



# The Levels of Food Insecurity Among First Generation and Non-First Generation Latinx College Students at California State University Stanislaus During the 2019 Novel Coronavirus Pandemic

Monica Fraga, MSW

Department of Social Work, California State University, 1 University Cir, Turlock, CA 95382, USA.

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\***Corresponding Author:** Monica Fraga, MSW, Department of Social Work, California State University, 1 University Cir, Turlock, CA 95382, USA. E-mail: [mfraga1@csustan.edu](mailto:mfraga1@csustan.edu)

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to describe the levels of food insecurity among first generation Latinx college students and non-first generation Latinx college students at California State University Stanislaus during the 2019 Novel Coronavirus. This study was guided by one research question: What are the levels of food insecurity among first generation Latinx college students and non-first generation Latinx college students at CSU Stanislaus? This was a quantitative research design. The sample consisted of 1,064 undergraduate and graduate Latinx students at CSU Stanislaus enrolled during the Fall 2019 academic year. Participants responded to an electronic survey. An Independent Samples T-test was conducted. The first major finding revealed first generation college students reported a higher average of food insecurity than non-first generation college students. Another major finding revealed that both first generation and non-first generation respondents do suffer from some level of food insecurity. The 2019 Novel Coronavirus created limited availability of food items for consumer purchase. Survey responses to measure food insecurity levels among this population may have differed prior to the stay-at-home order initiated by the 2019 Novel Coronavirus pandemic. One future research implication is to spread awareness of the Warrior Food Pantry at CSU Stanislaus. Future research can also explore the mental health impacts first generation and non-first generation Latinx college students experience due to food insecurity. Efforts by higher education should be made to find ways to spread awareness to all food assistance programs available to its students to address and diminish food insecurity on campuses.

**Keywords:** Food insecurity; Latinx college students; 2019 Novel Coronavirus; COVID-19; First generation college students; California State University Stanislaus

## Statement of the Problem

There is a shift in student demographics pursuing higher education with the increase of individuals enrolling on college campuses. Among this increase is a particular population, food insecure first generation and low-income students [1]. Studies that have been conducted find that food insecurity across college campuses can range from 43% to over 50% [2, 3].

There is minimal research studying the levels of food insecurity among first generation Latinx college students and non-first generation Latinx college students. There are consequences that stem

from food insecurity among college students regardless of race or ethnicity. In a study conducted among undergraduate students enrolled in a mid-Atlantic university it was found that food insecure students were more likely to self-report symptoms of poor health such as lethargy, depressive symptoms, trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, feelings of failure and trouble concentrating [4]. Additional consequences include low GPA, failing of courses which can ultimately lead to retention, academic probation, dismissal from college, and dropping out.

The Department of Health and Human Services, reports there are multiple contributing factors that may influence food insecurity such as employment and race/ethnicity [5]. Disability is among these factors as individuals with certain disabilities experience difficulty in obtaining and securing employment [5]. According to Twill, Bergdahl and Fensler, the shift in food insecurity levels among college students is paired with a steady and gradual increase in tuition and decrease in financial aid, scholarships, loans, grants, etc. [6]. The cost of tuition surpasses the amount of financial assistance available to students [6].

According to Bok, college tuition and college fees arose by a staggering 439% from the 1980s to 2010 [7]. An obstacle higher education faces is the decrease of state funding for higher education. The gradual increase in tuition is therefore used to supplement the monetary decrease. According to Shipley and Christopher, nearly 56% of students who experience food insecurity work a part-time or full-time job to meet their financial needs and approximately 75% receive loans, grants, or scholarships [8]. The National Center Education for Statistics conducted a study in 2017 and found that there was a higher amount of part-time undergraduate students who were employed than full-time graduate students [9]. Forty three percent of part-time students were employed whereas, 81% of full-time students were employed [9]. Out of those undergraduate students who worked fulltime, Asian students were least likely to be working (29%) than Black students (39%). It was found that 45 % of White students were employed. Hispanics were second most likely to work (46%) [9]. It was found that approximately 80% of students in each of these ethnic groups were employed while attending college [9].

LendEDU research study, found that approximately 3 in 10 college students in America are solely responsible for their tuition costs [10]. LendEDU found that sole responsibility for tuition was highest among Native Americans, Black, and Latinx/Hispanic college students [10]. According to Baker and Robnett, it is more common

for Latinx and Black students to come from a lower socio-economic standing when compared to Asian American students and White students [11]. It is also more common for Latino and Black students to carry much of the financial burden of college expenses. This may lead students to obtain employment in order to support themselves while attending school which can interfere in the student's participation in their academics [11]. According to Kolowich, there has been an increase of food insecurity among college students enrolling in higher education [1]. The United States Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as, "consistent access to adequate food limited by a lack of money and other resources at times during the year" [12].

According to psychologist Abraham Maslow, one of the most basic needs of human physical survival is food [13]. Without food, humans cannot function at their optimal level [13]. In order to achieve self-actualization, humans must have their physiological needs met, along with safety needs, loving and belongingness needs, and esteem needs [13]. Based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, students who lack these categories of needs, will not excel at their full potential [13]. Students who do not have adequate food, will be solely motivated to fulfill their primary physiological needs, such as hunger. The motivation to exemplify their academic capabilities will not be a priority for students who suffer from food insecurity.

Although the research is sparse, there is enough research that prompted some campuses to action. There have been initiatives enacted at colleges and universities by administration to support the students who experience food insecurity. Michigan State University was the first college campus nationwide to establish a food program in 1993 for its students [14]. It was not until 2015 that California State University Chancellor, Timothy White, commissioned a research study to raise awareness for the needs of food insecure and displaced students [15]. This study found that approximately 21% of students reported food insecurity. The findings of this study led to the creation of the CSU Basic Needs Initiative [15]. University of California Office of the President, the body that oversees all UCs, launched a Global Food Initiative in 2014 [16]. This initiative has been responsible for the implementation and expansion of food pantry services [16].

### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe the levels of food insecurity among first generation Latinx college students and non-first generation Latinx college students at CSU Stanislaus. This research study utilized a type of quantitative research known as descriptive research. The study was guided by one question: What are the levels of food insecurity among first generation Latinx college students at CSU Stanislaus and non-first generation Latinx college students at CSU Stanislaus?

The researcher hypothesized that first generation Latinx college students experience a higher level of food insecurity than non-first generation Latinx college students.

### Significance of the Study

The results of the study are made public and used to raise awareness surrounding food insecurity levels among Latinx students attending CSU Stanislaus. A research study that seeks to discover if there is difference in food insecurity levels among first generation Latinx college students and non-first generation Latinx college students at CSU Stanislaus has not been conducted. If the data finds there is a higher level of food insecurity among first generation Latinx college students, this can prompt additional studies, such as studying food insecurity levels and its impact on mental health among first generation Latinx college students or non-first generation Latinx college students. It is hopeful more campus administrators will become aware of the magnitude of this problem so they will take proactive measures to create committees on campus or expand existing

food programs to assist fellow students who suffer from food insecurity. In bringing awareness to this issue it is hopeful that studies such as this one will help to create more opportunities for college campuses to receive grants and funds that will be used toward food programs for students.

Students attending higher education institutions come from various backgrounds and various socio-economic levels [17]. Students who come from vulnerable backgrounds are more likely to struggle with food insecurity [17]. As social workers, one of our responsibilities is to "challenge inequities" [18]. The disproportionality of restricted student access to the basic human need, food, is an injustice to students enrolled in higher education. Not only bringing awareness to this issue, but also advocating for students and taking action to decrease food insecurity challenges is a movement toward achieving equity on college campuses. It is time to magnify the severity of the situation to promote open dialogues within campuses to help others better understand the depth of the problem and create solutions.

### Literature Review

This chapter aims to describe the existing knowledge regarding food insecurity among Latinx college students. It explores Transpersonal and Conflict theory, describes key concepts, such as the origin of the letter "X" and its symbolism. It will define Latinx, first generation, and food insecurity. In addition, this chapter will review food insecurity research studies completed at minority serving institutions. Lastly, this chapter explores various policies, programs and pantries that have been implemented to alleviate food insecurity among college campuses across the nation. This chapter will first provide readers with a broader understanding of how theory concepts can help understand why food insecurity exists and why it is important for individuals to be food secure.

### Transpersonal Theory

In the late 1960s, after Maslow introduced his hierarchy of needs model, the 6th tier, transcendence needs was added to the hierarchy [19]. Transcendence is known to be the highest level of being [19]. Once self-transcendence has been reached, one has reached their own full personal potential. This level cannot be reached unless basic needs, such as food and shelter, are met [19]. Psychological needs, safety needs, love needs, esteem needs and self-actualization must be met and surpassed to reach transcendence [19].

According to Maslow, a person who has reached self-transcendence aims for a cause that is beyond their own personal benefit [20]. Many people who reach self-transcendence will immerse themselves into altruistic activities [20]. This notion is important in that for students to reach self-transcendence and have the ability to support others in their community or beyond, it is vital each of Maslow's tiers must be met. Individuals who have reached self-transcendence can view the world on a macro scale independent of their own boundaries. According to Maslow, those who reach this last tier in the hierarchy of needs, are individuals he categorized as healthy and fully developed [20]. Self-transcended individuals have the ability to conceptualize their own purpose and meaning of life outside of their own environment [20]. For transcendence to be met, students must have their basic needs met first.

### Conflict Theory

Karl Marx's conflict theory suggests conflict arises when resources are limited and not distributed equally. According to Marx, "Social theory should focus on how people influence and are influenced by their material conditions; for example, their degree of hunger..." [21]. According to Marx, humans' primary necessities are eating, shelter, drinking, and clothing [22]. Dominant groups have means of easily obtaining basic needs, such as, food. Vulnerable subordinate groups struggle to fight oppressive systems and injustices to remain or be food secure. Due to lack of unemployment and amount of income people earn, individuals fall within the lower end of the

socio-economic ladder in society [22]. One group of individuals that can be classified in this category are college students. Society is structured in a way where those who control the means of production oppress those of the subordinate class [23]. Research has shown this power disparity can negatively impact people's lives [24.] One example of how oppressed individuals regain power is through the use of symbolism.

### Symbolism of "X"

Historically, the letter X, in terms of a name, represents a severance, a liberation, a rejection of a last name and used as a recognized signature for those who are illiterate or suffer from a disability that prevents them from signing their name. In addition, the letter X has religious connotations in the Muslim religion [25]. In the Muslim religion, many black Muslims such as Civil Rights Movement leader, Malcom X, adopted X in place of their former slave name [25]. It was between the 1950s and 1970s when those who followed the Islamic religion also adopted the letter X in place of their last name [26].

X has been used to replace a slave master's last name that was given to African Americans centuries prior. X symbolized the unknown African name of ancestors who were owned by slaves [27]. The last name that has been passed on from generation to generation of former slaves is reminder of the horrific history, racism, oppression, pain and suffering slaves have endured.

Typically, an X has also been used in place of a signature by individuals who were disabled or illiterate. Signing a document with an X can carry stigma associated with a disability or illiteracy. This has been viewed negatively upon the signing individual, such as, lacking little to no education [28].

### Latinx

Although the term Latinx has gained attention among activists and in academia, there is an inconsistency surrounding when this term was first used [29]. The term Latinx has been used by various activist groups since the beginning of the early 2000s [29]. It was created as a gender-inclusive and gender-free term, whereas Latino distinguishes masculinity due to the "o" in Spanish; and Latina which distinguishes femininity due to the "a" in the Spanish language [29]. As the X was used to replace a slave owners last name, the letter X has been used in Latinx as a non-gender identifying replacement [29].

The background of these terms can be complex in that each person may choose how they want to be identified, although the government socially constructs race and ethnicity to identify individuals in a certain category. Latinx is a person who descends from or was born in a Latin American country such as Mexico, Colombia, El Salvador, etc. [29]. Latinx does not include a person who was born or descends from Spain [29]. Latinx is sometimes used interchangeably with Hispanic, however, Hispanic refers to linguistics rather than culture. Hispanic is term used for persons who descend from a Spanish-speaking country such as Honduras, Spain, Mexico, etc. [30]. Latinx students make up 61% of first generation college students [31].

### First Generation

A first generation college student is defined as a student whose parents have not acquired a college degree [32]. A large percentage of first generation college students come from low socio-economic backgrounds [33]. It is common for first generation college students to struggle navigating the college system and resources each campus has to offer to support this special population [33]. The obstacles first generation college students face begins prior to applying to a college or university. Many low-income high schools do not have sufficient resources for their students who wish to pursue higher education [33]. For example, these high schools may not be able to aid their seniors with important information such as, how to complete a financial aid application [33]. With these barriers in place, this can have a tremendous impact on first generation college students' food insecurity.

### Food Insecurity

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, food insecurity is defined as minimal or no indication of food intake, low quality diet, and can include multiple indications of minimal food intake and inconsistent access to food [12]. The existing federal law allows eligible individuals to utilize the Supplemental Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP is also known as food stamps or CalFresh. Eligible recipients of SNAP may use their SNAP to purchase food at participating restaurants, stores, and grocery stores [34]. These businesses are known as Restaurant Meal Programs (RMP) [34]. Currently, there is a limited number of counties where SNAP college student recipients have the option to use SNAP to purchase meals at their community college campuses in California [34]. This program is aimed to expand the RMP to all of California [34]. In October of 2019, California Governor Newsom signed the bill, AB-612, the mandates California community colleges to implement this bill by February 1, 2021 [34]. Eligible SNAP students will be able to purchase meals at the cafeterias and restaurants on campus [34]. The legislation requires that the California Department of Social Services have a plan created by September 1, 2020 [34].

### Food Insecurity at HBCU and HSI Colleges

A recent study published in 2019 explored whether students enrolled at a Historically Black College/University (HBCU) struggled with food insecurity. Historically Black Colleges and Universities are defined as a college or university that was established prior to 1964 whose purpose is to educate African American communities [35]. The study conducted at Howard University examined the associations between food security/food insecurity, demographics, obesity and examined fast food and fruit/vegetable consumption [36]. An electronic survey was distributed to 570 undergraduate and graduate students. It was found that approximately 77% of respondents had experienced some level of food insecurity over the last 12 months while 22.2% of respondents reported being food secure [36]. Students living on campus were more likely to suffer from food insecurity [36]. Sophomores were more likely to be food insecure (11.1%) while graduate students reported to be more likely food secure (37.6%) [36]. Researchers suggested that a deeper understanding of the prevalence of food insecurity among students at HBCUs is required [36]. Researchers proposed that implementing a food pantry on campus is recommended to address the food insecurity at Howard University [36]. Recommendation for a future study would inquire students' overall health and their academic performance in relation to their food security levels [36].

As part of the CSU Basic Needs Initiatives, Phase 2, a mixed method study was conducted. A survey was distributed among all CSU campuses. This study examined the experiences of students who were displaced and suffered from low and very low food security. Of the 24,324 students that participated in this study, 41.6% reported food insecurity [37]. Twenty one of the 23 CSU campuses are Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) [38]. HSI is defined as a college or university that has an enrollment of undergraduate full-time students of whom are at least 25 percent Hispanic [38]. CSUs that are located in rural locations such as Humboldt State University, California State University Fullerton, and California State University Monterey Bay, all of which are Hispanic Serving Institutions, were found to have higher levels of food insecurity when compared to CSUs located in urban areas [37]. This study also found that first generation college students were more likely to be food insecure (49%) than non-first generation college students (36.9%) [37]. This study found that 65.9% of students who reported being first generation and Black/African American had the highest levels of food insecurity [37]. Almost 50% of first generation Hispanic students reported food insecurity [37]. It is recommended that additional studies are required to explore graduation retention rates among students who experience food insecurity. The researchers also recommended a longitudinal to

explore how food insecurity affects student success [37].

### **Campus Policies and Pantries**

Overtime, college and university administrations have worked to implement policies and programs for students who suffer from food insecurity. Multiple colleges and universities have implemented their own food pantries on campus. For example, Steve Hicks School of Social Work at Texas of Austin University is taking an active role in helping their campus fundraise items for their campus pantry [39]. In 2013, at Kennesaw State University, social worker Marcy Stidum created Campus Awareness Resource and Empowerment Services for displaced college students and students who need assistance with obtaining food [40]. From 2013 to 2019 this center has served almost 2,000 students [40]. The department of Social Work at Texas Woman's University created a food pantry for their students and it is operated by the Student Association for Social Work [41].

In June 2017, Senate Bill 85 was signed into law. This bill provided an allowance of \$7.5 million to support "Hunger-Free Colleges" [42]. The CSU system and California Community College system was granted a one-time payment of \$2.5 million to be dispersed among their campuses [42]. There are 23 colleges that make up the CSU system and 115 California community colleges [42]. This grant supported CSU's Basic Needs Initiative that addressed student's mental health, housing, and food security [42]. Under this initiative, all 23 campuses have opened a food pantry, food distribution program or have been able to sustain their existing food pantries [42]. CSU Stanislaus has been able to sustain the Warrior Food Pantry after receiving \$105,000 from SB-85 [42]. This grant not only was used to establish the food pantry but to address housing insecurity [43]. Students enrolled at CSU Stanislaus may collect up to 10 items weekly such as non-perishable food and toiletries [44]. Basic Needs Coordinators are stationed at the pantry and assist with determining if students are eligible for CalFresh and will guide students through the application process [44].

In 2014, Janet Napolitano approved \$3.3 million to assist students in accessing nutritious food on and off their UC campuses [45]. Each of the 10 UC's were granted \$151,000. This plan included expanding food pantry storage and the expansion of student access to these pantries, collaboration with state and county to offer registration assistance for CalFresh to students, create and expand student support and food services campaigns, creating food preparation and storage space in campus student housing [45]. This plan also included expanding the Swipe Out Hunger Program, previously known as Swipes for the Homeless, allows students to donate extra money on their meal plans to their peers who struggle with food insecurity [45].

There are many factors that influence food insecurity for all college students. Although policies and campus food pantries have been implemented to alleviate food insecurity, there are still students who report being food insecure. There is a gap that campuses must work to fill to ensure their students do not struggle with having this basic need met. Comprehensive and in depth studies are required to truly understand how campuses can expand and implement their services in a more efficient way that will reach all students in need. Studies should also be examining students' experiences with food insecurity who are considered vulnerable populations. Services may need to be tailored to these special populations to ensure they are receiving the appropriate resources and are informed of the resources that are being offered. It is within this study we will look at the food insecurity college student's experiences at CSU Stanislaus.

### **Methodology Overview**

The purpose of this study is to describe the levels of food insecurity between first generation Latinx college students and non-first generation Latinx college students. This study will provide insight surrounding food insecurity in relation to student's generation level and ethnicity. Depending on the data derived from this study,

administrators on college campuses that do not have many resources for their food insecure students, may use this information to begin implementing policies that will have a positive direct impact for this population. The following question guided this research study: What are the levels of food insecurity among first generation Latinx college students at CSU Stanislaus and non-first generation Latinx college students at CSU Stanislaus? The researcher hypothesized that first generation Latinx college students experience a higher level of food insecurity than non-first generation Latinx college students.

### **Research Design**

This study utilized a quantitative research design. "Quantitative research seeks to explain the relationship between two or more factors using numerical representation" [46]. This study utilized a type of quantitative research called descriptive research. According to Faulkner and Faulkner, "descriptive research is used to obtain information concerning the status of a phenomenon to describe variables to conditions in a situation" [46]. This study examined the levels of food insecurity among first generation and non-first generation Latinx college students.

### **Sampling Plan**

Stratified random sampling was used in this study. This sampling method was selected because it allowed the researcher to obtain an equal sampling size. According to Faulkner and Faulkner, stratified sampling will increase the accuracy of the results and decrease sampling bias [46]. Since the survey was distributed to both undergraduate and graduate Latinx students at CSU Stanislaus, each Latinx student enrolled had an opportunity to be a participant in this study. Participants for the study were accessed by distributing a mass email to all enrolled students on campus. The researcher allowed approximately 3 weeks for students to submit their responses. The research platform, Qualtrics, was utilized. According to the Office of Institutional Research, there were approximately 6,000 Latinx students enrolled at CSU Stanislaus during the Fall 2019 term [47]. With a response rate of 40-60% it is projected that an estimated 2,400-3,600 responses will be received [48]. In order for this study to be statistically valid, the researcher would need to obtain a sample size of at least 362 survey responses for a 5% margin of error [48]. The majority of students enrolled at CSU Stanislaus are first generation, approximately 73% [47].

### **Instrumentation/Data Collection**

The researcher distributed an electronic survey via email to only Latinx students enrolled at CSU Stanislaus during the Fall 2019 academic year. The researcher selected to survey the Latinx population at CSU Stanislaus due to the large number of Latinx students enrolled at this campus. The link that directed students to the survey was included within the email encouraging students to participate. All survey questions were written in both English and Spanish (see appendices A and B). The survey translated into the Spanish language was distributed as an option to accommodate participants who prefer to complete the survey in that language. The survey consisted of 10 close-ended questions. The first section of the survey consisted of demographic questions such as class level, generation status, disability, and employment. The question regarding disability was included due to the possibility of an individual's disability impacting employment and source/amount of income earned. Demographic factors were included in the survey as they may have an influence on the individual's level of food insecurity [5]. The next 5 questions inquired about food accessibility, meal rations, food affordability, and skipping meals. Lastly, the final question asked if the student had received any services or utilized food assistance programs in their community, on campus, or within Stanislaus County. This question was included in the survey to assess if food assistance programs were being utilized by the students who suffer from low food insecurity.

The researcher utilized multiple survey questions from the U.S. Household Food Security Assessment of the United States Department of Agriculture [49]. This questionnaire was rated using a ratio scale that ranges from ‘beyond 6 months’ to ‘not applicable’. Based on student’s answers, it provided the researcher with information regarding the levels of food insecurity each student experiences. After various statistical tests were conducted, it was found that the food security scale had good reliability and good external/internal validity, both in content and construct [50]. Questions utilized in the U.S. Household Food Security Assessment survey inquired about food insecurity within the last 12 months or the last 30 days. Tests found good reliability for the 12 month scale and moderate reliability for the 30 day scale [50].

The researcher collected the data and did not utilize a team or agency to assist in collecting data. Respondents were given from March 22, 2020 to April 10, 2020 to submit the survey. Participants were instructed to read the description and purpose of the research study. They were instructed to review and check a box agreeing to participate within the informed consent. Students were unable to proceed until they check the box indicating acknowledgement and understanding of the consent form. The researcher submitted the study to the University Institutional Review Board to be reviewed and approved before beginning the data collection process.

**Data Analysis**

An Independent Sample T-test was utilized to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between first generation Latinx college students and non-first generation Latinx college students. Utilizing the Independent Sample T test helped the researcher determine if the independent variable has an impact on the dependent variable [46]. The researcher used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the data obtained from the surveys.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

By providing the participants with the informed consent prior to beginning the survey, the researcher ensured protection of the participants. Within the informed consent, it was stated that involvement in this study was strictly voluntary, participants would remain anonymous, and the participant may withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. Only the researcher had access to Qualtrics, and the password/username to log into the system where

all the data was stored. There was no anticipated risk of harm to any participants. Should the participants have any questions or concerns, the researcher’s contact information was provided on the informed consent form. Participants had the option to enter a raffle to win one of 3 \$75 gift cards to Food-4-Less for participating in the study.

**Results**

This chapter will describe and analyze the data collected from this research study. The researcher explored food insecurity among first generation and non-first generation Latinx college students at CSU Stanislaus by utilizing a quantitative method. In this chapter, an overview of the sample will be discussed and the results of the demographic questions in the survey will be reported. The levels of food insecurity at CSU Stanislaus between first generation and non-first generation Latinx college students will be compared. Based on the analysis, the researcher will determine if the hypothesis was supported.

**Overview of Sample**

The electronic survey was distributed to 6,050 Latinx students enrolled at CSU Stanislaus. The sample for this study consisted of 1,064 Latinx students enrolled at CSU Stanislaus. Of the 1,064 students who completed the survey, 89% (n=943) were first generation college students. Eleven percent (n=121) of these students were non-first generation college students. Eighty-four percent were undergraduate students. Sixteen percent were graduate students. Five percent reported a disability. Over half of these students, 59%, reported being currently employed at the time of the survey.

**Food Insecurity**

Within the survey, there were 5 questions that pertained to food insecurity. Each question was rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1= food insecurity does not apply, to 4 = food insecurity concerns have exceeded 60 days. The 5 food insecurity questions were combined for a total score ranging from 5-20; 5 being “food secure” and 20 being the “highest level of food insecurity.” The average score for all respondents was 8 on this scale. A total of 41% (n=436) of students reported being food secure. One percent (n=15) scored a 20, reporting the highest level of food insecurity. Table 1 shows how the respondents scored on the various food insecurity ranges.

Food Insecurity Index Range	N=	Percent
5	436	41%
6-8	279	26%
9-12	208	20%
13-16	92	9%
17-19	31	3%
20	15	1%

Rates of self-reported food insecurity; 5 being “food secure” and 20 being the “highest level of food insecurity.”

Table 1: Food Insecurity Index

Question number 5 asked respondents, “How recent have you been worried you will run out of food?” Over half of the students reported

being food secure. Forty-nine percent of respondents did report some level of food insecurity, see Table 2.

How recent have you been worried you will run out of food?	N=	Percent
Does not apply	547	51%
Within the last 30 days	346	33%
Within the last 31-60 days	93	9%
Beyond 60 days	78	7%
Total	1064	100%

Table 2: Food Insecurity Survey Question 5

Question number 6 asked, “How recent have you not been able to afford enough food so you ate less than what you should have?”

Sixty-one percent reported being food secure. Thirty-nine percent reported some level of suffering from food insecurity, see Table 3.

How recent have you not been able to afford enough food so you ate less than what you should have?	N=	Percent
Does not apply	649	61%
Within the last 30 days	217	20%
Within the last 31-60 days	99	9%
Beyond 60 days	97	9%
Total	1062	100%

Table 3: Food Insecurity Survey Question 6

Question number 7 inquired, “How recent have you had to eat less to portion out your food so you would have enough food for your

next meal?” Sixty percent reported being food secure whereas, 40% reported some level of food insecurity, see Table 4.

How recent have you had to eat less to portion out your food so you would have enough food for your next meal?	N=	Percent
Does not apply	632	60%
Within the last 30 days	250	24%
Within the last 31-60 days	85	8%
Beyond 60 days	96	9%
Total	1063	100%

Table 4: Food Insecurity Survey Question 7

Question number 8 asked, “How recent have you had to skip a meal because you could not afford to eat?” Sixty-eight percent reported

being food secure. Thirty two percent reported some level of food insecurity, see Table 5.

How recent have you had to skip a meal because you could not afford to eat?	N=	Percent
Does not apply	724	68%
Within the last 30 days	156	15%
Within the last 31-60 days	78	7%
Beyond 60 days	104	10%
Total	1062	100%

Table 5: Food Insecurity Survey Question 8

Question number 9 asked, “How recent have you had to go one full day without eating food due to not being able to buy something

to eat?” Eighty-three percent reported being food secure. Seventeen percent reported some level of food insecurity, see Table 6.

How recent have you had to go one full day without eating food due to not being able to buy something to eat?	N=	Percent
Does not apply	887	83%
Within the last 30 days	73	7%
Within the last 31-60 days	38	4%
Beyond 60 days	65	6%
Total	1063	100%

Table 6: Food Insecurity Survey Question 9

### First Generation vs Non-First Generation

This research intends to answer the following questions: What are the levels of food insecurity among first generation Latinx college students at CSU Stanislaus and non-first generation Latinx college students at CSU Stanislaus?

On the Food Insecurity Index scale, ranging from 5-20; 5 being “food secure” and 20 being the “highest level of food insecurity,” the average score for a first generation student was 8. The average score for a non-first generation student was 7. These numbers indicate that

first generation college students, on average, are more likely to suffer from food insecurity than non-first generation college students. First generation standard deviation was a 4 and the non-first generation standard deviation was a 3. The results indicate that, with confidence, there is a statistically significant difference between first generation and their levels of food insecurity and those students who are non-first generation; first generation Latinx students suffering from food insecurity.

**Independent Samples T-test Results:** Independent Samples T-test were computed for each of the 5 food insecurity questions.

It was found that for each of the food insecurity questions, first generation college students ranked slightly higher averages for food insecurity than the non-first generation students. Both generations' average responses fell between "within the last 30 days" to "within the last 31-60 days." However, when analyzing this data, non-first generation students were more likely to select "within the last 30 days", whereas, first generation college students, on average, were more likely to select "within the last 31-60 days". These results indicate that first generation respondents reported a higher level of food insecurity than non-first generation respondents.

An Independent Samples T-test was utilized to compare how non-first generation and first generation students responded when asked, "How recent have you been worried you will run out of food?" First generation college students had an average score of 1.75 and non-first generation students had an average score of 1.49. With a t-value of 3.51, and an associated two-tailed significance level of .001, the results clearly indicated that, on average, first generation college students reported, on average, they were more concerned about running out of food than non-first generation college students.

An Independent Samples T-test was utilized to compare non-first generation and first generation students responded when asked, "How recent have you not been able to afford enough food so you ate less than what you should have?" First generation college students had an average score of 1.69 and non-first generation students had an average score of 1.43. With a t-value of 3.35, and an associated two-tailed significance level of .001, the results clearly indicated that, on average, first generation college students were more likely to eat less than they should have due to not being able to purchase food.

An Independent Samples T-test was utilized to compare non-first generation and first generation students responded when asked, "How recent have you had to eat less to portion your food so you would have enough food for your next meal?" First generation college students had an average score of 1.7 and non-first generation students had an average score of 1.5. With a t-value of 2.2, and an associated two-tailed significance level of .028, the results clearly indicated that, on average, first generation college students in the sample were, on average, more likely to portion out their food so they would have enough for their next meal.

An Independent Samples T-test was utilized to compare non-first generation and first generation students responded when asked, "How recent have you had to skip a meal because you could not afford enough to eat?" First generation college students had an average score of 1.6 and non-first generation students had an average score of 1.3. With a t-value of 3.7, and an associated two-tailed significance level of .000, the results indicated that, on average, first generation college students, on average, were more likely to have skipped a meal due to not having enough money to purchase food.

An Independent Samples T-test was utilized to compare non-first generation and first generation students responded when asked, "How recent have you had to go one full day without eating food due to not being able to buy something to eat?" First generation college students had an average score of 1.3 and non-first generation students had an average score of 1.2. With a t-value of 2.4, and an associated two-tailed significance level of .015, the results indicated that, on average, first generation college students in the sample were, on average, more likely to go one full without eating because they could not afford food.

Question number 10 inquired if respondents had accessed any of the following assistance programs: CSU Stanislaus Warrior Food Pantry, community food pantries/food programs, county food assistance such as food stamps, or does not apply. Respondents were asked to select all that applied. Due to an error within the survey, respondents were restricted from selecting more than 1 option, therefore, multiple options were unable to be collected. Over half of the respondents,

59%, reported that this question does not apply. Thirty percent reported having accessed the Warrior Food Pantry, 3% reported receiving services from community food pantries/food programs, and 8% reported accessing county food assistance.

After analyzing the data, it has been concluded that first generation Latinx students at CSU Stanislaus are more likely to suffer from food insecurity than non-first generation Latinx students at CSU Stanislaus. The null hypothesis stated: There is no difference among first generation Latinx college students' experience of food insecurity than non-first generation Latinx college students. The null hypothesis was rejected due to p value, .001, being less than .05. There was a statistically difference among first generation and non-first generation Latinx students' level of food insecurity at CSU Stanislaus. However, food insecurity is not limited to only first generation respondents in this study. Frequency distributions for each of the 5 food insecurity questions within the survey do indicate that students at CSU Stanislaus, both first generation and non-first generation, suffer from food insecurity. The Latinx population at CSU Stanislaus is susceptible to food insecurity.

## Discussion

The following question guided this research study: What are the levels of food insecurity among first generation Latinx college students at CSU Stanislaus and non-first generation Latinx college students at CSU Stanislaus? In this chapter an overview of major findings, limitations, implications, and future research suggestions for this study will be described.

## Overview of Major Findings

The first major finding revealed that first generation college students reported a slightly higher average of food insecurity than non-first generation college students. The results indicated that, with confidence, there is a statistically significant difference among first generation food insecurity levels and non-first generation food insecurity levels. A second major finding that was revealed is that both first generation and non-first generation Latinx college students at CSU Stanislaus do suffer from some level of food insecurity. There is limited research comparing food insecurity experiences among first generation and non-first generation Latinx college students. Although prior research studies have revealed that first generation college students were more likely to be food insecure, comparisons were not made in relation to the Latinx population only [37].

## Limitations

This research study provided insight to food insecurity on a particular college campus, however, there are some limitations that should be noted. One major limitation to this study was the COVID-19 pandemic which included shut down orders for all non-essential work. On March 19, 2020, the governor of California ordered a mandatory stay-at-home order to slow the spread of the highly contagious strain of Novel Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19 [51]. According to the Public Policy Institute of California, this resulted in millions of unemployment claims being filed in California within a matter of weeks [52]. The Novel Coronavirus caused a shortage of many food items available to consumers, as many stores placed limitations on the number of items customers may purchase at a time; these items included: eggs, canned goods, toilet paper, soap, water, etc. Due to these factors, survey responses may have differed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and after the ending of this pandemic. Another factor to consider is the timeline in which the survey was distributed. Respondents were given from March 22, 2020 to April 10, 2020 to submit the survey. Respondents who completed the survey at the beginning of its distribution, may have answered differently if completed toward the end of the survey closing.

A second limitation was utilizing a quantitative survey. There were no face-to face interviews conducted with the respondents. By conducting a quantitative study, this did not allow the researcher

to obtain student's stories on a personal level. Quantitative studies lack the human aspect of obtaining additional information relevant to the study regarding student's food insecurity personal experiences. Not having an open-ended question within the survey did not allow the opportunity for respondents to elaborate on their levels of food insecurity. Qualitative comments may have provided clarification to respondents' answers and their personal food insecurity experiences, as well as, offer details about contributing barriers.

### Implications of Major Findings

The findings in this study are meaningful to social worker practitioners who work with direct college students. Social workers who work with these students should be aware that although colleges have pantries on campus and other resources available to them, not all food insecure students have been utilizing these resources. As direct social worker practitioners, it is important to not assume that college students have the basic need of food met, even if they are living on campus where food is potentially more accessible. Direct social workers have the opportunity to highlight services that are provided at the student's college campus. They also have the ability to speak with students to normalize the utilization of campus food pantries, community/county food programs, etc.

Based on prior research, students who suffer from insecurity have experienced depressive symptoms and lack of concentration [4]. Food insecure students have also self-reported struggling with insomnia and fatigue [4]. These studies have highlighted the consequences faced by these students. Some consequences resulted in low GPA, failed courses, and dismissal or withdrawing from their college. It is possible that another implication for food insecure students at CSU Stanislaus may experience these symptoms and consequences.

One policy that can be implemented to alleviate food insecurity among college students is screening all students for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program eligibility. Many students are unaware of the application process, eligibility criteria, and unaware that they may even be eligible. A policy that should be reexamined is Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program eligibility criteria for students enrolled in higher education. Currently, there is specific criteria that must be met that prevents students from securing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits. These benefits should be made more accessible to students and the criteria should be revised. Assembly Bill 612 that will be implemented February 1, 2021 will hopefully encourage more college students to apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits when these benefits may be used in California community college dining centers next year.

### Future Research

There are future implications that should be considered. One future implication for this research study is to determine the reason why students are not utilizing campus services to alleviate their food insecurity. Depending on the barrier that may be discovered, college campuses can take measures to address that issue. Another future research implication is to measure students' awareness of the Food Warrior Pantry at CSU Stanislaus. Additional research may want to consider whether food insecurity has impacted retention rates at CSU Stanislaus. Future research can also explore the mental health impacts of food insecurity among first generation and non-first generation college students. Efforts by higher education should be made to find ways to spread awareness to all food assistance programs available to its students to address and diminish food insecurity on campuses.

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## INFORMED CONSENT

### Purpose of the Research

The Principal Investigator, Monica Fraga, is a student at California State University, Stanislaus conducting research for a master's degree thesis in social work.

The purpose of this research is to discover if there is a difference in levels of food insecurity among first generation college students and non-first generation Latinx college students at CSU Stanislaus. Food insecurity is defined as "consistent access to adequate food limited by a lack of money and other resources at times during the year" (United States Department of Agriculture, 2018, p. 2).

### Procedures

- If you choose to participate, you will be asked to sign, print, and date this consent form.
- You will be asked to complete an anonymous 11 question electronic survey made up of questions regarding food insecurity.
- This survey will be sent to your CSU Stanislaus email address.
- This is a one-time survey that will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.
- This survey will be available to you to complete for 1 month, beginning March 1st, 2020 to March 31st, 2020.

### Potential Risks or Discomforts

There are no potential risks to you for your participation in the study.

### Potential Benefits of the Research

There are no potential benefits of the research study.

### Confidentiality

The information collected will be protected from all inappropriate disclosure under the law. All data will be kept in a secure location. The researcher, Monica Fraga and faculty advisor, Dr. Paul Wright, will have access to the results of the completed survey. This information will be kept in electronic format in a highly secured computer to protect your confidentiality. The researcher and faculty advisor of this study will have access to the data obtained. The researcher and faculty advisor will have the username and passcode to access your data from the survey you completed. The researcher **will not** keep your research data to use for future research or other purposes.

### Costs

There is no cost to you beyond the time and effort required to complete the procedures listed above.

### Compensation

You will have the option to be entered into a raffle to win one of three \$75.00 gift card to Food-4-Less.

There is no anticipated commercial profit related to this research.

### Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or stop participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

### Questions

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me, Monica Fraga, at (559) 706-4541 or my faculty sponsor, Dr. Paul Wright at (209) 667-3818.

If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator by phone (209) 667-3493 or email IRBadmin@csustan.edu.

### Consent

I have read and understand the information provided above. All of my questions, if any, have been answered to my satisfaction. Please select one of the following options:

I agree to participate.

I do not agree to participate.

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Food Insecurity Survey- English  
Appendix A

**1. Are you a first generation student or non-first generation student?**

(First generation student: Your parents have not earned a postsecondary, such a bachelor's degree or higher, degree from a college or university.

Non-first generation: Your parents have earned a postsecondary, such a bachelor's degree or higher, degree from college or university.)

1. First generation college student
2. Non-first generation college student

**2. Are you currently an undergraduate student or graduate student?**

1. Undergraduate
2. Graduate

**3. Do you identify as someone with a disability?**

1. Yes
2. No

**4. Are you currently employed?**

1. Yes
2. No

**5. How recent have you been worried you will run out of food?**

1. Does not apply
2. Within the last 30 days
3. Within the last 31 – 60 days
4. Beyond 60 days

**6. How recent have you not been able to afford enough food so you ate less than what you should have?**

1. Does not apply
2. Within the last 30 days
3. Within the last 31 – 60 days
4. Beyond 60 days

**7. How recent have you had to eat less to portion out your food so you would have enough food for your next meal?**

1. Does not apply
2. Within the last 30 days
3. Within the last 31 – 60 days
4. Beyond 60 days

**8. How recent have you had to skip a meal because you could not afford to eat?**

1. Does not apply
2. Within the last 30 days
3. Within the last 31 – 60 days
4. Beyond 60 days

**9. How recent have you had to go one full day without eating food due to not being able to buy something to eat?**

1. Does not apply
2. Within the last 30 days
3. Within the last 31 – 60 days
4. Beyond 60 days

**10. Have you accessed any of the food assistance programs listed below while enrolled at CSU Stanislaus? Select all that apply.**

1. Does not apply
2. Warrior Food Pantry (On campus pantry)
3. Community Food Pantries/Food programs
4. Food assistance from the county such as SNAP (Food Stamps)

**11. If you would like to be entered in a raffle to win one of 3 \$75.00 gift cards to Food-4-Less, please enter your email address: \_\_\_\_\_**

## Food Insecurity Survey-Spanish Appendix B

### 1. ¿Eres un estudiante de primera generación o un estudiante que no es primera generación?

(Estudiante de primera generación: tus padres no obtuvieron un título postsecundario, como un título de licenciatura o superior, de un colegio o universidad. No primera generación: tus padres obtuvieron un título postsecundario, como un título de licenciatura o superior, de un colegio o universidad).

1. Estudiante universitario de primera generación
2. No primera generación

### 2. ¿Actualmente eres estudiante de pregrado(licenciatura) o estudiante de posgrado(graduado)?

1. Pregrado licenciatura)
2. Posgrado (Graduado)

### 3. ¿Te identificas como alguien con una discapacidad?

1. Si
2. No

### 4. ¿Está trabajando actualmente?

1. Si
2. No

### 5. ¿Qué tan reciente te has preocupado por quedarte sin comida?

1. No aplica
2. En los últimos 30 días.
3. Dentro de los últimos 31-60 días
4. Más de 60 días.

### 6. ¿Qué tan reciente tuvo que comer menos de lo debido por no tener los recursos para para comprar comida?

1. No aplica
2. En los últimos 30 días.
3. Dentro de los últimos 31-60 días
4. Más de 60 días.

### 7. ¿Qué tan reciente ha tenido que comer menos o disminuir las porciones de alimento para tener suficiente comida para su próxima comida de el día?

1. No aplica
2. En los últimos 30 días.
3. Dentro de los últimos 31-60 días
4. Más de 60 días

### 8. ¿Qué tan reciente ha tenido que saltarse una comida porque no podía comprar comida?

1. No aplica
2. En los últimos 30 días.
3. Dentro de los últimos 31-60 días
4. Más de 60 días

### 9. ¿Qué tan reciente ha tenido que pasar un día completo sin comer debido a no poder comprar alimentos?

1. No aplica
2. En los últimos 30 días.
3. Dentro de los últimos 31-60 días
4. Más de 60 días

### 10. ¿Ha accedido a alguno de los programas de asistencia alimentaria durante su acistencia a CSU Stanislaus? Seleccione todas las que correspondan.

1. No aplica
2. Warrior Food Pantry (Despensa de comida de Universidad Estatal Stanislaus)
3. Despensa de alimentos de la comunidad / Programas de alimentos
4. Asistencia alimentaria del país, como SNAP (cupones de alimentos)

### 11. Si desea tener la oportunidad de ganar una de 3 tarjetas de regalo de \$ 75.00 para Food-4-Less, ingrese su dirección de correo electrónico: \_\_\_\_\_