumed (USDA, 2024). From June 1 to June 13, 2022, almost 24 million households—including 11.6 million households with children under 18—reported that they sometimes or often did not have enough to eat during the week (Pathak et al., 2022). More than 7 million households were food insecure despite receiving federal food and nutrition benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and almost 4 million of these households included children (Pathak et al., 2022).

Who is Experiencing Food Insecurity?

Food insecurities have influenced individuals' lives through inequalities tied to race, class, gender, immigrant status, older adults and disabled individuals, and sexuality

(Hines et al., 2021; Pathak et al., 2022). Who experiences food insecurity? In 2019, Black and Brown households with children reported the highest population of food insecurity (Bowen et al., 2021). Women who are the head of households have higher than average rates of food insecurity, as 35% of households with annual incomes in 2019 were below the federal poverty line and were food insecure (Bowen et al., 2021). More people in Southern states experience higher food insecurity than in northern states, given the higher population ratio of Black and Brown races in the south compared to the states of the north (Pathak et al., 2022). More individuals in rural households' experience food insecurity than in urban households due to food deserts (Pathak et al., 2022).

People Live in Food Deserts

Food deserts exist in low-income communities with less access to quality food. Pathak et al. (2022) estimated that 6.1% of the U.S. population resides in a food desert area. The USDA defines a *food desert* as where individuals in a rural area live more than 10 miles from the nearest large grocery store (Ivancic, 2021; Pathak et al., 2022; Swafford et al., 2021). In Swafford et al.'s (2021) study, the high food insecurity in rural areas was due to individuals not having reliable cars or public transportation and the two-lane highways being unsafe to walk on due to the lack of sidewalks. Swafford et al. stated that food-insecure households headed by minorities in rural areas are most likely to be single mothers who also lack transportation.

Rising Cost of Living

The rising cost of living continues to place pressure on families' budgets. Martinchek et al. (2023) noted that in December 2022, 63.2% of adults reported their

household grocery costs increased, costs increased for gasoline at 55.5%, home heating at 26.4%, rent at 26.2%, childcare at 14.3%, health insurance at 12.5%, and mortgage payments at 8.1%. The rising cost of living has families struggling to pay bills, facing unstable housing such as eviction or living in motels, and food insecurity. One-third of U.S. households (38.1 million) owners and renters spent more than 30% of their incomes on housing in 2016 (Lind, 2018). The high cost of housing is widening the inequality, which correlates with racial segregation and the home-ownership gap that stands between Blacks at 41.6% and Whites at 72.9% (Lind, 2018). Families are left to rely on charitable food such as food banks, SNAP, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), food boxes, and donations from churches and other nonprofit organizations. (McCarthy et al., 2023). Seventy percent of individuals have a second job, 44% of Gen Z use food delivery services like DoorDash or Grubhub, and 39% of millennials sell products online like Etsy to offset price inflation (Kanika, 2023).

Low Educational Attainment

Situations where specific households experience socioeconomic factors, such as low educational attainment, are more strongly associated with food insecurity than households with an adult holding at least a 4-year college degree (Raskind et al., 2019). According to the USDA (2024), before and during the pandemic, heads of households with less than a high school diploma had the highest percentage of food insecurity. In 2016, food insecurity rates were 27.4% among households with less than a high school degree, 16.2% among households with a high school education degree, and 4.2% with a

college degree. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the head of household without high school education rates rose to 35% (Food Research and Action Center, 2021).

Health Problems/Disabilities

Children who live with an adult who has a disability or health condition may live in a food insecurity household. Heflin et al. (2019) noted that 4.96 million households contain a prime-aged adult who is disabled. Parents of children with disabilities face barriers, such as finding childcare that will take a child with complex medical needs, which has significant consequences on parents' careers, financial burdens, and extra out-of-pocket costs that can lead a family to food insecurity (Novoa, 2020). Adults with disabilities experience and live with barriers to food security, such as high unemployment rates, low wages, restrictions around eligibility for social safety net programs, and physical and transportation limitations (Heflin et al., 2019).

Individuals with disabilities earn significantly lower wages due to an exception under the Fair Labor Standards Act allowing employers to pay disabled employees less than the specified minimum wages—which could, on average, amount to \$3.34 per hour (Ives-Ruble & Sloane, 2021). Adding the extra expenses related to having a disability can keep them in high levels of poverty (Goodman et al., 2020). The additional costs of disability fall into indirect and direct costs. The indirect costs associated with disability are barriers to work, such as employment discrimination (Goodman et al., 2020). Family members may reduce their paid work or take lower-paying jobs with the flexibility needed to provide care to a family member with a disability (Goodman et al., 2020; Sonik et al., 2016). Direct costs associated with disability are the extra costs for personal

assistance services and health care, the cost of ordering things when the in-person pickup option is not accessible due to no transportation, building a wheelchair ramp, acquiring, and maintaining service animals, buying a more expensive car to accommodate a wheelchair, or purchasing food for special diets (Goodman et al., 2020). Access to social benefits varied across studied populations (Goodman et al., 2020).

The Social Security Disability Insurance program is the most extensive disability program in the United States. Weaver (2021) stated that the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program provides income support to several groups, including children with disabilities younger than 18 years, adults with disabilities aged 18 to 64 years, and older people. The SSI has relatively high percentages of individuals who have not finished high school, reside in the South, and are Black (Weaver, 2021). Food insecurity rates are most prevalent among SSI recipients compared to recipients of other disability assistance programs (Ashbrook, 2022).

Widowhood

A widow faces both food and income insecurity when her husband dies. When a widow's husband dies, her living standards drastically fall, as do the children (Chami & Pooley, 2023; Grable et al., 2022; Mueller, 2020). Mueller (2020) mentioned that 60% of women experience severe food insecurity worldwide. The husband is usually the primary provider in the family, and the woman raises the children and runs the household. The loss of the husband's income is rarely compensated due to the disparities between women's and men's income (Chami & Pooley, 2023). More often, when the spouse dies, this leaves the widow and their children in poverty. Widows usually have minimal

support for a change in financial circumstances (Grable et al., 2022). Some women have minimal marketable work skills, poor economic support, and low wages, which leads to children's food insecurity (Grable et al., 2022). An estimated 56% difference in economic status is a loss attributed to the death of a spouse (Chami & Pooley, 2023). Research findings associated with financial hardship were identified as the most common stressors, especially for women still raising children (Chami & Pooley, 2023; Mueller, 2020).

The Older Population

Individuals of the older population are not spared from food insecurity. In 2019, 72% of households with an older adult living alone were food insecure (Assoumou et al., 2023). Seniors are especially vulnerable, given the increased risk for acute and chronic health conditions (Assoumou et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2022; Tong et al., 2019). For example, food-insecure seniors are 91% more likely to have asthma, 64% more likely to be diabetic, and 57% more likely to have congestive heart failure (Assoumou et al., 2023). Many seniors live on a fixed income and must choose between paying for food and other necessities such as housing, transportation, and medication (Assoumou et al., 2023). Of the current senior population in the United States, 5.3 million were food-insecure in 2018 (Assoumou et al., 2023).

Many factors associated with food insecurity in older adults are similar in the estimated direction of the relationship to those found in other adult age groups (Assoumou et al., 2023). Food insecurity in older adults is associated with age, race, ethnicity, marital status, gender, health status, depression, functionality, income, poverty, household composition, and homeownership (Lee et al., 2022). Lee et al. (2022) cited

that older adults experience food insecurity differently from other age groups based on the following: (a) some older adults have the finances but have limited social and functional limitations, such as disabilities-hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory; (b) living in an area that is food insecure because of distance to the grocery store; and (c) financial constraints due to being a minority have a high percentage of not completing high school and live below the poverty line. Lower educational attainment, lower household income, female gender, a disability, and a minority are associated factors negatively associated with food security for decades (Assoumou et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2022).

Harris et al. (2021) found that the older population is raising their grandchildren; 2.5 million children in the United States who grow up in grandparent-headed households face higher rates of hunger and food insecurity. Grandparents who are older than 60, rates of food insecurity are three times higher, and they face higher levels of stress in dealing with the financial challenges that come with unexpectedly raising grandchildren (Stapleton, 2022). Key factors reported by Harris et al. on grandparent-raising grandchildren include: (a) minority families such as Blacks, Indians, Alaska Natives, and Latinos have the highest rates of being raised by grandparents; (b) the proportion of grand-families is highest in the South; (c) the South is also the states with the highest percentage of food insecurity; and (d) large number of grand-families live in rural areas. Food Research and Action Center (2024) noted that grandparents' concerns are their limited income goes on medication, food, and rent. Only 42% of grandparents raising

low-income grandchildren participate in SNAP or WIC to help supplement their food (Food Research and Action Center, 2024).

College Students

Minority students with lower socioeconomic backgrounds, students who identify with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community, students who age out of foster care, and nontraditional and first-generation suffer from food insecurity (Beam & Johnson, 2023; Willis, 2019). Less than 42% of college students were food insecure (Oh et al., 2022). Food insecurity has several mental health outcomes, such as depression and suicidal ideation (Oh et al., 2022). The typical college student is not a recent high school graduate. Only 37% attend college after high school and live in the dormitory or receive parental support (Coursera, 2023). Nontraditional college students are quickly becoming the new tradition in higher education ages 24 years and older (Coursera, 2023).

Most college students are nontraditional, cannot qualify for government assistance, which leads to mental health issues and food insecurity, and could be facing (a) unemployment, (b) illness, (c) divorce, and (d) financial difficulties today (Beam & Johnson, 2023). The effects of food insecurity on college students are that 53% stated they experience food insecurity, 55% reported problems not affording books, missed class due to food insecurity, and some failed a class due to food insecurity (Beam & Johnson, 2023). Wolfson et al. (2022) provided evidence that nontraditional students who experienced food insecurity were more likely to have higher dropout rates and are non-White and first-generation students.

Domestic Violence Victim

Intimate partner violence (IPV) includes physical violence, rape, and stalking victimization is pervasive, affecting 1 in 3 women at 35.6% and 1 in 4 men at 28.5% in the United States (Fedina et al., 2022). Food insecurity is connected to IPV in three ways. Waterman et al. (2024) noted that (a) economic abuse refers to the denial of access to financial resources; this occurs when one partner in a relationship controls access to the finances of the other partner; (b) individuals who escape abusive situations rely on financial assistance and low-wage jobs for survival, which increases food insecurity due to low funds or income; and (c) poverty is associated with an increased risk for both IPV and food insecurity, in which have triggers IPV in abusers. In addition, cohabitating couples have higher rates of IPV than married couples (Fedina et al., 2022; Waterman et al., 2024).

Severe Mental Illnesses (SMI)

Severe mental illness (SMI) is defined as a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder resulting in severe functional impairment that substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities (Afulani et al., 2020). SMI, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and other mood disorders, are associated with poverty and food insecurity (Afulani et al., 2020). Approximately 71% of adults with SMI experience food insecurity (Michels et al., 2022). SMI is associated with low social support, their income level is below the federal poverty line and there is a strong association between poor mental health and food insecurity (Cunningham et al., 2022). SMI may make individuals more vulnerable to food insecurity due to (a) decreased ability to earn income and

maintain full-time employment, (b) decreased eligibility for sufficient healthcare coverage, and increased out-of-pocket healthcare expenses, which pose additional financial burdens on households in meeting their basic needs, including access to food; and (c) there were higher odds of SMI among females, those in single adult households with children, and Black Americans (Afulani et al., 2020). Individuals living in households with college graduates are less likely to have SMI than those in households where the most highly educated person has not completed high school (Afulani et al., 2020).

Substance/Alcoholic Abuse

Food insecurity is correlated with substance use, heavy alcohol consumption, and dual use among men but not among women (Bergmans et al., 2019). Heflin and Sun (2022) conducted a study and found that individuals who use illegal substances, injected drugs, crack, methamphetamines, and prescription opioids show high rates of food insecurity consistently. Food insecurity may be both a cause and a consequence of drug, alcohol, and cigarette smoking abuse to cope with the psychological strain of not having food and the stigma associated with the addiction (Bergmans et al., 2019; Heflin & Sun, 2022). Bergmans et al. (2019) added that alcohol use disorders (AUD) are disproportionately prevalent among those who are socially or economically disadvantaged. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2021), 29.5 million individuals ages 12 and older had AUD. AUD sufferers have no control over their consumption of alcohol, which leads to significant troubles in life, such as food insecurity (National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2021). Basile (2022) noted that 70% of those

with substance abuse problems are also food insecure. The individual with an addiction may not care about their children's food security and instead often direct their efforts and energies on securing money to focus on their next high (Basile, 2022).

Homelessness

Over half a million individuals are homeless on a single night in the United States. Approximately 65% are in homeless shelters, and the other 35%—just under 200,000—are found unsheltered on the streets (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2023). The vast majority, 72%, were individual adults, but a notable share of 28% were individuals living in families with children (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2023). Homelessness almost always involves individuals facing desperate situations and extreme hardship, such as extreme duress like physical duress, financial duress, and psychological duress (Schwartz, 2023).

The following groups of individuals experience homelessness: (a) individuals who are heterosexual and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer; (b) individuals with families, chronically homeless individuals; or (c) individuals with disabilities who have experienced long-term or repeated incidents of homelessness, veterans, and unaccompanied youth under 25 years (Tucker et al., 2022). Although Whites have the largest population in America, minority populations have the highest numbers of individuals who experience homelessness (Henry et al., 2020; Tucker et al., 2022). The National Alliance to End Homelessness (2023) noted that 10 out of 10,000 White individuals experience homelessness, even though the Black population is four times higher, with 48 out of 10,000 experiencing homelessness. Native Hawaiians or Pacific

Islanders have the highest rate of 121 out of 10,000 experiencing homelessness (The National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2023).

There is a growing problem in the United States of emerging adulthood, ages between 18 and 24 years, who experience homelessness and food insecurity (Tucker et al., 2022). On any single night in 2020, 34,000 people under the age of 25 were unaccompanied homeless (not with a parent or guardian), 90% of whom were between the ages of 18 and 24, which can hinder a successful transition to adult role—careers, or parenthood (Tucker et al., 2022). Davis et al. (2022) noted that adolescents with a history of multiple runaway episodes who do not live with both biological parents have lower educational attainment, substance abuse issues, delinquency problems, violence perpetration, and victimization tendencies, which are associated with increased risk for homelessness.

History of Incarceration

Previously incarcerated older adults may be particularly at risk of food insecurity (Jordan & Sneed, 2023). Individuals with a history of incarceration (HOI) are more likely to have insufficient income, reducing the ability to access healthy food; sixty percent of employers choose not to hire those with a HOI, leading to an unemployment rate of over 27% for this group (Jordan & Sneed, 2023). Formerly incarcerated individuals who find employment earn the lowest paying salary (Couloute & Kopf, 2018). Incarceration accelerates aging: individuals face more chronic and life-threatening illnesses, which makes it difficult for older adults to perform jobs like construction and manufacturing; therefore, incarcerated adults have fewer job opportunities (Jordan & Sneed, 2023;

Widra, 2023). Once released from prison, these older adults often face numerous challenges that increase their risk of food insecurity, including homelessness, unemployment, and poverty (Couloute & Kopf, 2018). Individuals with HOI cannot receive food assistance (SNAP or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) due to felony convictions (Sibilla, 2023). In 2020, nearly 20% of Black adults aged 50 and older experienced food insecurity, compared to only 5.2% of White adults (Jordan & Sneed, 2023). Blacks are more likely to be incarcerated than Whites; while Blacks make up only 13.4% of the U.S. population, they account for 38.1% of those currently incarcerated (Jordan & Sneed, 2023). Older previously incarcerated individuals may receive less SSI than their counterparts, as lower lifetime earnings also translate into lower social security benefits (Sneed, 2023)

Individuals Who Receive Food Assistance

The SNAP and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for WIC are the most widely known federal programs (USDA, 2024). SNAP, formally known as “food stamps,” is the most extensive U.S. food program. SNAP is a state agency that determines eligibility based on income, age, and disability status (Desilver, 2023). WIC is a federal grant program that provides nutrition to young children and pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women with lower incomes (Ivancic & Dooling, 2023). SNAP and WIC are the primary safety net programs for low-income households in the United States for food insecurity. SNAP and WIC served roughly 18 million individuals. Statewide News Service (2019) noted that households participating in SNAP include families in which one or more adults are working for low pay, seniors with low incomes,

individuals with disabilities living on modest incomes, and individuals who are out of work; more than two-thirds of participants in an average month are in households with children, and more than one-quarter are in families with seniors or people with disabilities.

The severity of food insecurity has deepened over the past decade and tremendously impacts Black and Latinx. Many people utilize food assistance programs such as SNAP, WIC, and food pantries and continue to report food insecurity (Gundersen et al., 2019; Hambrick, 2020; State News Service, 2019). About one-quarter of all households exhaust all their benefits within a week of receipt, and more than half exhaust them within the first 2 weeks (Carlson et al., 2021). SNAP merely reduces levels of food insecurity by supplementing other household income, but if a household has zero income, it covers the total cost of the food budget (State News Service, 2019). One of the problems with SNAP is that the calculation does not match the price of food due to inflation after the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving families utilizing more than one food program, such as food pantries (Hambrick, 2020).

Veterans

Some low-income veterans are at greater risk of food insecurity than other veterans. Characteristics that place veterans at the highest risk of food insecurity are younger age, female, and racial/ethnic minority groups (Kamdar et al., 2023). Unmarried low-income individuals experience depression, activity limitations, and severe psychological distress (Elbogen et al., 2024; Pooler et al., 2021). Elbogen et al. (2024) cited those veterans with food insecurity had nearly four times higher suicidal ideation

one year later compared to veterans not reporting food insecurity. The veterans' health status puts them at a higher risk of food insecurity. Some of the risk factors are heavy smoking, heavy alcohol consumption, higher rates of mental illness (e.g., PTSD), and depression (Cypel et al., 2020). Pooler et al. (2021) noted that 24% of veterans receiving care at the Veterans Health Administration clinic were food insecure, and 27% of veterans who fought wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were food insecure in 2012.

Approximately 1.4 million veterans participated in SNAP (Pooler et al., 2021). The factors for food insecurity were: (a) higher among unemployed veterans who had less than a 4-year college degree; (b) rented their homes and participated in SNAP; (c) many veterans return to civilian life without a job and find it challenging to secure civilian employment that matches their skills and salary expectations; and (d) substance abuse (Cypel et al., 2020; Pooler et al., 2021). Nearly all veterans reported annual household incomes of less than \$ 35,000 (Pooler et al., 2021). Lower income wages are associated with food insecurity, which has been found insufficient to meet basic needs in households with children (Cypel et al., 2020; Pooler et al., 2021). The number of veterans not in the labor force equates to 74.1% who also had functional limitations, which could contribute to working-age veterans deciding not to pursue employment (Pooler et al., 2021). The challenges that injured veterans face in obtaining employment are more likely due to service-related injuries, which include physical injuries and invisible wounds such as hearing impairment, PTSD, and brain injury (Cypel et al., 2020; Pooler et al., 2021).

What Predicts Food Insecurity?

Food insecurity has involved certain groups of individuals such as women, the low-income, sexuality, and racial and ethnic minorities (Bowen et al., 2019). The socioeconomic problems associated with food insecurity are poverty, ill health, and the lack of school (Drewnowski, 2022). There is a relationship between race, ethnicity, and food insecurity, which is associated with poverty, unemployment, incarceration, and disability. Odoms-Young and Bruce (2018) noted that the definition of *racial discrimination* is the unequal treatment of individuals or groups based on their race or ethnicity. Racial discrimination includes two components: (a) differential treatment based on race that disadvantages a racial group, which is disparate treatment, and (b) treatment based on inadequately justified factors other than race that disadvantages a racial group, which is disparate impact (Odoms-Young & Bruce, 2018).

Odoms-Young and Bruce (2018) found that disparate treatment studies have shown that racial discrimination limits people of color's access to educational and employment opportunities, resulting in social and economic repercussions that could lead to food insecurity. Disparate impact also has implications for creating racial/ethnic disparities in food insecurity, such as Blacks having been incarcerated in state prisons at a rate that is five times that of Whites (Rezal, 2021). Consequently, it restricts employment for HOI, which is a disadvantage to people of color and is a contributing factor to food insecurity (Jordan & Sneed, 2023). Women working the same job as men but receiving less pay is another disparate impact that could leave a household in food insecurity (Belsey-Priebe et al., 2021).

Structural racism refers to the inequitable systems of housing, employment, earnings, benefits, credit, media, health care, and criminal justice based on race or ethnicity (Odoms-Young & Bruce, 2018). Braveman et al. (2022) noted that systemic and structural racism are forms of racism that are widespread and deeply immersed in and throughout systems, laws, written or unwritten policies, long-established practices, and beliefs, with attitudes that produce, condone, and perpetuate widespread unfair treatment of people of color. Braveman et al. (2022) found that systemic racism is the involvement of whole systems, for example, legal, health care, school, and criminal justice systems, but structural racism emphasizes the role of the structures (laws, policies, institutional practices, and ingrained norms) that are the systems.

Systemic and structural racism expose people of color to health-harming conditions that impose barriers to opportunities for good jobs with benefits, good schools, good health care, and fair treatment by the criminal justice system, putting minority people (e.g., Black, Indigenous, Latinos, and other people of color) at a disadvantage within society (Braveman et al., 2022; Odoms-Young & Bruce, 2018). The involvement of structures in race-based discrimination causes oppression, which leads to food insecurity, poor mental health, homelessness, poor health, and chronic stress (Braveman et al., 2022).

Malnutrition: The Effects of Food Insecurity on Children

More than 10 million children in the United States suffer from food insecurity (Hines et al., 2021). Poor nutrition is the fourth leading cause of death in the United States (Simon & DeBrew, 2021). A child suffering from food insecurity could be

hindered by physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development (Gallegos et al., 2021; Hines et al., 2021; Pathak et al., 2022). Food insecurity may influence child development through exposure to increased stress and anxiety (Johnson & Markowitz, 2018). The effect of food insecurity on children's behavior is externalizing and internalizing (Gallegos et al., 2021; Hines et al., 2021). Internalizing behavior is inner-directed behavior and is usually the result of negative emotions including: (a) depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms, emotional symptoms (e.g., sadness, guilt, shame, fear); (b) social withdrawal; (c) eating disorder; (d) unwillingness to speak; (e) self-harm; (f) drug abuse; (g) somatic symptoms; and (h) suicide attempts (Gallegos et al., 2021; Hines et al., 2021).

Externalizing behavior is an outer-directed type of child problem behavior, such as aggression, defiance, and conduct disorder (Gallegos et al., 2021; Hines et al., 2021). Examples of externalizing behavior are lying, cheating, stealing, vandalism, arson, fighting, verbal abuse, breaking the law, and substance abuse (Bowen et al., 2021; Gallegos et al., 2021; Hines et al., 2021; Odoms-Young & Bruce, 2018). Children can start displaying these behavior symptoms as young as 24 months if they are in a food-insecure home for more than 9 months, which hurts a child once entering school age (e.g., kindergarten; Hines et al., 2021). The characteristics of children suffering from food insecurity include: (a) utilized special education services, (b) mental health counseling, (c) repeating grades, (d) early childhood food insecurity can affect cognitively, (e) food insecurity children have lower cognitive skills, and (f) and mental proficiency—lower math and reading scores (Gallegos et al., 2021; Hines et al., 2021).

Food insecurity hurts children's social-emotional and cognitive development through two potential pathways: a direct pathway, by undermining children's health, and an indirect pathway, by disrupting children's environments and developmentally supportive interactions (Johnson & Markowitz, 2018). Hines et al. (2021) found that undernutrition from food insecurity directly undermines child health in three plausible ways: (a) limited access to nutritious food may result in iron deficiency, which is linked to impaired energy levels, immune functioning, and neurodevelopment most often in infants and toddlers; (b) besides iron, deficiencies in other vitamins, including iodine and zinc, have been linked to brain damage and impaired neuropsychological growth, and (c) when the body is without adequate energy from protein also known as protein-energy malnutrition, children are typically tired, fatigued, and uninterested and have reduced energy or desire to engage in school activities and those around them. If the body has protein-energy malnutrition, it will likely not use available energy for brain development (Roberts et al., 2022).

Food insecurity affects the neurodevelopmental processes, brain functions, and energy levels that support social-emotional, self-regulatory, and cognitive development; this can impact children from obtaining a good education to become self-sufficient and live productive lives (Johnson & Markowitz, 2018). Intergenerational transmission of food insecurity is higher in minority communities (Arlinghaus & Laska, 2021). Children and adolescents in food-insecure households are more likely to drop out of school and have poor academic performance, which contributes to social disadvantage when transitioning to adulthood (Dush, 2020). Adolescents are affected by food insecurity with

a wide range of mental health issues, social and peer-related problems, substance use, conduct disorder, and internalizing and externalizing behavioral disorders (Whitsett et al., 2019). Dush (2020) found that food insecurity contributes to adolescents' illicit behavior, such as selling drugs, stealing/shoplifting, and other high-risk behavior, and can predispose them to sexual exploitation to obtain food.

Parent stress regarding food insecurity in the household affects the children. Parental stress due to worrying about whether there is enough or if they are going to run out of food causes parents' anxiety and depression (Berge et al., 2020). Single mothers will go without eating to ensure all the children eat, which reduces parental cognitive stimulation, warmth, and support and increases harsh parenting (Berge et al., 2020). Parental stresses affect a child's social-emotional and cognitive outcomes (Gallegos et al., 2021; Hines et al., 2021). Gallegos et al. (2021) noted that parenting warmth, style, and mental health are affected when there is food insecurity in the home, which brings harsher discipline strategies and more significant conflict within the family. Parental stress reduces the mealtime structure, which is very important to family relational dynamics during meals (Schuler et al., 2020). If the mother is not eating due to insufficient food, she will most likely not sit at the dinner table (Leung et al., 2022). Family dynamics during mealtime include sharing about the day, solving family issues, children consuming adequate vegetables, and maintaining a healthier weight (Schuler et al., 2020).

Public Housing and Food Insecurity

Public housing is the country's oldest and largest housing subsidy program. The National Low Income Housing Coalition (2019) cited that 1.1 million public housing units are serving 2.2 million residents. The history of public housing programs started as part of the Housing Act of 1937, passed during the New Deal to address the country's housing and economic development by constructing the first public housing, Techwood Homes, in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1935 (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2019). This project evicted hundreds of Black families to create a 604-unit, Whites-only neighborhood (Rogers, 2022). Bezuneh and Yiheyis' (2024) findings were residents living in public housing: (a) adults skipped meals for a whole day due to lack of food, (b) adults and children cut size of meals, (c) food hardship or food insecurity mainly occurred during the third and fourth week of the month. Martinez et al. (2019) reported an association between personal vehicles, diet, and food insecurity. The researchers found that in public housing in deprived urban areas or food deserts, where access to food stores was limited, a personal vehicle could improve their ability to access healthy food (Martinez et al., 2019). Quintiliani et al.'s (2021) study revealed that residents living in public housing who were found to be food insecure were associated with women not married, higher stress, lower social support, greater number of personal problems, and a high number of adverse physical symptoms.

The Sociodemographic Characteristics of Public Housing Residents

Many families qualify for housing assistance and have minimal income. Most of whom are minorities with incomes below the poverty line. Households in public housing

neighborhoods face challenges, including heightened poverty levels, adequate food supplies resulting in food insecurity, and crime (Choi et al., 2022). Fischer et al. (2021) cited the sociodemographic characteristics of public housing residents were: (a) 70% of residents are minorities (Black 43%, Latino 25%, and White 28%); (b) 26% of men and 74% of women are heads of households; (c) 40% of the age of the head of household is 25-50, 20% is age 51–60, and 35% is age 62 and up; (d) 76% of residents have no disabilities in the household, and 24% do have a disability in the household; and (e) 55% of public housing is located in Urban cities, 24% in suburban areas, and 22% in rural areas. According to HUD’s federal housing assistance report, the characteristics that make up public housing residents are: (a) 31.4% did not graduate from high school, (b) 32.01% graduated from high school, (c) 18.6% some college, and (d) 18.0% did graduate from college (Helms et al., 2020).

Helms et al. (2020) stated that for residents who resided in public housing in 2020 employment percentage, 59.6 % of the heads of the house were not working, 16.5% of heads of the house worked part-time, and 24% of heads of the households worked full-time. Less than 4 million children live in public housing, and nearly two-thirds of public housing households are considered “extremely low income,” with incomes below 30% of the area median income (National Housing Law Project, 2023). Food insecurity by race in 2020, Hispanics 42.4%, Blacks 38.6 %, Whites 28.7 %, and others 34.4% (Helms et al., 2020). The U.S. Department of Urban and Development (2019) cited that HUD continues to play a significant role in providing shelter for America’s most vulnerable populations: the working poor, minorities, Native Americans, individuals with

disabilities, individuals with AIDS, older adults, individuals experiencing homelessness, and those with a HOI.

However, there are still high numbers of food insecurity homes in public housing. The poverty and food inequality cycle are rapid in public housing (Coleman-Jensen, 2020). U.S. Department of Urban and Development (2019) noted that food insecurity is linked to a low income. Bezuneh and Yiheyis (2020) found that most respondents with children reported low incomes that would not cover all their basic expenses. The families living in public housing cope with food insecurity by: (a) eating less, (b) limiting portion size, (c) borrowing food, (d) borrowing money to buy food, and (e) mother skipping meals. Almost a quarter of the study participants stated that their food needs are unmet and that they receive SNAP or WIC programs (Bezuneh & Yiheyis, 2020). Most residents living in public housing receive a SNAP or WIC. The food aid program only subsidizes some food needs (Hambrick, 2020). Hambrick (2020) cited that 57% of families using food pantries also utilized SNAP, and 54% used WIC.

Mobile Food Unit -Truck/ Accessibility

Virginia Department of Health (2020) noted that a mobile food unit means a food establishment that is mounted on wheels (excluding boats in the water), readily moveable from place to place at all times during operation, and shall include but not limited to pushcarts, trailers, trucks, or vans. Several nonprofit organizations, federal programs, schools, churches, and food pantries use mobile food units to transfer food to low-income families as a structural intervention to help families access more healthy food (Dublin et al., 2020). Woo Baidal et al. (2022) found that FARMacia used a mobile unit to reach a

population that is food insecure because (a) the population they serve does not have access to transportation, and (b) some of their homes are experiencing kitchen problems. As a result of FARMacia's approach, they have reduced food insecurity, improved their target population's diet, and improved their health outcomes (Woo Baidal et al., 2022).

The Jersey Shore Dream Center is a nonprofit organization that serves the needs of homeless individuals and families. The Dream Center launched a mobile unit to bring food to individuals experiencing homelessness in the parks, motels, and rooming houses; it served more than 200 people weekly (United States: FirstEnergy Foundation Grant, 2024). Tyson Foods awarded \$125,000 to the Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee in Nashville, Tennessee, to purchase mobile food trucks for different food pantries to increase feeding capacity in 15 states (Burleson, 2018). This initiative collects prepared and perishable food from 150 area grocery stores, restaurants, caterers, and discount retailers for distribution to the food insecure (Burleson, 2018). USDA Summer Food Program during the summer of 2018, District 87 served 18,658 lunches to children 18 and younger. This was a 27.6% increase from the number of meals served in the summer of 2017 due to transporting food to children without access to pick-up sites. Eighty percent of the children receiving food from the mobile food truck get food 4–5 days a week (Sather et al., 2021).

Summary

Literature was broadly examined, analyzed, and synthesized to establish focus and justify the research study. The base theory for this study is the feminist theory. I utilized the fourth wave of feminist theory, where today's feminists are turning their attention to

the system of governance that allows for wrongdoing regardless of sexuality, race, class, and gender. Feminists use intersectionality and represent individuals irrespective of race, class, gender, or sexuality to cause social change for the good. The feminist theory was created from an inclusive perspective by considering how systems of power and oppression interact (Crossman, 2021). Feminists do not just focus on gendered power and oppression but on how this might intersect with systemic racism, a hierarchical class system, and (dis)ability. All of these undergird the substructure of factors that facilitate and perpetuate food insecurity among households, especially those headed by people oppressed by the intersections highlighted by feminists. I used the feminist theory intersectionality perspective to advance understanding of food insecurity among children living in public housing using mobile food trucks to reduce food insecurity.

In 2022, 11.6 million households with children under 18 reported that they sometimes or often did not have enough to eat during the week (Pathak et al., 2022). More than 7 million households were food insecure despite receiving federal food and nutrition benefits through SNAP, and almost 4 million of these households included children. The burden of food insecurity falls most heavily on low-income individuals, rural communities, people of color, women, children, older adults, and disabled individuals. The predictor of food insecurity involves certain groups of individuals like women, low-income individuals, sexuality, and racial and ethnic minorities (Bowen et al., 2019). The socioeconomic problems associated with food insecurity are poverty, ill health, unemployment, incarceration, disability, and the lack of school (Pine & De Souza, 2013). The effect of food insecurity on children is that more than 10 million children in

the United States suffer from food insecurity (Hines et al., 2021). Children are affected physically, cognitively, and social-emotionally development, and poor nutrition is the fourth leading cause of death in the United States (Simon & DeBrew, 2021).

Public housing provides safe rental housing for eligible low-income older adults, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities. To qualify for housing assistance, an individual must have a minimal income. Most residents are minorities with incomes below the poverty line and suffer from food insecurity. Public housing has more females as heads of households with children under 40. Plus, many residents are seniors. The education level of the residents is mostly between not finishing high school and receiving a high school diploma. Most of the residents are non-working adults or have a part-time job.

Mobile food units are food establishments mounted on wheels. The mobile food unit can be a pushcart, van, or truck. Mobile food units provide food to low-income families. The mobile food unit has successfully reached more individuals because some individuals have no transportation or disabilities challenges, and it provided them with food. This intervention decreased food insecurity in homeless communities, seniors' communities, veterans, and children during the summer by providing healthy meals. The mobile food truck can benefit the public housing communities. Mobile food trucks can deliver food to public housing communities to reduce food insecurity among children. This intervention can improve the children's health and education outcomes and decrease the parental stress of worrying about their children receiving adequate food. This

intervention can assist the children to have a productive and healthy future. Chapter 3 will cover the research method.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

I aimed to explore the perspectives of public housing professionals on the challenges programs that provide mobile food trucks to children living in public housing units face in meeting their goals of stemming food insecurity. In addressing this research problem, I focused on and consider the nature of data gathered by interviewing public housing professionals to gain their perspectives. The method of inquiry for this study will help uncover if a mobile food unit at different site locations and accessibility for children in the United States' southern states will reduce food insecurity. The sections in this chapter will include the research design, the role of the researcher, methodology, and trustworthiness issues.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question for this study was: What is the perspective of public housing professionals on an on-site mobile food unit accessible for children in the southern United States? I adopted a generic qualitative approach, which is a suitable research method for this study. Generic studies seek to understand how individuals interpret, construct, or make meaning from their world and experiences (Kahlke, 2014). The generic qualitative research approach focuses on descriptions of how and what individuals experience by simply seeking to understand their perspectives, processes, or worldviews. It is an inquiry or method of research that involves skillfully asking open-ended questions of individuals and observing matters of interest in a real-world setting to solve problems (Patton, 2015).

This study included open-ended question semistructured interviews (see Appendix A) with the professionals of public housing in the southern United States to gain a rich understanding of food insecurity in public housing. The semistructured interview was a dialogue between the public housing professionals and me. Using a generic qualitative method of inquiry allows public housing directors to give their perspectives on their property. They can use a food mobile unit to reduce food insecurity at their location. The semistructured interview included a guide. The structured interview method is designed to collect data. The method used to collect data was a combination of face-to-face interviews and video conference calls. Some of the public housing offices are closed due to COVID-19 precautions.

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research is used to gain insights into individuals' feelings and thoughts, which may provide the basis for a future stand-alone qualitative study. The role of the researcher in qualitative research is to attempt to access the thoughts and feelings of study participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015). One-on-one interviews were provided for data collection. During the interviews, I took handwritten notes and use audio-recording to accurately capture the critical data from the interview. After the interviews, the captured data were transcribed verbatim to cover the spoken and written words to begin analysis. The next step is coding the gathered data. I identified new topics, similarities, and differences that are revealed through the public housing professionals' narratives and will be interpreted. This process enables me to understand the world from each public

housing professional's perspective. The data were coded by hand on a hard copy of the transcript or using qualitative research software.

I took the appropriate preventive measures to avoid bias in this research, as I considered and addressed every detail at the study design stage to avoid bias. According to Shah (2019), there are three researcher biases: (a) confirmation bias is where the researcher interprets the data to support their hypothesis; (b) question-order bias is where some questions may influence the responses to questions; and (c) leading questions and wording bias is when questions may lead the participants in the direction of probable outcomes. However, the role of a researcher in avoiding bias occurs when: (a) all data obtained must be analyzed with a clear and unbiased mind; (b) general questions are asked before moving to specific or sensitive ones; (c) questions are kept simple; and (d) words that could introduce bias are avoided. Member checking was used to ensure that bias is almost impossible in this study. It was implemented by having the public housing professionals read through and check over the interview transcript to ascertain the accuracy of their responses before data are analyzed. There were no ethical issues applicable to this study. There was no conflict of interest or power differentials.

Sampling Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The research sample for this study was 20 public housing professionals from rural and urban areas in the southern states of the United States (four public housing professionals from each state) Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. The inclusion procedure for sampling was that the participants must be professionals

from public housing (see Appendix B). The professionals must have been in the position for at least 2 years at a public housing property with families (children). The exclusion criteria were public housing professionals who work for a property with no children (some public housing communities serve seniors only). To maintain the confidentiality of the public housing professionals, their names or specific locations of the public housing were not used or indicated. The professionals were selected based on their pre-screening questions via flyers or recruitment by phone to conduct face-to-face interviews or by online video chat/meeting, like Zoom. The criteria for participants in the study were as follows: (a) Are you a professional at a public housing site? (b) How long have you worked as a professional for public housing? The person needs at least 2 years of work experience; and (c) Does your public housing site have families and children? The selections were not from public housing sites where I may have previously provided volunteer services or had personal relationships.

Participant Sampling and Saturation

The number of participants for this study was 20 professionals from the southern United States of America. This study included Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. I interviewed two public housing professionals in urban areas and two in rural areas in each southern state listed (total 10 urban interviews and 10 rural interviews). The sampling strategy for this study was convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is the easiest sampling method because the participants are selected based on their availability to participate in the study (Edgar & Manz, 2017). The research was on food insecurity in children living in public housing agencies and whether

a mobile food truck would decrease food insecurity. Convenience sampling was the best choice because the professionals, considered experts in managing public housing agencies, have the right perspectives and are easy to interview compared to the families that live in public housing.

Participant Recruitment and Data Collection

I identified two urban and two rural public housing professionals in the southern United States of America in the following states: Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. U.S. Department of HUD (2024) showed there are public housing agencies located in the states of: (a) Georgia, with over 180 properties; (b) Florida, with over 98 properties; (c) Alabama, with over 142 properties; (d) Mississippi, with over 50 properties; and (e) Louisiana, with over 154 properties. Simkus (2023) suggested that taking multiple samples as a larger sample size will reduce the chance of sampling error. In addition, repeating the survey ensures the accuracy of the results. Twenty participants adequately provided saturation of the data and helped gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

I chose two urban and two rural public housing agencies in each southern state of the United States. The public housing professionals were emailed a flyer to personally ask them to volunteer their time for a short one-on-one interview at their location regarding food insecurity in children. The professionals had the option to do a face-to-face or Zoom online video interview. Also, the participants were informed about the confidentiality of the research on the first initial phone call and a reminder on the day of the interview. On the first initial phone call, if the professional met the participation

criteria, they were given an appointment for a virtual or face-to-face meeting. Following the call, the professional was emailed the interview appointment date and time as a follow-up. If the public housing professional wanted to opt out of the research, they could email or text me at any time.

Instrumentation and Data Collection Process

The data collection process used the following data collection instruments and include: (a) field notes, (b) a voice recording device for face-to-face interviews, (c) virtual interviews will be conducted with Zoom online video meetings and a web-based application for recording the interviews, and (d) an interview guide. I paid for a transcription service (confidentiality agreement with the servicer). After conducting and transcribing all interviews, the participant-directors were emailed the transcripts for their response-consistency review and subsequent approval by email. Once all interview transcripts were approved, the data coding and analysis began. The NVivo software application was the data coding software used.

NVivo is a software for qualitative data analysis. Syarifuddin et al. (2021) stated that NVivo is widely used by several prominent researchers in qualitative field studies to describe, evaluate, and interpret social phenomena, find patterns, organize, and analyze, and it is efficient in time. Researchers use the software to analyze data from interviews, surveys, field notes, web pages, and journal articles (Lumivero, n.d.). NVivo was introduced 30 years ago by QSR International, which is based in Australia. Different studies have used NVivo as a data analysis tool that conducts studies in medicine, nursing school, psychiatry, and other health fields (Syarifuddin et al., 2021). Content validity will

be accomplished when handwritten notes from the interviews and audio/video recording devices are compared to NVivo data analysis. If there is any discrepancy, it will be corrected in the data analysis report.

Data Analysis Plan

Data collected from the interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis. It is a qualitative research analysis method that involves identifying, analyzing, and interpreting recurring themes or patterns in data (Nicolas, 2021). Thematic analysis has been widely used in diverse fields of study, such as psychology, medicine, health service, and education (Lester et al., 2020). Thematic analysis was used to sort, sift through, and analyze 20 interview responses from the public housing professionals to identify similar phrases and relationships to develop themes. Thematic analysis of data helps with preparing and organizing the data, transcribing, paraphrasing, or translating the data, becoming familiar with the data corpus, coding the data, producing categories and themes from underlying coded passages, and making the analysis process transparent (Lester et al., 2020). The data analysis plan followed these steps:

Step 1: Preparing and organizing the data for analysis. I gathered all audio- or video-recorded interview files into one location, convert observational notes to electronic format (Microsoft Word document), and scan documents retrieved in paper form. The process included a structured naming protocol for each file, the production of a master data catalog that lists each data source, and the date of its collection.

Step 2. Transcribing the data. The 20 interviews contained audio or video data that was transcribed for further analysis. The interviews were transcribed verbatim to

capture every word from the public housing research participant professionals, which served as an accurate conversation record. Once completed, the transcribed data set was outsourced to a professional transcriptionist, NVivo.

Step 3. Becoming familiar with the data. I reviewed the collected and transcribed data to note specific or unique ideas or experiences described by the public housing research participant professionals that appeared in interviews and are recorded in the observation notes.

Step 4. Coding the data. The following process involved coding the data. A code is simply a short, descriptive word or phrase that assigns meaning to the data related to the researcher's analytic interests (Lester et al., 2020). There were three phases of data coding. In the first phase, codes will be assigned to the entire data set. This coding layer serves to identify important statements, experiences, reflections, data segments, and passages, as the first phases are often descriptive. In the second phase, following the passages/data segment codes assigned in the first phase, additional codes that reflect concepts and ideas that are more directly related to the focus of the study were assigned. The second coding phase aimed to connect statements, experiences, and reflections offered by the public housing professionals. In the third coding phase, connections were made to the study's theoretical ideas.

Step 5. Moving from codes to categories and categories to themes. Inductive analysis means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data (Lester et al., 2020). Once categories were developed, I aimed to produce their applicable

themes. Themes are generally aligned with the study and designed in response to the study's primary research focus.

Step 6. Making the analytic process transparent. I included the report coding frequency usage in the research studies. This process was generated using the NVivo qualitative data analysis software application. This process comprises tabulating coding frequencies but also allows these tabulations to be exported in publication-ready formats.

Research Credibility and Issues of Trustworthiness

Patton (2015) stated that the credibility of findings and interpretations depends on careful attention to establishing trustworthiness, which includes: (a) time at your research site, that is, the time spent preparing for semistructured interviews; (b) time spent interviewing, that is, time spent learning when to ask the main questions, follow-up questions and how to probe; and (c) time to build a good relationship with people or participants in your research that contributes to a trustworthy data, which helps to facilitate a responsive interview. For a research study with credibility to be conducted, it must follow or go through the various processes of triangulation, which include: (a) data triangulation, which is the use of more than a single type of data to establish findings, for example, using different books, peer-review articles, and newspaper articles; (b) using several different ways to record the participants' answers, for example, recording the interview, and writing notes; (c) using member checking in verifying researchers' interpretations of the facts; (d) using Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval as a form of member checking; and (e) using reflexive self-analysis and daily journaling in research logs (Stahl & King, 2020).

To ensure and resolve the trustworthiness issues, I incorporated members checking in my study to test the accuracy of the findings and interpretations of the data collected. After completing the transcription of the interviews, each housing professional was sent a copy of the transcription to verify their responses and approve the transcribed answers. Transferability provides a thick description and variation in participant selection (Patton, 2015). Each interview was assigned a number, and everyone who participated had a full interview that was transcribed. Dependability involves keeping a log of the research as the research study progresses. That is all the steps from starting a research study to developing and reporting findings. These records will be kept regarding what will or was done in this investigation (see Patton, 2015). Confirmability involves verifying, checking, and rechecking data collection and analysis to ensure results are likely repeatable by others. I utilized the data collection information from the audio and video recordings and check with the notes taken during the interview (see Patton, 2015). Reflexivity examines the researcher's judgments and belief systems during the data collection. I interviewed with a closed and clear mind and did not make assumptions about the research sample and population.

As a researcher, I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before beginning participant recruitment among public housing professionals to ensure the study met ethical research standards. Once approved, the recruitment of 20 public housing professionals from the southern states of the United States of America commenced by sending a flyer by email or contacting them by phone to participate in this study. The participants were prescreened with questions. Once the participants were

approved, they were emailed and sent the informed consent form, additional information regarding the research study, and the interview question guide. I reviewed the informed consent form and confidentiality agreement with the client-participants. If the participants were still interested in moving forward with the research interview, they were given a date and time and the option for a face-to-face or Zoom virtual meeting.

On the day of the research interview, the informed consent form and the confidentiality agreement were reviewed again for the second time. Then, the interview started and was recorded along with taking or using field notes. Once the interview was over, the participants were thanked for volunteering their time. The interview was transcribed and emailed to the participants for member checking and response accuracy. Each participant received a \$20.00 gift certificate upon completion of their interview and the transcribed copy was returned for data analysis. After this, data analysis commenced. I designated a fireproof cabinet to store the audio and video tapes or files and the transcripts for 5 years. After 5 years, I will shred and dispose all data collected in my research and a secured bin.

This study did not include any conflict of interest. The participant professional interviewed had no personal relationship with the researcher, nor has the researcher volunteered for their public housing agency. This study was based on openly recruiting participants to gain their perspective on the public housing professionals and to see if the public housing agency could utilize a mobile food unit to help decrease food insecurity in children. To successfully conduct this research, the participants completed the criteria form to verify that they met all conditions for participating in the research study. The

requirements included that (a) all participants must be over 18 years old; (b) participant's personal information and responses must always be kept confidential and private in a locked, fireproof filing cabinet for 5 years; and (c) the research would not involve any vulnerable populations (e.g., children, prisoners, individuals with impaired decision-making capacity, and or economically or educationally disadvantaged individuals).

Summary

The discussions in this chapter covered the research design, the role of the researcher, data collection methodology, and trustworthiness issues. The generic qualitative genre was suitable for this research study. Generic studies seek to understand how individuals interpret, construct, or make meaning from their world and experiences. This study included open-ended interviews with public housing professionals in the southern United States to understand food insecurity in public housing. The structured interview was a dialogue between the public housing professionals and the researcher.

The role of the researcher in qualitative research is to assess the thoughts and feelings of study participants. I provided one-on-one interviews for data collection; I took handwritten notes and use a video recording to accurately capture the essential data from the interview. After the interviews, I transcribed the data from the interview. The next step is coding, in which I identified new topics revealed through the public housing professionals' interpreted interviews.

The sample for this study was 20 public housing professionals from rural and urban areas in the southern states of the United States. Their names or the specific location of the public housing were not included in the research to maintain the

confidentiality of the public housing professionals. To ensure the public housing professionals meet the criteria, I had the public housing professional complete a criteria application. The sampling strategy for this study was convenience sampling, as it is the easiest sampling method because the participants are selected based on availability and willingness to participate.

The data collection process included face-to-face interviews and virtual interviews. I transcribed the interview by using NVivo transcription service. The trustworthiness criteria are for the accountability of the research; it consists of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, audit trails, and reflexivity. Ethical procedures consist of informed consent and criteria developed to ensure everyone meets the study's criteria and the participants consent to participate. Plus, all participants' information will be kept confidential. No vulnerable participants were interviewed in this study. Chapter 4 is about the analysis of data from the research.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain the perspectives of public housing professionals on providing a mobile food unit to children living in public housing to meet their goals of addressing food insecurity. The research study aimed to address the issue of food insecurity among children residing in public housing. By focusing on the following research question, “What are the perspectives of the Public Housing Professionals on a mobile food unit on-site accessible for children in the southern United States?” This chapter will cover settings, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and results.

Setting

The interviews were conducted via Zoom and face-to-face. The interviews conducted via Zoom were set up for audio only for the participants. The Zoom interviews were held in my home office or a hotel room, depending on whether I was on the road collecting research data. To maintain confidentiality, no one was present in the room with me during my interview with the professionals from public housing. The face-to-face interviews took place in a private office with only the person I was interviewing and myself present.

The recruitment challenge I faced was access to only public housing directors for my participants. During the 5 months of August 2024–December 2024, I encountered public housing directors who were either uninterested in the study or difficult to reach by phone and email. In December 2024, I needed to obtain approval from the IRB to modify

the study's perspective from that of public housing directors to that of public housing professionals. The approved professionals were the public housing director, housing manager, assistant housing manager, housing specialist, or resident relations in public housing agencies. I had to travel to Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia to gain access to the professionals of public housing to complete the study. I found that traveling to different public housing complexes in various states was more effective in securing interviews and collecting data.

Demographics

The study included 13 public housing professionals' interviews with some participants overseeing two or more public housing agencies. The data screening was collected either through a phone screening questionnaire for Zoom participants or face-to-face participants who answered the screening questionnaire. Each participant met the requirements by working for public housing for more than 2 years and holding one of the approved professional jobs at public housing. Each participant works at a public housing with children and families living on the property. In each of the five southern states, there were interviews from participants that represent two urban and two rural public housing communities (see Table 1).

Table 1*Demographics of the Participants*

Participants pseudonym	State	Rural/urban	Multiple sites
FL02U	Florida	Urban	No
FL03U	Florida	Urban	No
FL05R	Florida	Rural	Yes
GA01R	Georgia	Rural	Yes
GA02U	Georgia	Urban	Yes
AL01R	Alabama	Rural	No
AL02U	Alabama	Urban	Yes
AL03R	Alabama	Rural	No
MS02R	Mississippi	Rural	No
MS03R	Mississippi	Rural	No
MS04U	Mississippi	Urban	Yes
LA01R	Louisiana	Rural	Yes
LA02U	Louisiana	Urban	Yes

Data Collection

I conducted 13 interviews with public housing professionals (e.g., public housing director, director of resident services, family self-sufficiency, property manager, and housing director) regarding food insecurity in children living in public housing. I received IRB approval to conduct research in the southern states of the United States (e.g., Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana).

The recruitment procedure consisted of Zoom (online interviews) and face-to-face interviews. The procedure for recruitment using the Zoom platform involved calling the public housing agencies and speaking with the public housing director of the property. I introduced myself as a doctoral candidate at Walden University, working on my dissertation on food insecurity among children living in public housing. I asked the public housing director if they were interested in participating in my research. If they were

interested, I followed up by asking the inclusion and exclusion questions. If the participant met the inclusion criteria, I scheduled a future appointment and emailed them the interview date, time, and Zoom information. On the appointment date, I read the consent form aloud to have it recorded and to receive consent, starting the interview process.

When I visited several public housing sites, I had the pleasure of meeting professionals from various public housing organizations in their state (see Table 1). I interviewed 13 professionals. I interviewed some professionals who oversaw several public housing properties in the southern states of the United States (e.g., Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana). The interviews conducted met data saturation. Simkers (2023) stated that repeating interviews ensures the accuracy of the results. Through the 13 interviews, I reached data saturation and gained an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon by bringing rich insights to the information. The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. I interviewed each professional in public housing just once. There was no reason to have a follow-up interview. The participants were very knowledgeable about the family's needs in public housing and resourceful in sharing their perspective on food insecurity among families living in the public housing community where they work.

The data were collected through Zoom and face-to-face interviews. The Zoom interviews were set up for audio recording only. I used the audio recording on my iPhone to capture the face-to-face interviews, which were then videoed in a secluded room. Within 24 hours of each interview, I transcribed verbatim to capture all spoken and

written words. I submitted the transcribed transcript to the participants for member checking within 24 hours of the interview, allowing them to approve or request corrections. After the participants audited the transcript and returned it, I updated the interview to incorporate the corrections and any additional comments. After completion of the interview, I sent electronic gift cards of \$25.00 to each participant via email from the gift card website. In Chapter 3, I stated that the participants would receive a \$20.00 gift card; however, the gift card website only offers increments of \$25.00.

All audio recordings of interviews were backed up and transferred to a USB flash drive for safety. There is a file with all participants' information (e.g., public housing communities, interview positions with the company, a copy of all the literature articles, proposal approval, IRB approval, transcribed interviews, and member checking, both corrections and added material). In 2031, I will destroy all audio recordings to maintain confidentiality.

Data Analysis

For this research, I used the thematic analysis approach of using the data from the transcript to complete my analysis report. According to Lester et al. (2020), thematic analysis helps with preparing and organizing the data, transcribing, paraphrasing, or translating the data, becoming familiar with the data, coding the data, producing categories and themes from underlying coded passages, and making the analysis process transparent.

I started with a Microsoft Word document and manually coded each interview. I started by posting each interview question and all 13 interview responses under each

question. Each interview was read and re-read as I looked for keywords. I drafted the codes by analyzing and identifying text segments relevant to my research study. I re-read the transcript again and color-coded each theme I identified. I continued to code each interview, looking for common patterns in the data.

Following the six-step thematic analysis approach outlined by Lester et al. (2020), I began with step one by preparing and organizing the data. In step two, I manually transcribed each interview verbatim to ensure that participants' exact words and meanings were preserved. Step three involved becoming familiar with the data through repeated readings of the transcripts, during which I highlighted significant phrases and took notes to identify emerging ideas. In step four, I began coding the data in two phases. The first phase involved applying descriptive codes to the entire dataset, using color-coding to mark key themes such as "low income," "reduced food stamps," and "high cost of living."

In the second phase, I grouped related codes into broader conceptual categories such as combining "fixed income" and "lack of money" under the category of "income." Step five involved moving inductively from codes to categories and then to themes, allowing patterns to emerge naturally in alignment with the study's focus. Finally, step six emphasized making the analytic process transparent by documenting the frequency and distribution of codes, which I did in the study's findings.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

For my research study to be credible, I followed various processes of triangulation, which included: (a) data triangulation, which is the use of more than a single type of data to establish findings, for example, using government website, peer-review articles, and newspaper articles; (b) using several different ways to record the participants' answers, for example, recording the interview (Zoom platform and iPhone), and writing notes; (c) using member checking in verifying researchers' interpretations of the facts; I transcribed the interview within 24 hours and emailed the public housing professionals to check the transcript for correcting incorrect data and can add any more information that can in rich the qualitative data (d) used IRB approval as a form of member checking; and (e) using reflexive self-analysis occurred when I interviewed public housing professionals by paying attention to my thoughts and emotions, and daily journaling in research logs (Stahl & King, 2020).

Transferability

Transferability provides a thick description and variation in participant selection (Patton, 2015). Each interview was assigned a number, which included the state abbreviation, a number, and U (urban) or R (rural) property. Everyone who participated in the study had a fully transcribed interview, and information from the interview was transferred into the research.

Dependability

For my research to be dependable, I kept a log of the research as the research study progressed. These records were kept regarding what was done in this investigation (Patton, 2015). To assure reliability, I documented the collection of procedures and plans that include the overall process, such as techniques for data gathering, procedures for analysis, and a comprehensive log documenting the decisions made throughout the research process, which guarantees the dependability of the results.

Confirmability

Confirmability involves verifying, checking, and rechecking data collection and analysis to ensure results are likely repeatable by others (Patton, 2015). I used the data collection information from the audio and video recordings and checked with the notes taken during the interview. I rechecked and listened to the audio and video recording a second time to make sure I transcribed the data correctly. In addition, I utilized different approaches to improve the confirmability of their findings, including member checking and reflexive journaling to strengthen the confirmability of the findings by providing an opportunity for the participants to offer corrections to the interpretations of the transcript.

Results

The findings of the public housing professionals' perceptions revealed that the residents were food insecure. Eleven out of thirteen professionals agreed that a food mobile unit that is located in public housing communities and is accessible to all residents will decrease food insecurity. The six major themes that were identified were (1) food insecurity exists in public housing, (2) everyone needs food not just children, (3) food

stamps are not enough, (4) in addition to income, having a large family and access to internet are challenges in access to food, (5) there are multiple ways people in this community get access to food, (6) mobile food units may or may not be needed to reduce food insecurity.

Theme 1: Food Insecurity Exists in Public Housing

Participants responded that they were aware that there is not enough food, and that food insecurity exists. The participants' quotes support food insecurity across the different demographics found in public housing (families with children and seniors). Participants highlighted: (a) lack of affordable food, (b) the limited amount of Food Stamps/SNAP benefits and money runs out, and (c) some public housings are located in food deserts (availability of food are low due to the major grocery stores are several miles away).

Participants reported a connection between food insecurity in public housing and the lack of affordable food options. This is attributed to the overlapping economic pressures that limit their ability to purchase sufficient groceries to meet the family's needs. The rising cost of living, such as rent, car notes, automobile insurance, childcare expenses, and household utility bills, has reduced the portion of the household budget available for food. The high cost of food is forcing families to cut back on meals or food quality. The participants recognized that due to low income or fixed income (social security or disability checks), they do not meet all of their basic needs. The participants in the study shared that some residents sell their food stamps or SNAP benefits to pay rent or bills, which leaves less money for food. Many participants shared that residents

(children and adults) have come to the front offices asking for food. Plus, some parents have asked for money to buy food to feed their children.

To emphasize the severity of food, GA02U stated, “There is without a doubt families with food insecurities residing within our public housing.” GA01R also shared, “Most certainly there are food insecurity families with children. We have 14 scattered sites of public housing.” In addition, AL03R commented, “Children ask for snacks from the front office. The parents will talk about it in regard to rent. I talk to parents on how to rationalize their food. Some parents have asked to borrow money for food.”

The participants in the study also stated that residents in public housing reported experiencing food insecurity when their only source of food support, food stamps and SNAP, was reduced or exhausted before the end of the month. A participant expressed that decreases in food stamp benefits have created fear in residents, that they will not have enough food to sustain their families. Participants frequently mentioned that they must actively search for other food sources when food stamps or cash run out. As one FL05R explained,

The lack of not having food stamps or the food stamps have been decreased... it puts fear in us that we may not have enough food."ALO2U shared, “On a regular basis, people look for food, ways to purchase food. SNAP benefits and money have run out.

Another source of food insecurity in some of the public housing locations is the lack of accessible and affordable food in close proximity. Some of the key issues reported by the participants in this study were the lack of a grocery store within walking distance.

The participants explained that the nearby corner stores have limited food options (more junk food and fewer healthy options), and the food is more expensive. The main barrier for the residents is getting to the store to get food. Participants recognized that most residents do not own a vehicle, making grocery travel difficult. This is due to a poor public transportation system, and some public housing locations do not have access to public transportation. The walk is far too long to be toting large bags of groceries for miles. FL03U shared, “Lack of affordable food in close proximity and Food desert-limited options of food and food is more expensive at the corner stores.”

The findings support that food insecurity exists within the public housing areas managed by the participants. Food insecurity exists because of insufficient benefits and proximity to afford food sources. The responses were consistent in each of the states, regardless of demographic. Food insecurity has been cited 15 times out of 13 interviews in the Coding Chart (Appendix B).

However, based on one participant interview, a few of the communities are not experiencing challenges related to food access. This suggests that in some public housing existing resources and support may be meeting the needs of the residents.

FL02U stated, “We manage multiple family developments, and after consulting with the property managers for these developments, they reported that they have not encountered any families experiencing food insecurity.”

Low income and increasing living expenses intensify food insecurity in public housing., Families are believed to be forced to stretch limited subsidies, prioritize rent

and bills over food, and face higher grocery costs that their incomes and benefits cannot cover.

Theme 2: Everyone Needs Food, not Just Children

The participants reported that everyone needs food, not just children, but also parents, seniors, and people without children, which indicates that not only children ask for food, but all the residents in public housing. The residents (children, parents, and seniors) actively seek food from the housing office due to insufficient access and benefits. The residents have demonstrated the need for food through visible and direct requests for food.

Food insecurity is not an infrequent issue, but one that surfaces regularly. The participants frequently reported that residents struggled with food access at least once a week, this shows that hunger is a recurring stressor. The participants observed that food insecurity is tied to poor access and affordability. In some cases, the participants shared that there are periods when residents reported two or more times a week. The requests for food and hunger reports increase dramatically toward the end of the month. This pattern was associated with food stamps/SNAP benefits running out before the next month's cycle begins. The participants shared that the severe food shortages usually occur in the last week (7-10 days) before new benefits arrive.

Children in public housing experience food insecurity as a recurring, visible, and urgent need. The participants frequently mentioned that children demonstrate food needs weekly, sometimes multiple times a week. The children's reliance has become normalized, with the children coming by the office regularly, asking for snacks or food,

when there is no food at home, especially during the summer months or holidays when school meals are not available, which leads to an increase in visible requests.

AL03R shared, "Quite frequently, mostly from the children. Children ask for snacks from the front office." FL03U shared, "Interacting with people may not or maybe make a statement. But they demonstrate the need. Children come mostly."

Parents in public housing experience food insecurity as a persistent, recurring hardship. The participants shared that parents often bring up food insecurity during routine visits to the public housing office (paying rent or checking in). Parents come by the office asking for emergency food bags, or a small number of parents have asked for money to buy food. The participants discussed how a lack of grocery stores and transportation deepens food insecurity in the residents' households. The participants added that the emotional strain of being unable to provide for their children adds another layer of hardship to their lives. GA02U stated, "The parents on a weekly basis."

Seniors in public housing are at high risk of food insecurity due to limited mobility (disabilities, limited walking ability, use of a wheelchair or walker) and fixed incomes. Most seniors in public housing live on Social Security, have a disability, or have a small, limited income. The rising cost of living, such as food, medication, and utilities, leaves the seniors short on money before the end of the month. Participants claim the Seniors who qualify for SNAP/Food Stamps often receive smaller benefits that are insufficient to cover the whole month. Some seniors do not receive any benefits due to complex paperwork or a lack of computer access. Plus, some seniors do not understand how to use a computer.

In public housing, the reports of food insecurity are from different households, signaling different public housing communities, which are simultaneously experiencing food shortages. The repeated frequency in the different public housing communities is widespread, not limited to a few isolated families, but the community as a whole. The following quotes captured the participants' experiences of residents needing food across all age groups. MS03R stated, "The seniors at the property often complain about food insecurity." LA02U shared, "I only hear the people without small children (minors) in their household talking about coping with food insecurity."

Food insecurity in public housing affects seniors, children, and parents in distinct yet interconnected ways. Seniors face heightened vulnerability due to limited mobility, and fixed incomes. Children experience food insecurity as a visible and urgent need, often requesting snacks directly when resources run out. Parents experience food insecurity as a chronic hardship, running out of food before the month ends and struggling without access to nearby grocery stores or reliable transportation.

Theme 3: Food Subsidy Programs are not Enough

Participants consistently expressed that food subsidy programs, such as SNAP and WIC, are insufficient to meet the needs of families in public housing. Responses highlighted several overlapping challenges, including reducing food stamp benefits, low household income, rising living expenses, and the unaffordability of nutritious food. Although all 13 participants confirmed that residents in their communities receive SNAP and/or WIC, only one or two believed these programs adequately meet family food needs. FL02U stated, "We manage multiple family developments, and after consulting

with the property managers for these developments, they reported that they have not encountered any families experiencing food insecurity." This suggests that in some public housing, existing resources and support may effectively meet the needs of the residents. The majority indicated that subsidies fall short, creating persistent food insecurity.

Participants emphasized economic hardship throughout the responses. The participants explained that food stamp benefits are insufficient, and residents experience fear and uncertainty about whether their families will have enough to eat. This anxiety is heightened by financial pressures, such as low wages, rising rents, increasing utility costs, and inflation in food prices.

Limited income cannot keep up with rising costs. The participants shared that many of their residents are making minimum wage or relying on low-wage jobs. So, when the cost of living increased, such as rent, utilities, automobile insurance, and food costs, their income did not stretch to cover all essential bills. As a result, the food budget is the most flexible expense and gets reduced first, leading to food insecurity. The residents often prioritize paying rent, utilities, and basic bills to avoid eviction or shut-offs.

Some residents reported selling part of their food stamps to pay bills, reducing food access. Furthermore, the participants explained, the constant struggle to juggle limited income and increasing expenses creates fear and uncertainty about food availability. Several participants highlighted these concerns, with GA02U stating, "Low income, as well as the rising increase of food/living expenses." MS04U said, "Not enough income for the household if you are making minimum wage or below. Not

enough to live on with rent, utilities, vehicle, and clothes. Not enough food,” and AL03R added: "They are selling their food stamps to pay bills or rent."

While food subsidy programs provide some relief, participants reported that SNAP/WIC rarely lasts the entire month. The rising grocery prices are widening the gap between needs and resources, which means the food subsidies program (SNAP/WIC) affords less food. The cycle of stress and insecurity is heavy on families with children, seniors, and adults without children. The following participant statements illustrate these concerns: AL02U stated, "Snap and WIC do not meet their family needs due to raising cost of inflation and food cost steadily going up," and FL05R reported, "Lack of not having food stamps and when the food stamps are reduced it puts fear in the residents that they may not have enough food to sustain the family," along with LA01R sharing, "Rising cost of food," as it relates to the cause of food subsidy not lasting the entire month.

These responses suggest that while food subsidy programs (SNAP/WIC) provide important assistance. However, it is noted that the benefits are insufficient in addressing the broader economic challenges residents face in public housing. As a result, families struggle to stretch limited subsidies, and the fear of running out of food remains a constant reality.

Theme 4: In Addition to Income, Having a Large Family and Access to the Internet are Challenges in Access to Food

While income is a central factor in determining food access, participants emphasized that non-financial barriers—such as large family size and limited access to technology—also significantly shape food security for residents in public housing. These barriers highlight that food insecurity is not driven by income alone but compounded by structural and logistical challenges that disproportionately affect vulnerable families

Large Families and Food Security

Families with multiple children often struggle to secure sufficient food and resources, even when receiving SNAP or WIC benefits. Although benefits increase with household size, the incremental support often fails to match the actual cost of feeding multiple children. Participants noted that the benefits provided do not reflect rising food prices or the overall high cost of living, making it difficult for larger families to stretch resources to meet their needs.

As noted by participants, GA01R stated, “Families with multiple children have high food bills.” AL03R added, “The food service program gives according to income and the number of children ... But the cost of living is one of the major concerns. The prices of food are high.” Because public housing residents typically live on low or fixed incomes, larger families experience an even greater strain on limited resources. As household size increases, per-person income available for food decreases, forcing families to stretch dollars further.

Larger families also incur higher expenses in other areas, including

utilities. Bigger households naturally consume more electricity, gas, and water for cooking, heating/cooling, and laundry. They also use appliances (refrigerators, stoves, and washing machines) more frequently and often occupy larger living spaces requiring more energy. While housing assistance offsets rent, there is no comparable relief for utility costs, forcing families to choose between keeping the lights on or putting food on the table.

Larger families also require more frequent grocery trips due to higher food needs and limited storage. Without cars, families depend on public transit, which becomes costly when multiple children must accompany parents. Families with vehicles often require larger cars, which increase expenses for gas, maintenance, and insurance. In addition, essential expenses such as childcare, clothing, and shoes place additional demands on limited budgets, competing directly with funds for nutritious food.

Technology Barriers and Food Assistance

In addition to household size, residents identified limited access to technology as a growing barrier to maintaining food security. With SNAP and WIC transitioning to digital-only systems for applications, recertification, and benefit management, households without internet access, computers, or digital literacy face significant disadvantages. One participant (FL03U) explained, “It is challenging for our residents to maintain benefits due to electronic requirements. Some residents cannot recertify their benefits due to the lack of computers or internet access. But they lose the benefits because they cannot fulfill the application requirements.”

The digital divide creates systemic inequities and families risk losing essential food assistance not because of ineligibility, but because they cannot navigate online systems. When benefits are delayed or lost, already vulnerable families are left at greater risk of hunger. This demonstrates how structural barriers—beyond income—intersect with poverty to deepen food insecurity in public housing communities.

Non-financial barriers significantly compound food insecurity in public housing. Families with multiple children face disproportionately high food costs, as SNAP and WIC benefits fail due to rising living expenses, utilities, transportation, and childcare. In addition, the digital transition of SNAP/WIC systems creates structural obstacles: households without reliable internet. Together, these factors demonstrate that food insecurity in public housing is not solely income-driven but shaped by broader structural and logistical challenges.

Theme 5: There are Multiple Ways People Get Access to Food

Analysis of participant interviews revealed various food resources regarding how families in public housing access food during periods of insecurity. The participants stated families relied on a variety of formal and informal sources to meet their food needs. Formal resources included food banks, churches, nonprofit organizations, schools, community centers, and on-site programs such as those provided by the Boys & Girls Club. GA02U explained, “Many of our families are dealing with food insecurities on a weekly basis and will utilize various food banks/food drives based on availability,” illustrating how residents navigate multiple resources depending on availability and timing.

The accessibility of accessing food through churches, schools, and nonprofit programs provided critical support through weekly or seasonal distributions. Some public housing communities operate an on-site food bank, while others rely on food banks in the broader community. Participants frequently mentioned that food banks operate on varying schedules, such as twice a week (e.g., Tuesdays and Thursdays), once a week, or once a month. Residents can sometimes access emergency food bags outside regular distribution days. LA02U described this support, noting, “People stop by here to give food and to tell us where people can go to get food. For example, during Thanksgiving, churches give away food or the schools give away food during the summer. The churches come weekly to give food.” On-site resources also facilitated access, often offering logistical support such as transportation to off-site food distributions. FL03U stated, “Families in need can go to the food pantry (Boys & Girls Club on property). We receive flyers where people can go for food. For example, food distribution in school and other places in the community. We have a bus to transport the family to the food distribution as well. Families can access food on a weekly basis.”

When formal systems were insufficient, families turned to personal networks of relatives and friends to supplement their food needs. Despite the variety of resources, participants emphasized that food supplies often fell short of community needs. The variation in distribution schedules required families to coordinate across multiple sources to manage food insecurity week to week, revealing persistent structural limitations.

These findings demonstrate that public housing residents navigate a complex web of resources to access food, drawing on institutional, community-based, and personal

networks. While these supports are essential, they are often insufficient to fully meet residents' needs, underscoring the ongoing challenges in achieving consistent food security. Families in public housing rely on various food resources when facing food insecurity, including food banks, churches, nonprofit organizations, schools, and community-based programs.

Theme 6: Mobile Food Units May or May Not Be Needed to Reduce Food Insecurity

Analysis of participant responses revealed strong support for implementing a mobile food unit in public housing communities to reduce food insecurity. Participants consistently emphasized that a mobile food unit should serve the entire household, not just children, as food insecurity affects all family members. Seniors, families with children, and homeless residents were identified as primary beneficiaries. One participant highlights the importance of the mobile food unit being for everyone. LA02U stated: "I think it would help if it was for everyone not just the children, especially during the summer and Christmas time (tough times). Christmas is a tough time financially, but the parents must choose between giving their families Christmas gifts or putting food in the house." Furthermore, AL02U agreed, "Mobile food truck should be for everybody, Mobile food truck should serve hot meal everyday plus send boxes of fresh food."

Preferred frequency of mobile food unit visits varied across participants. While some participants suggested daily service to ensure children received meals on weekends, the majority participants recommended weekly visits. Other participants suggested twice-weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly distributions, citing storage limitations or concerns about misuse of food assistance. Participants emphasized the importance of regular, consistent

visits FL03U stated, "Yes, weekly—once a week. If it's consistent, families can plan to be there accordingly. I think everybody will benefit from the mobile. Seniors and homeless families (prepared hot meals), families with children on the property (bag of groceries)." Another participant emphasized the importance of consistent visits. AL03R also stated, "The mobile food truck should come bi-weekly."

Participants requested both hot meals and boxes of groceries. Hot meals were vital for seniors, homeless residents, and working parents who may lack time or resources to cook. At the same time, grocery boxes were essential for families with children to supplement their household food supply. Some participants expressed a desire for the mobile unit to provide both groceries and hot prepared meals, benefiting families, seniors, and individual residents. One participant highlighted the potential utility of such a service when MS02R noted, "Yes, the mobile food unit can come once a week. For families, the mobile food unit can supply boxes of food (produce, non-perishable items) and hot meals for seniors. The mobile food truck should be for everyone." Although the majority of participants expressed support, one participant indicated that additional food resources were unnecessary due to existing programs such as SNAP and WIC, as FL02U stated, "No, because the residents receive SNAP/WIC and do not experience food insecurity." GA02U also shared, "Every available resource helps, so I definitely feel as though a mobile food unit would be beneficial."

Overall, the findings indicate that residents perceive a mobile food unit as a viable strategy to alleviate food insecurity in public housing communities. To maximize impact, participants recommended that the service provide a combination of hot meals and

grocery boxes, be available to all residents, and operate at a consistent, preferably weekly, schedule.

Summary

In Chapter 4, the findings addressed the research question: *What are the perspectives of public housing professionals on a mobile food unit on-site accessible for children in the southern United States?* Thirteen participants, overseeing one or multiple housing sites across Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, shared their perspectives through interviews conducted via Zoom or face-to-face. All interviews were transcribed and analyzed using a five-step process: preparing and organizing the data, manual transcription, familiarization, coding, and developing categories and themes. Six themes emerged: (a) food insecurity exists in public housing, (b) everyone needs food, not just children, (c) food stamps are not enough, (d) income, family size, and internet access create additional barriers to food, (e) multiple sources are used to obtain food, and (f) mobile food units are needed to reduce food insecurity. Chapter 5 will interpret these findings in relation to existing literature and the theoretical framework, discuss limitations, provide recommendations for future research, highlight implications for positive social change, and conclude the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative generic study was to explore and understand the perspectives of public housing professionals on mobile food unit location and accessibility for children. The study was conducted to examine whether food insecurity exists among children living in public housing and to determine if mobile food units could serve as a viable strategy to reduce that insecurity. The research question was: What are the perspectives of the Public Housing Professionals on a mobile food unit on-site accessible for children in the southern United States? Data was collected from thirteen public housing professionals via Zoom and face to face interviews. The professionals represented both rural and urban properties across five southern states with some professionals serving more than one community. I used the thematic analysis approach of using the data from the transcript to complete my analysis report. Six major themes that were identified: (1) food insecurity exists in this community, (2) everyone needs food not just children, (3) food stamps are not enough, (4) in addition to income, having a large family and access to internet are challenges in access to food, (5) there are multiple ways people in this community get access to food, (6) mobile food units may or may not be needed to reduce food insecurity.

Chapter 5 presents an interpretation of the findings through the lens of a feminist intersectional framework, emphasizing how intersecting factors such as race, class, and gender shape experiences of food insecurity. The chapter is organized around the six key themes derived from participant perspectives and compared with existing peer-reviewed

literature. It also addresses the study's limitations, provides recommendations for future research, and outlines implications for positive social change at the individual, family, organizational, and policy levels. In addition, methodological and theoretical implications are considered, with attention to how this framework can guide future studies of food insecurity in marginalized communities. Finally, recommendations for practice are provided to inform housing professionals, policymakers, and community-based organizations seeking to reduce food insecurity among children in public housing.

Interpretation of the Findings

Food insecurity in public housing across the southern states of the United States of America is a complex and multifaceted issue, affecting residents across all age groups and household types. I identified six themes that were extracted from the analyzed data in this study. The six themes were: food insecurity exists in this community, everyone needs food not just children; food stamps are not enough, in addition to income, having a large family and access to the internet are challenges in access to food; there are multiple ways people in this community get access to food, and mobile food units are needed to reduce food insecurity. I utilized the six-step thematic analysis approach. First, I familiarized myself with the data by reading and re-reading the transcript. I looked for possible patterns. Work systematically across all the transcripts, generating codes. I analyzed the codes by looking for similarities, differences, and connections to categorize the codes. The themes were developed by analyzing relationships among categories where patterns emerge naturally in alignment with the study.

Theme 1: Food Insecurity Exists in Public Housing

The first theme, "Food Insecurity Exists in Public Housing," confirms that food insecurity is a pervasive concern within these communities. Across the 13 interviews, participants referenced food insecurity 15 times, indicating its prominence in residents' daily lives. Participants, many of whom oversee multiple public housing properties in the southern United States, described ongoing struggles with insufficient access to affordable and nutritious food. Notably, one participant reported no challenges with food access, suggesting that local resources and support systems may mitigate the severity of food insecurity in some communities.

These findings are consistent with existing literature highlighting poverty's systemic and recurrent nature in public housing. Coleman-Jensen (2020) characterized the poverty and food inequality cycle as remarkably rapid within public housing environments (p. 220). The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2019) linked food insecurity directly to low income. Bezuneh and Yiheyis (2020) reported that families with children often earn too little to cover basic household expenses. Participants' reported food insecure—lack of affordable food, the limited amount of Food Stamps/SNAP benefits and money runs out, and some public housings are located in food deserts (availability of food are low due to the major grocery stores are several miles away)—mirror these documented patterns, reinforcing the conclusion that food insecurity is both a widespread and systemic issue.

Theme 2: Everyone Needs Food, Not Just Children

The second theme, "Everyone Needs Food, Not Just Children," expands on the first by highlighting the differential impact of food insecurity across household members. Seniors were described as particularly vulnerable due to fixed incomes and limited mobility, while children's needs were immediate and often visibly expressed through direct requests for food. Parents reported chronic stress, frequently running out of food before the month's end, and facing structural barriers such as limited transportation and the absence of nearby grocery stores.

Combined with the first theme, these findings illustrate that food insecurity is a shared reality across household generations. The regularity with which residents discuss these challenges underscores the urgency of addressing food insecurity comprehensively, rather than focusing interventions solely on children.

Theme 3: Food Subsidy Programs Are Not Enough

The third theme, "Food Subsidy Programs Are Not Enough," highlights the limitations of existing food assistance programs. Participants emphasized that SNAP and WIC benefits frequently do not last the entire month, leading families to ration food, borrow from neighbors, or skip meals. Reduced benefits and administrative hurdles were also cited as significant challenges to consistent food access.

This theme aligns with literature noting that federal and local food assistance programs, while critical, often fail to meet the full nutritional needs of low-income families (Coleman-Jensen, 2020; Bezuneh & Yiheyis, 2020). These findings suggest that

temporary relief programs are insufficient to address the structural and economic challenges underlying food insecurity.

Theme 4: In Addition to Income, Having a Large Family and Access to the Internet Are Challenges in Access to Food

The fourth theme, "In Addition to Income, Having a Large Family and Access to the Internet Are Challenges in Access to Food," emphasizes that multiple structural factors beyond income alone shape food insecurity. Participants reported that larger households often struggle to meet their food needs even with SNAP benefits, as benefit increments may not reflect household size adequately. Additionally, limited access to technology and the internet restricted residents' ability to learn about, apply for, or utilize food assistance programs, online ordering, and other resources.

This finding underscores the multidimensional nature of food insecurity, corroborating research that identifies structural and logistical barriers as significant determinants of food access (Bezuneh & Yiheyis, 2020; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2019). Addressing food insecurity effectively requires strategies that consider family size, technology access, and financial assistance.

Theme 5: There Are Multiple Ways People Get Access to Food

The fifth theme, "There Are Multiple Ways People Get Access to Food," illustrates the resourcefulness and resilience of residents in securing food. Participants described leveraging multiple channels, including food assistance programs, local food pantries, informal community networks, borrowing from neighbors, and community

gardens. These adaptive strategies reflect necessity and creativity in navigating structural limitations within public housing.

This theme aligns with prior research highlighting that low-income families often rely on diverse methods to meet their food needs (Bezuneh & Yiheyis, 2020).

Recognizing these multiple pathways is crucial for designing interventions that strengthen existing community networks while addressing persistent gaps in food access.

Theme 6: Mobile Food Units May or May Not Be Needed

The findings from this study indicate that mobile food units could significantly reduce food insecurity for residents of public housing, particularly among children and other vulnerable household members. Twelve of the 13 participants supported a mobile food unit serving their communities, emphasizing that it should be accessible to all residents. Participants suggested flexible distribution schedules, either daily or weekly, with preferences split between providing both hot meals and non-perishable boxes or only non-perishable boxes. These insights demonstrate that residents see mobile food units as a practical and adaptable solution to supplement existing resources.

This theme directly intersects with the other five themes identified in the study. Theme 1, Food Insecurity Exists in Public Housing, establishes that residents regularly experience limited access to affordable and nutritious food, confirming the need for additional food access interventions. Theme 2, Everyone Needs Food, Not Just Children, highlights that seniors, children, and parents are all affected, suggesting that mobile food units should serve all household members rather than focusing on children. Theme 3, Food Subsidy Programs Are Not Enough, demonstrates that SNAP and WIC benefits

frequently fall short of meeting monthly needs, indicating that mobile food units could fill gaps in supplemental food access. Theme 4, *In Addition to Income, Having a Large Family and Access to the Internet Are Challenges in Access to Food*, underscores structural barriers such as family size and limited technology, which mobile food units can help mitigate by physically delivering food to households and providing a consistent, accessible source of nutrition. Theme 5, *There Are Multiple Ways People Get Access to Food*, shows that residents already rely on diverse strategies to meet food needs; mobile food units would complement these existing approaches, creating a more robust and reliable food access system.

These findings are consistent with the literature on mobile food units as structural interventions for low-income populations to improve access to healthy foods. The Virginia Department of Health (2020) defined mobile food units as food establishments mounted on wheels that deliver food to communities as a means of addressing food insecurity, a finding supported by Dublin et al. (2020). Research also indicates that these units effectively reach populations with limited transportation options, improving dietary intake and health outcomes (Woo Baidal et al., 2022). The present study extends this literature by showing that mobile food units can be tailored to meet the specific needs of public housing communities, providing flexible distribution schedules, a variety of food types, and equitable access for all residents, including children, seniors, and parents.

Overall, integrating participants' responses from the southern states of the United States of America across all six themes suggested that mobile food units represent a feasible, community-supported intervention to reduce food insecurity. By complementing

existing food assistance programs, addressing structural barriers, and providing reliable access to nutrition for all household members, mobile food units have the potential to improve the well-being of public housing residents and alleviate some of the chronic stress associated with food insecurity.

This study was guided by the feminist theory intersectionality approach, which recognizes that systems of oppression such as racism, classism, and sexism do not act independently but instead intersect to produce compounded disadvantage. Within the context of food insecurity, Black women are particularly vulnerable because they experience overlapping marginalization based on race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Research has shown that Black women experience higher rates of poverty than both Black men and women of other racial groups, are overrepresented in low-wage service jobs, and continue to face wage disparities despite being highly represented in the labor force (Helms et al., 2020; Patterson et al., 2020). These structural inequalities situate Black women at greater risk for food insecurity.

Shostak (2023) highlighted how food access is deeply embedded in intersectional inequalities, showing that food insecurity is disproportionately experienced by households with children, single female-headed households, low-income households, and households of color. These findings parallel the feminist intersectionality perspective, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of multiple forms of oppression. The current study's findings reinforce the framework by showing that public housing residents—primarily women, often Black, and living below the poverty line—embody these intersecting inequalities. Existing literature further aligns with these findings, noting that

the majority of public housing residents are women-headed households, predominantly from minority backgrounds, with limited education and high unemployment or underemployment rates (Fischer et al., 2021; Helms et al., 2020; National Housing Law Project, 2023). The convergence of these demographic realities with feminist intersectionality theory underscores how structural inequalities translate into heightened food insecurity among marginalized populations.

Limitation of the Study

In this study, I wanted to know the perspective of public housing professionals on using a mobile food unit to reduce food insecurity in children. The barrier was getting the public housing professional on the phone to set up an appointment to see if they could participate in my research study. From August 2024–December 2024, the research study was on the perspective of executive directors on a mobile food unit decreasing food insecurity in children. In December 2024, I changed the study to the perspective of public housing professionals. I still ran into the same problem when I broadened the study, regarding calling, and emailing potential professionals. Ninety-eight percent of the calls or emails did not get returned. I flew to Louisiana and drove through Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia to complete my 20 site interviews. I found it to be successful in going to the public housing agency instead of calling.

Recommendations

Early studies indicate that the southern states experience the highest levels of food insecurity (Helms et al., 2020). With approximately 75% of public housing occupants either unemployed or working part-time, food insecurity remains a critical challenge

(Helms et al., 2020). Mobile food units have been found to increase access to meals for food-insecure populations, yet more evidence is needed to refine these approaches. For example, Sather et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of further research on mobile feeding programs, specifically regarding site locations, timing, and accessibility, to effectively reduce food insecurity among children. Building on the findings of this study, future research should further explore mobile food unit accessibility and location from the perspectives of public housing residents. While this study provided meaningful insights into residents' experiences in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, the sample size was limited, and the findings may not fully represent other geographic areas or housing contexts. Complementary quantitative studies could strengthen these insights by measuring the broader impacts of mobile food units. At the same time, research on food-insecure populations outside of public housing could uncover additional barriers and solutions not addressed here.

Future research should adopt more participatory approaches, like town hall meetings and structured focus groups, to involve residents in shaping potential interventions. Flyers, local partnerships, and targeted outreach can increase participation and ensure diverse voices are represented in discussions about food access. Rich, detailed accounts from individuals experiencing food insecurity can capture the lived realities and variations in need across communities, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of how mobile food units may serve as an effective strategy. Such approaches not only build on this study's findings but also contribute to evidence-based policymaking and program design to reduce food insecurity among vulnerable populations.

Implication for Social Change

The findings of this study emphasize significant implications for social change by demonstrating the potential of mobile food units to address food insecurity in public housing communities. Residents' overwhelming support for mobile food units indicates that these programs can effectively reduce food insecurity's immediate and long-term consequences, including negative adverse health outcomes, psychological stress, and social inequities. The impact of mobile food units extends across multiple levels—individual, family, organizational, and societal/policy—highlighting their potential as a comprehensive intervention that addresses both personal and structural dimensions of food insecurity.

At the individual level, mobile food units reduce barriers to accessing healthy and affordable food, particularly for those most vulnerable to food insecurity. Food insecurity is linked to adverse physical and mental health outcomes, including obesity, hypertension, diabetes, anxiety, and depression (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2022). By providing reliable access to nutritious foods, mobile food units mitigate these health disparities, foster greater food stability, and support individual resilience. They also reduce financial strain by supplementing the need to purchase food from convenience stores, which are often costly and nutritionally limited, allowing individuals to reallocate resources toward other essential household needs, such as rent and utilities. Additionally, by delivering food directly to communities, mobile food units address mobility challenges that affect seniors, individuals with disabilities, and caregivers—particularly women who frequently manage household food responsibilities (Feeding America, 2021).

Mobile food units also serve as entry points for wraparound services, such as nutrition education, SNAP enrollment, and health screenings, recognizing that food insecurity intersects with broader social determinants of health.

At the family level, mobile food units enhance household stability and reduce the stress associated with feeding dependents. Families experiencing food insecurity often face strain that can affect children's physical health, emotional well-being, and academic performance (Gundersen & Ziliak, 2015). Mobile food units help families maintain regular, healthy meals, reduce parental anxiety, and foster a more supportive and cohesive household environment by ensuring consistent access to nutritious foods. This support is particularly critical for single mothers and other primary caregivers in low-income households, who experience higher rates of food insecurity. Furthermore, mobile food units can provide nutrition education and guidance for families, encouraging healthier eating practices and promoting long-term resilience against food insecurity.

At the organizational level, mobile food units expand the reach and effectiveness of food assistance programs by enabling organizations to serve marginalized communities. Unlike stationary food pantries, mobile units can bring services directly into neighborhoods where transportation barriers, low income, and structural inequities limit access to food (Helms et al., 2020). Mobile units also facilitate collaboration among community partners, including schools, housing authorities, healthcare providers, local businesses, and community organizations. These partnerships increase the efficiency of food distribution, enhance organizational credibility, and provide opportunities for

comprehensive service delivery that addresses the multifaceted needs of vulnerable populations.

Mobile food units contribute to systemic change at the societal and policy levels by highlighting gaps in the current food system and informing policy decisions. Food insecurity is shaped by structural inequalities, including poverty, racial discrimination, gender disparities, and policy limitations (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2022). Mobile food units can serve as evidence-based models for scalable interventions, providing data on usage patterns, demographic disparities, and health outcomes that inform policy development, resource allocation, and social safety net programs. Their visibility within communities raises public and political awareness of food insecurity, fostering advocacy efforts and encouraging legislation addressing food deserts, public health equity, and comprehensive nutrition assistance programs.

Grounded in a feminist intersectionality framework, the study emphasizes that social change must consider overlapping systems of oppression that exacerbate food insecurity for marginalized groups, particularly low-income women and racial minorities living in public housing (Crenshaw, 1991). When designed with equity in mind, mobile food units respond to these intersecting realities by reducing structural barriers, promoting dignity, and empowering individuals and families to exercise greater self-reliance over their food access. By addressing immediate food needs and the systemic factors perpetuating food insecurity, mobile food units represent a practical and transformative approach to advancing social equity, health, and community resilience.

Mobile food units offer a multi-level strategy for social change. They directly improve individual and family well-being, strengthen organizational capacity, and inform societal policies that promote equity and food justice. By integrating immediate food support with broader systemic considerations, mobile food units have the potential to create lasting positive impacts on vulnerable populations and foster more socially just communities.

Conclusion

Food insecurity has been going on in public housing for many years. Feminist intersectional theory suggests that various forms of oppression (e.g., racism, classism, and sexism) are interrelated to form a system of oppression in which multiple forms of discrimination intersect (Boundless Sociology, 2020). The goal of intersectionality research is to validate and create opportunities for social justice by changing the systematic oppressive conditions and reducing the food insecurity found in public housing for many years. In this study, it was proven that there is food insecurity in public housing. The residents are primarily Black, single women living below poverty income that is the intersectional racism (Black/minority), classism (lower class/poverty), and sexism (women).

In this research, generic qualitative methodology was used to question 13 professionals from public housing with a semistructured interview question. The 13 professionals are from five different southern states (e.g., Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana). Individuals from rural properties and urban properties were interviewed. The study concluded that individuals talked about coping with food

insecurity mainly daily or weekly. The study concluded that the root causes of food insecurity were income, increased living expenses, lack of resources, and food desert. I found that the families who live in public housing receive federal nutrition (SNAP & WIC).

Most importantly, SNAP and WIC do not meet the families' requirements for food security. Each public housing professional cited there are food resources the residents can go to get food, but some resources do not have food to meet all the community needs. The mobile food unit was approved by most of the professionals in public housing to be located and accessible in public housing to decrease food insecurity. Many of the professionals from public housing stated that the mobile food unit should serve hot and cold nonperishable food on a daily to weekly basis to reduce food insecurity.

Social change agents are individuals who work to make an impact in the world on a local and global level by shifting attitudes, values, and actions to address social problems in a positive way. It is my hope that this research can change lives all across the world through nonprofit organizations, churches, and state and federal policies and programs helping implement mobile food units to reduce food insecurity in all public housing.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

The purpose of this study is to gain further insight into the food insecurity of children in public housing and to find out if a mobile unit that is accessible and is located in public housing will be beneficial in reducing food insecurity in children. Thank you for participating in this study. All information collected during the interview will be confidential (your name and the public housing agency). This interview will be about 50-60 minutes in duration. This interview will be recorded. If, at any time during the interview, you would like to stop. Please let me know, and we will cease immediately.

1. Do you think there are food insecurity families with children living at this public housing property?
2. How often do you hear people talking about coping with food insecurity?
3. What are the root causes of food insecurity?
4. Do you think families receive federal nutrition? (Example SNAP and WIC).
5. Do you think SNAP and WIC meets the families' requirements of food security?
6. Are there any food resources the families go to get food when they are food insecure?
If so, how often can the family access the food resource?
7. Do you think a Mobile Food Unit will help decrease food insecurity for the children?

If yes, how often do you think the Mobile Food Unit should come to the public housing location to reduce food insecurity in children?

Demographic of the residents

1. Estimate the demographic of the residents? (Blacks, Hispanic, Whites and Other?)
2. Do most of the resident work?
If yes, (A) Mostly full-time
(B) Mostly part-time
(C) Do not have a job.
(D) Other
3. What is the medium income for this property?
4. Head of the household are mostly.
Women _____
Mothers & Fathers _____
Men _____
Other _____
5. Who is raising the children? Can you estimate the percentage?
Mother _____
Grandparents _____
Father _____
Other _____

Interview Closing Statement: Thank you for participating in my study. Within the next couple of days, you should receive the transcript of this interview. To validate the research finding, I will be utilizing member checking for accuracy. Please review the transcript to verify accuracy, correct any errors, provide any clarifications and add new additional information and insights because I value your viewpoints. Please return the transcript in 48 hours. You will receive a \$20.00 Gift Ecard within 24 hours of returning the transcript by email.

answers for accuracy, you can make corrections if there are errors and you can add more information value your viewpoints! Is there anything you would like to ask me about the project?"

Appendix B: Coding Chart

Number	Code	Definition of code	F per Participant	F (F) Total (n=xx)	Category	Theme
1	Not enough food	Participants say there is not enough food for everyone	FL03U-1; FL05R-1; GA01R-1; AL01R-1; MS03R-1; MS04U-1; LA02U-1; AL03R-1	8	Insufficient food	Theme 1: Food insecurity exists in this community.
2	Food insecurity	Food insecurity exists in these communities	FL03U-1; AL01R-2; GA01R-2; AL02U-1 GA02U-3; MS02R-1; MS03R-1; MS04U-1; LA01R-1; LA02U-1; AL03R-1	15	Insufficient food	Theme 1: Food insecurity exists in this community.
3	Food Desert	Source of food insecurity	FL03U-1; MS02R-3	4	Insufficient food	Theme 1: Food insecurity exists in this community
4	Children asking for food	Children asking for food at the Public Housing Office	FL03U-1; AL03R-1	2	Everyone needs food	Theme 2: Everyone needs food-not just children
5	Parents asking for food	Parents asking for food at the Public Housing Office	FL03U-3; AL03R-1; MS03R-2 (Seniors);	6	Everyone needs food	Theme 2: Everyone needs food-not just children
6	Everyone needs	Everyone needs food, not just children	FL03U-1; AL02R-1 GA01R-1; MS02R-1; MS03R-1;	8	Everyone needs food	Theme 2: Everyone needs food-not just children

7	No food insecurity	Participant stated no families reported experiencing food insecurity	GA02U-1; MS04U-1; LA02U-1 FL02U-1 FL05R-1 LA02U-1 (mostly not); MS03R-1 (families with children no food insecurity).	4	No participant experiencing food insecurity	Theme 1: No food insecurity
8	Food stamps decreased	Source of food insecurity	FL05R-2; MS03R-1;	3	Finances and affording food	Theme 3: Food stamps are not enough
9	Low income	Source of food insecurity	GA02U-1; MS03R-1; MS04U-1	3	Finances and affording food	Theme 3: Food stamps are not enough
10	Increase of living expenses	Participants stated the parents stated there was an increase in rent and in their household bills	GA02U-1; GA01R-1; AL02U-1; MS04U-1; AL03R-1	5	Finances and affording food	Theme 3: Food stamps are not enough
11	Lack of money	Source of food insecurity	FL03U-2; AL01R-1; AL02U-1; MS04U-1	5	Finances and affording food	Theme 3: Food stamps are not enough
12	Lack of Affordable Food	Source of food insecurity	FL03U-1; GA01R-1; GA02U-1; AL02U-1; LA01R-1; AL03R-2	7	Finances and affording food	Theme 3: Food stamps are not enough

Table 10 continued

Number	Code	Definition of code	F per Participant	F (F) Total (n=xx)	Category	Theme
13	Large families (multiply children)	Source of food insecurity	GA01R-1; AL03R-1	2	Challenges accessing food outside of just income	Theme 4: In addition to income, having a large family and access to internet are challenges in access to food
14	Using Food Stamps to pay bills	Participants reported using food stamps to pay rent and bills (lead to food insecurity).	FL05R-1; GA01R-01; AL01R-1; AL03R-1	4	Finances and affording food	Theme 3: Food stamps are not enough
15	Challenges to Maintain Food Benefits	Participants lose benefits due to not meeting the electronic requirements- Lack of internet or lack of computer.	FL03U-1; LA02U-1	2	Challenges accessing food outside of just income	Theme 4: In addition to income, having a large family and access to internet are challenges in access to food
16	Families receive Snap/WIC	Participants receive government assistance	FL03U-1; FL05R-1; GA01R-1; GA02U-1; AL01R-1; AL02U-1; MS02R-1; MS03R-1; MS04U-1; LA01R-1; LA02U-1; AL03R-1;	12	Finances and affording food	Theme 3: Food stamps are not enough

Table 10 continued

Number	Code	Definition of code	F per Participant	F (F) Total (n=xx)	Category	Theme
17	Snap/ WIC does not meet family's needs	Participants stated the families do not receive enough food stamps to meet their monthly food needs	FL03U-1; GA01R-1; GA02U-1; AL02U-1; MS04U-1; LA01R-1; AL03R-1	7	Finances and affording food	Theme 3: Food stamps are not enough
18	Snap/WIC meets family's needs	Participants stated their family food needs are being met for the month	FL05R-1; AL01R-1; MS02R-1; MS03R-1 (families with children, not seniors);	4	Finances and affording food	Theme 3: Food stamps are not enough
19	Residents utilize Food Resources	Food Resources are Food Banks, Churches, Non-profits and Families	FL03U-1; GA01R-1 GA02U-1; AL01R-1 FL05R-1' AL02U-1; MS02R-1; MS03R-1; MS04U-1; LA01R-1; LA02U-1; AL03R-1	12	Food resources	Theme 5: There are multiple ways people in this community get access to food
21	No, to a Mobile Food Unit	Participants do not think the mobile food unit will reduce Food Insecurity.	FL02U-1	1	Mobile unit not needed	Theme 6: Mobile food units are not needed.