

Chapter 7

Chasing the “American Dream”: Food and Housing Insecure College Students Engage in Participatory Action Research and Planning

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes a participatory action research (PAR) project involving food and housing (FHI) insecure students from impacted communities in the California Central Valley who engage in research, action, and planning to address issues that impede their ability to succeed academically. FHI students completed research and are engaged in action to challenge the California State University, Stanislaus community to increase awareness of unfair systemic conditions that contribute to student FHI and to better understand and respond to the stigma and isolation students with marginalized identities experience. Students have also begun to engage in program-level planning and decision-making processes that impact the availability and delivery of resources for FHI students at CSU Stanislaus. This PAR project represents an ongoing (four year) effort and commitment by students who experience FHI, Faculty and Student Affairs professionals to work collaboratively to implement recommendations and take meaningful action that emerged from this participatory action research study.

INTRODUCTION

An ongoing Participatory Action Research (PAR) project at California State University (CSU) Stanislaus has created an opportunity for students to explore and address their experiences of food and housing insecurity (FHI) (Barba et al., 2021). This chapter describes the efforts of CSU Stanislaus FHI students, faculty, and Student Affairs professionals to work toward implementing recommendations from the PAR project. A research study was completed and students are now engaged in actions to challenge the difficult conditions they experience. They are focused on raising community consciousness and shifting perceptions of their situation drawing attention to the unfair stereotypes, stigma, shame, and isolation they experience. They increase awareness across the campus of their struggles to meet basic needs while

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6898-2.ch007

pursuing higher education. Students are also engaged in program-level planning and decision-making processes within the university to increase the availability and delivery of support and resources for all FHI students. This project represents a strengths-based approach where students apply their existing knowledge, strengths, and resources to reconstruct how they and others perceive them. It empowers resilient and diverse students to directly address situations of marginalization that they experience.

The author is a CSU Stanislaus Master of Social Work (MSW) faculty member who first became involved in Student Basic Needs programming on campus to develop an outreach support program to assist students applying for CalFresh (a food relief program widely known in the U.S. as food stamps). MSW graduate student interns were introduced to Basic Needs programming on campus in 2018 to develop and deliver the CalFresh Outreach program. The interns also provided support to other aspects of the developing Basic Needs Program including a food pantry, an emergency fund for students in financial crisis, and food box distributions made possible through a partnership with the California Faculty Association and a local non-profit group, the United Samaritans Foundation. As the MSW graduate student intern field instructor, the author became increasingly engaged in understanding the food and housing issues that students face at CSU Stanislaus.

GEOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Migrant workers form the human backbone of one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world. Mexico, Central America, and other countries have provided a pipeline of cheap, available and disposable labor in the California Central Valley since the early twentieth century. Generations of migrant farm workers have provided support within a stressful, exploitive, and labor-intensive industry (Castillo et al., 2021). Many become undocumented immigrants, clinging to hope for a better life, fleeing extreme poverty and hardship in home countries where ongoing political, social, and economic strife and devastation unfold. Ironically, while food is abundant in the Central Valley, many workers and their families face hunger and limited housing options in an industry built on exploitation and profit. Those experiencing challenges with food and housing security also often face inadequate access to basic resources like health care and education. While the setting for this struggle occurs within one of the wealthiest of the United States, international parallels regarding the exploitive and dehumanizing impacts of globalization on select and marginalized groups of people are easily drawn.

CSU Stanislaus is located in Turlock, California, and is a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) that offers 45 undergraduate and 26 graduate-level programs. It is one of 23 universities in the California State University (CSU) system, which is the largest four-year public institution of higher education in the U.S. The CSU system focuses on teaching and preparing students to meet employment sector needs for post-secondary prepared professionals. CSU Stanislaus is considered a ‘commuter’ school that serves students within a six-county area with many students driving upwards of two to three hours a day to access the institution.

Enrollment data at CSU Stanislaus for 2021 indicates that 57% of newly admitted students identified as Hispanic, 20% as White, and the remainder as Asian, African American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Non-Resident and Mixed Race (CSU Stanislaus, 2022). A staggering 73% identified as first-generation students (the first in their family) to attend college or university. The 2021 National College Health Assessment III survey indicates 40% of CSU Stanislaus

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students experienced low or very low food security, and 11.6% experienced housing insecurity within the most recent 12 months (American College Health Association, 2021). The United States Department of Agriculture (2022) defines low food security as reduced “quality, variety, and desirability” of diet but where “quantity of food intake and normal eating patterns were not substantially disrupted” and very low food security as “disrupted and reduced food intake because the household lacked money and other resources for food” (USDA, 2022, para. 5). Housing insecurity is defined as experiencing, or being at risk of experiencing, homelessness, and includes lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate residence (McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 2000).

In 2018, 21.6% of all Californians enrolled in undergraduate higher education programs lived below the federal poverty line (Danielson et al., 2022). With some of the nation’s highest housing and living costs, and more recent impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic, many students who come from an agricultural-dependent background in the California Central Valley experience extreme poverty at unparalleled levels in the U.S. (Castillo et al, 2021). While many economic issues of the region relate to migrant workers in the agricultural sector, there are many other social and economic challenges experienced within the Central Valley. For example, the ethnically diverse city of Stockton located a one-hour drive north of CSU Stanislaus, was ravaged by the 2008 U.S. Great Recession and declared bankruptcy in 2012 (Galvin, 2020). The Stockton Unified School District was sued in 2016 by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Northern California due to an alleged culture of disproportionately over-policing African American and Latinx students. Significant disparities exist in educational attainment, unemployment, and homeownership for people of color in Stockton who live in areas of high poverty and crime rates. The median income of \$30,400 in 2020 among African-American households was half that of Caucasian households in the city. Hispanic and Asian households also lagged far behind. According to the California Poverty Measure (CPM) a family of four with an income under \$36,900 is considered to be living in poverty (Danielson et al., 2022). Other major cities in the area CSU Stanislaus serves, Modesto and Merced, reflect similar disparities with African-American and Hispanic people experiencing the highest levels of poverty (Welfare Info, 2022). Given the ethnic diversity of CSU Stanislaus students appears to mirror that of the surrounding communities there is a high likelihood that many students continue to experience poverty and marginalization as they seek to complete higher education.

STUDENT FOOD AND HOUSING INSECURITY

Food and/or housing insecurity among California State University (CSU) students has been the focus of increased attention since a ground-breaking multi-year study commissioned by the CSU system in 2015 (Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018; Crutchfield et al., 2016). Study recommendations resulted in many of the 23 CSU campuses initiating basic needs projects, through limited system funding, comprising various and differing types of support to students experiencing FHI. Ongoing state-level legislative changes and increases to base CSU funding have also driven the expansion of basic needs programming on campuses.

A CSU Long Beach study of CSU student experiences with FHI found little research specific to college students (Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018). Literature in the study cites the deleterious impacts of low income and resulting poverty on the ability of students to meet basic needs such as food, housing, health, utilities, and transportation. The literature indicates that access to and quality of food is the first area of impact. Numerous studies are cited that indicate that between 21% and 52% of students in the U.S. experience food insecurity (Chaparro et al., 2009; Crutchfield et al., 2016; Goldrick-Rab et al.,

2015; Martinez et al., 2016). Other research Crutchfield and Maguire (2018) cite, that looks at the effect of food insecurity on younger children, indicates links with adverse effects, including lower academic performance (Feeding America, 2017; Winicky & Jemison, 2003). Crutchfield and Maguire (2018) indicate promising benefits of CalFresh benefits (also known as food stamps) on college campuses citing benefits found in studies with school-age children who experienced better learning outcomes. Food pantries, housing assistance, and emergency funding were also recommended to assist students on college campuses.

Crutchfield and Maguire (2018) cite research suggesting a significant number of college students experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness results from difficulty managing a large range of personal and financial responsibilities (Crutchfield, 2016; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2015; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017). They found that students attending CSUs across California find it increasingly difficult to secure affordable housing in areas where property values are staggeringly high. The stigma that is attached to homelessness contributes to students failing to share their situations with other students, faculty, and university personnel. The overall national prevalence rate for food insecurities is 12.3%. The findings from the CSU study indicate that 41.6% of students across the CSU system report some degree of food insecurity (Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018). Demographically, first-generation students, former foster youth, first-generation Black/African American students, and students with children present at the highest risk of experiencing food insecurity. The researchers also found that 10.9% of students had experienced some sort of housing insecurity over the past year. Keeping in mind the high number of Latinx students at CSU Stanislaus, it is notable that a study that looked at 123 U.S. colleges and universities indicated 50% of Latinx students reported food insecurity and 61% indicated encountering housing insecurity (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019).

Looking specifically at students experiencing FHI, Martinez et al. (2021) conducted focus groups with students across five University of California (UC) campuses. They found that student basic needs (food, housing, transportation, etc.) are inextricably intertwined but that housing costs (which are extraordinarily high in California) were a priority that most often led to food insecurity and other financial issues. Transportation barriers, limited financial aid (including guidance in obtaining it), and additional academic fees were cited by students as greatly contributing to issues around meeting their basic needs.

A study involving the use of in-depth qualitative interviews with 25 food-insecure students at UC Berkeley, in 2017 examined the psychosocial effects of food insecurity (Meza et al., 2018). Study participants expressed feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and feeling undeserving of assistance. They further indicated that they feared disappointing family, felt resentment toward students who were financially/food secure, were unable to develop meaningful relationships, and, ultimately, were frustrated that the institution did not place enough emphasis on supporting them.

Henry (2017) conducted a study with similar results that involved qualitative interviews with 27 FHI students at the University of Texas. Students reported high degrees of stress, feelings of low self-worth and embarrassment, avoided social gatherings, felt undeserving of assistance from family/friends, and were unable to concentrate on academic performance. Beam (2020) conducted qualitative interviews with eight non-traditional students in a university setting and found participants reported high levels of physical and mental distress because they were unable to focus on academics and were coping with the stigma associated with food insecurity that contributed to social isolation from peers. Participants reported a number of different strategies such as reducing the quality and amount of food to stretch resources, borrowing food, and having to borrow money. Participants further shared that they would welcome resources and support from the university.

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Most of the above research studies occurred prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Given the devastating social and economic consequences for vulnerable populations during the pandemic, it is reasonable to assume the situation for FHI students has intensified. Indeed, a survey study that explored the prevalence and determinants of FHI among 651 students across three campuses in Texas during the pandemic indicated 34.5% reported being food insecure within the previous 30 days (Owens et al., 2020). Changes in living arrangements and loss of employment due to pandemic conditions were reported by a staggering 95% of study participants who reported food insecurity.

The 2018 CSU system-wide study reports students experiencing FHI score lower on indicators of physical and mental health, and days of inactivity (Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018). Students described negative impacts in most aspects of their lives including their academic performance, working long hours, and experiencing a high degree of stress and worry resulting in negative impacts on their mental health (stress, depression, irritability, anxiety), in addition to more physical health concerns.

The following recommendations emerged from the CSU study and some are being implemented on campuses such as CSU Stanislaus. These recommended actions represented a starting point to begin to address and support the needs of students struggling to meet their basic needs for food and housing:

- Develop affordable food and housing options.
- Target student populations at the highest risk.
- Conduct longitudinal research to explore predictors and protective factors for food and/or housing insecurity to assist students in more positive outcomes (degree completion, time in which it takes to complete a degree, etc.)
- Develop a single point of contact, trauma-informed perspectives in program responses.
- Innovate creative campaigns to impact a more supportive campus culture of awareness and responses to better support food and housing insecure students.
- Use campus-based preventive measures (such as CalFresh enrollment) and other strategies to assist students to avoid FHI.

In August 2018, CSU Stanislaus began to engage in planning to address student Basic Needs by introducing an array of services, including CalFresh Outreach, an expanded food pantry, bi-weekly food distributions, an emergency financial need fund, and community resource/referral information, in addition to existing campus counseling and health care services. A Basic Needs Committee comprised of campus partners began meeting to share information, resources, and strategies intended to strengthen program approaches across campus. The MSW program assisted in developing CalFresh Outreach efforts and supporting the expansion of the other array of services. In November 2019, a dedicated Student Affairs administrator was hired to coordinate and promote Basic Needs programming on campus. At present, the Basic Needs program, situated within Student Affairs, has increased capacity to employ seven full-time professionals, aided by a number of part-time undergraduate and graduate student assistants, to deliver the range of available services. Student interns from the MSW program continue to support programming, most notably having developed a Basic Needs Ambassador ‘Ally’ program in the past two years that provides workshops targeting faculty, staff, and students to build awareness of FHI and available basic needs resources on campus.

INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES OF POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS STRUGGLING WITH BASIC NEEDS

While assumptions about the identity of post-secondary students in America have not historically been associated with systemic oppression and marginalization, there is growing evidence that links the experiences of students with intersectional identities (ethnicity, poverty, gender, immigration status, LGBTQ+, etc.) with extreme hardship, struggle and despair while attempting to earn post-secondary credentials (Owens et al., 2020; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019; Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018; Crutchfield et al., 2016; Martinez et al., 2016). Education is seen by many from systemically marginalized groups as a way out of poverty and oppression in America. Many students who pursue education at CSU Stanislaus come from socio-economically marginalized community groups in the California Central Valley. They struggle within higher education systems while facing inadequate access to basic resources. It is also important to acknowledge the strengths and contributions that students from diverse backgrounds bring to post-secondary education, enhancing and expanding perspectives within existing academic areas of focus by challenging existing mainstream worldviews within higher education.

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH WITH SYSTEMICALLY MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS

The CSU Stanislaus student FHI PAR project embodies the belief that students struggling to meet their basic needs are the experts of their situation and ultimately in the best position to ask questions and seek answers (Barba et al., 2021). There is a strong belief that their experiences within the PAR project will contribute to their personal and professional growth and ultimately assist them as they move beyond their educational experience to better serve themselves and the communities of the Central Valley of California. This aligns with a strengths-based approach to practice that seeks to empower individuals, groups, and communities by taking action to reconstruct perceptions of themselves.

Babbie (2001) defines PAR as “an approach to social research in which the people being studied are given control over the purpose and procedures of the research; intended as a counter to the implicit view that researchers are superior to those they study” (p. 67). PAR offers an alternative approach to more traditional academic research and advocacy. It fundamentally embraces the concept of approaching issues from the perspective of those (most often from marginalized and historically underserved communities) most affected by them. Most research is conducted by academic researchers who control knowledge and serve as the experts, framing necessary questions, determining methodology, and interpreting results (Babbie, 2001). Traditional positivist paradigms of research argue for the separation of researcher and ‘subject’ (Baum et al, 2006; Whyte et al., 1991). PAR offers an alternative approach to research that fundamentally embraces the concept of approaching issues from the perspective of those most affected by them (Babbie, 2001; Baum et al, 2006; Townsend et al, 2000).

Baum et al. (2006) note that PAR differs from traditional research in three ways: the purpose of PAR research is to enable and engage in action (through an iterative reflective cycle); it actively advocates for power to be shared with those being researched; and those being researched are actively involved in the process. Emphasis on participation, empowerment and the lived experiences of those affected by the issues being studied are key principles within PAR that create space for the research team to engage in critical reflection within the research process and to then subsequently develop strategies for community action.

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PAR approaches, used increasingly in settings with Indigenous and marginalized populations across the world, are viewed as more effective in disrupting the colonizing effects of traditional research approaches (Baum et al., 2006). Positivist research approaches, predicated on the concept of a single objective reality, have increasingly been critiqued for the exploitation and harm of Indigenous and other disempowered groups of people. Traditional research approaches elevate researcher power and current academic paradigms without an active focus and attention on disrupting clear and present injustices within impacted communities.

PAR METHODOLOGY

In 2019, a Participatory Action Research (PAR) study was proposed to the CSU Stanislaus Center for Public Policy Studies (CPPS) and quickly gained support from the two faculty directors (Barba et al., 2021). They worked alongside the author to engage 15 CSU Stanislaus students facing FHI to become paid co-researchers and activists in a PAR project. While the research component was completed in 2021, the project team is now engaged in the action implementation phase (with several original and four newly recruited student co-researcher/activists) engaging with Student Affairs and other campus professionals. The goal is to empower FHI students’ strengths and perspectives within the campus community and to ensure their voices are reflected in institutional programming developed to support them.

This project was based on the central PAR belief that ‘those most affected by an issue’ are uniquely qualified and necessary to engage in efforts to address it. Therefore, CSU Stanislaus students (often marginalized by various intersectional identities and struggling to meet their basic needs) are well positioned as paid experts within their own situations to best identify relevant research questions, conduct research, identify possible solutions, and more importantly, take action. The purpose of the initial research study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges that FHI students, specifically in a low-income/high-cost-of-living region, face while trying to fight their way out of poverty (Barba et al., 2021). Although literature describing issues of FHI exists, there is limited research that illustrates college or university student perspectives, voices, and lived experiences. This PAR project provides students who are affected by FHI with an opportunity to conduct research, promote program and system-level awareness and engage in advocacy at CSU Stanislaus to challenge identified issues and create potential solutions.

The intent of the research was to expose and share the actual lived experiences of students struggling through isolation, mental and physical distress, intergenerational poverty, excessive family responsibilities and obligations, and multiple and layered forms of discrimination (ethnic, cultural, gender, LGBTQ+ identity, etc.) in a society and system where they often feel stigmatized and unseen (Barba et al., 2021). Low graduation rates in these settings are easily understood in light of the tremendous struggles FHI students endure to remain in school. It was readily sensed at the beginning of this project that there were multi-layered intersectional determinants and impacts of FHI on students, that required better understanding by Student Affairs, university administrators, faculty, and staff. The project goal is to develop a more inclusive and empathetic campus climate with effective and responsive programming to better address the critical needs of FHI students.

The project has been based on building partnerships between students experiencing FHI, CSU Stanislaus faculty (the PAR team) and program administrators who are concurrently involved in developing interventions to assist students who are experiencing FHI. Fundamental to this partnership is the sharing of information. Information is viewed as power. Hall (1982) contends that traditional research creates a

situation whereby the knowledge that is generated by the research endeavor is owned by the researchers. Researchers determine the ultimate meaning of the findings and how and when the knowledge will be shared. Contrary to traditional approaches to research the PAR student co-researcher/activists, who are experiencing challenges to their basic needs, collectively own and share the responsibility for naming the consequences of food and housing insecurity, by developing the research methodology and design, evaluating and interpreting the data collected and advocating for actions to be taken on campus. For this project, PAR serves as both a mechanism for creating a more meaningful approach to understanding CSU Stanislaus students’ basic needs and understanding how their experiences may be better addressed on our campus.

Engaging and maintaining the integrity of PAR principles is important to creating meaningful and engaged research and action outcomes. Freire (1970) asserts that meaningful action is driven and maintained by adhering to dialogical processes. The field of PAR has drawn considerably from approaches like Freire’s that emphasize engaging with those most affected by issues and seeking to level power so their involvement moves beyond being merely consultative or tokenistic, to a state of engaged meaning, action, and impact. The benefit at both the individual and community level is considerable – traditionally researched and acted upon group members are empowered as experts in their own situation to define critical issues and implement solutions to address these issues within the community. Dialogical approaches are based on the understanding that systemic power operates to disenfranchise marginalized group members. Therefore, PAR involves intentional processes designed to level the power of participants, share information, and privilege the lived experiences of those most affected by the issues in focus. This approach is grounded in the concept of ‘praxis’ which is the meaningful engagement in ongoing dialogue, reflection, and action to drive liberatory processes forward (Freire, 1970). Building trusting and respectful partnerships into PAR processes by utilizing ‘praxis’ is critical to empower community members who are best positioned to explore and define issues and solutions. Emphasis on collaborative decision-making through ongoing conscious leveling of power needs to occur. As such, a major focus in this project has been placed on dialogical processes and ‘praxis’ to level power and elevate the voices, findings, and recommended actions of students who are affected by FHI.

PAR student team members shared through various team meetings, presentations and individual conversations, that relationships developed within the PAR team provided a sense of mutual support and empowerment that they had not experienced before. They challenged themselves and each other to undertake research and plan meaningful advocacy efforts in an institutional setting. They realized the power and change that is possible through solidarity and collective action. Some have used words such as liberating, life-changing, and empowering to describe their experience. They describe growing in confidence and resolve in addressing issues where they had previously felt powerless, stigmatized, and excluded. They also describe feeling a sense of inclusion and solidarity - that what they are doing is important not only for themselves but for other students at CSU Stanislaus struggling to meet their basic needs. Connections -personal, academic, and for some, professional - were made. PAR student team members chose to apply to graduate programs to pursue interests related to FHI and research; several are now working in professional settings with FHI individuals, some within the Basic Needs program at CSU Stanislaus. The impact of the PAR project on the student team members is undeniable. It is anticipated that they will take these experiences further into their own lives and professions building on their individual strengths and emerging leadership orientation to address FHI and other important issues within their communities. They have developed confidence, skills, and knowledge that will continue to grow and have a ripple effect within the Central Valley and perhaps beyond.

Researchers as Study Participants

At the beginning of the 2019 fall semester, the PAR project group comprised of three faculty members, a graduate student assistant, and fifteen student members began to meet to plan the project approach (Barba et al., 2021). The student team members were made aware of the opportunity through their use of the food pantry or other basic needs programs on campus. Through a number of individual and then group interviews students were familiarized with the purpose of the study and with the principles of PAR. Students were asked to make a one-year commitment to engage as researchers in the project (which is now in year four). They were provided gift cards to attend initial meetings. Once committed to the project they were hired and paid an hourly wage as student researchers. Most student team members continued beyond the one-year commitment to the project through spring 2021. In the second and third years of the project, additional funding and support for the project were provided by the CSU Stanislaus Basic Needs Program. We continue to recruit FHI students to join the initiative.

The PAR project began with an initial four-month period of building respectful and trusting relationships between student and academic team members (Barba et al., 2021). Student researchers shared their lived experiences of food and housing insecurity in confidential bi-weekly meetings (September to December 2020) where food was provided, and fellowship encouraged. Most expressed never having shared their FHI experiences with others. Their narrative accounts were used to develop the guiding research question, “what are the lived experiences and struggles of students facing food and/or housing insecurity at CSU Stanislaus?” The team collaboratively developed a methodological strategy for answering the research question. Eleven themes emerged from the stories and provided the basis for a conceptual framework to anchor the research study: 1) Mental Distress; 2) Physical Distress; 3) University Barriers; 4) Family Responsibilities; 5) Intergenerational Poverty; 6) First Generation Students; 7) Societal Expectations; 8) Survival Mode; 9) Community Disadvantages (barriers); 10) Cultural & Diversity; 11) LGBTQ.

Once the research design was developed students decided to act as both researchers and participants in the study (Barba et al., 2021). The 13 undergraduate and two graduate students represented the convenience sample, collecting data about their own personal experiences to address the research question. The sample consisted of four male and 11 female students. Fourteen students reported being first-generation college students. They identified as Latinx American, Indian American, African American, and Caucasian. Many participants had children and others described being responsible for the care of other relatives.

Food and housing insecurity is a difficult and emotional topic often based on ongoing traumatic experiences. As student team members collected data about their experiences and shared their stories, it was possible that they may have experienced discomfort (Barba et al., 2021). To minimize risk, all participants were instructed that the data collection was voluntary—they were not required to document their experiences or share their stories. They were able to choose not to divulge information that they were not ready to share. Their risk was also minimized by the fact that they had spent the first semester (four months of the project) engaged in conversations about FHI, in the conceptualization of the research study, and were able to build relationships based on a sense of trust and safety. They all also agreed to protect the confidentiality of one another and not share any information outside of the research group.

Student team members would later decide to include their names in the research report (Barba et al., 2021). They also actively engaged in presentations to university partners sharing the research results and recommended actions that emerged. In-depth discussion of the possible repercussions (as both participants in the study and as PAR researchers) occurred to ensure all understood that there was potential to identify them and their families with the research and ensuing action. They unanimously agreed that

they were comfortable with being identified with the research findings and eager to engage in the action phase of the project which has involved ongoing engagement and meetings with university administration, faculty, students, and staff. Ongoing preparation and support of co-researchers to engage in these institutional and community meetings is a primary focus in the project. Thinking about and exploring unintended consequences of engagement is ethically important to ensure that student co-researchers understand how their involvement and actions may impact them. This represents responsible and ethical community-based practice.

An ongoing shared team decision-making approach through ‘praxis’ (dialogue, reflection, and action) has not wavered throughout the project and continues with new student team member recruits. Until the last year, the original PAR team was involved in all aspects of planning, research, and actions taken. Many PAR student team members have graduated, so an effort has been made to recruit new CSU Stanislaus PAR student team members as we move into the action phase of our work. Due to process and time constraints, PAR team members have not been directly involved in writing this chapter but have had an opportunity to review it and provide included feedback.

Research Design

The research team collectively proposed a qualitative phenomenological design to address the research question “what are the lived experiences of CSU Stanislaus students struggling to meet their basic needs?” (Barba et al., 2021). The phenomenological research approach embodies the essence of qualitative research in the sense that it is intended to capture an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study: in this case student experiences with FHI. It is not unusual in phenomenological research that the “researchers become research participants themselves” (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2014, p. 88). Once the research design was developed with the plan for researchers to act as study participants CSU Stanislaus University Institutional Review Board (UIRB) approval was obtained.

Data Collection Approach

A ‘Flexible Diary’ data collection method was decided upon (Herron et al., 2018). The participants were provided with options for capturing their stories (data) and experiences of FHI (Barba et al., 2021). First, they had the option of using ‘devices’ as outlined in this approach: notebook, computer/internet, and/or camera. Next, they had the option of the ‘medium’: written text, photographs, sketches, memes, artifacts, etc. to describe their experiences of FHI. Their instructions for data collection were to use their device(s) and medium(s) to tell/document their experiences related to the 11 themes (that the research team had created as a conceptual framework for understanding FHI). Participants selected which categories were the focus of their data collection/storytelling. Two rounds (designated two-week periods) of data collection occurred in the spring of 2020 (which unintentionally coincided with the beginning of the Covid 19 pandemic in March 2020).

Data Analysis

Following the data collection period, the PAR team met virtually and provided an opportunity for each participant student team member to share their data. Notes were taken by research facilitators (Barba et al., 2021). PAR team members asked questions for clarification purposes and student participants were also provided the opportunity to ‘relate’ to the experience being described. This process continued until

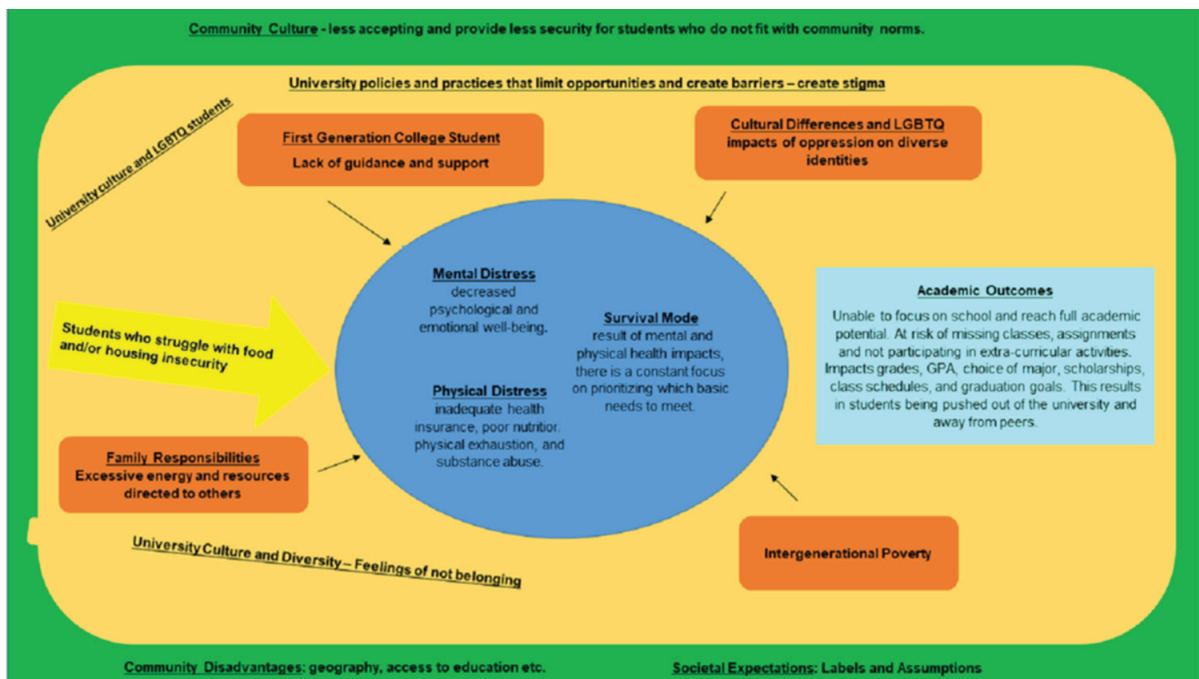
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all participants had shared their data. Data was then analyzed by the entire PAR team and organized in relation to the 11 themes (the conceptual framework) and Neuman’s (2003) five-step approach to qualitative data analysis was used to sort; open code, axial code, selective code, and elaborate. Given the co-researcher dual roles as both participant and researcher, the team engaged in strategies for maintaining openness and objectivity (Stutey et al., 2020). Data analysis processes were utilized that involved participants sharing their experiences and gaining feedback from other participant/co-researchers to maintain openness to alternative perspectives and understandings of the diversity of student experiences of food and housing insecurity.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The eleven themes within the conceptual framework originally developed early in the project were well supported by the data collected and analyzed by the team (Barba et al., 2021). As part of the data analysis process, the team collectively developed definitions for each theme represented by the data. Themes are organized below in a logic model (Figure 1) developed by the team to visually represent the inter-relatedness and circularity of concepts that emerged from the data: intersectional factors that contribute to FHI (orange), university/community environment which may create barriers (green and yellow), and direct impacts on students (blue). The light blue box represents the impact on academic outcomes for students who are experiencing FHI. The logic model has been useful in communicating the study findings to our institutional partners.

Figure 1. Logic model: Food and/or housing insecurity at CSU Stanislaus (Barba et al., 2021)



Intersectional Factors Contributing to Student FHI

First Generation Student

Many of the participants in the study experiencing FHI were the first in their families to attend a four-year college or university (Barba et al., 2021). Participants identified a lack of familial guidance and support as one of the obstacles to being first-generation students. As a result, first-generation students also described overworking, as well as feeling disconnected from other students, shame, and lowered self-esteem. One participant showed a picture of dusty soiled hands with earth in the background, describing summers where they wake at 3:30 am make lunch and go to work as a seasonal agricultural field worker. “I was exposed long hours in the sun as well as to chemicals (i.e., pesticides). I was also exposed to poor health conditions. My knees, back and hands hurt. I couldn’t do anything but to continue working. I feel overworking is a necessity in order to cover my personal and family responsibilities.” Other impacts described included feelings of guilt for not being able to help their family members, who are often struggling with their own FHI issues.

Intergenerational Poverty

Food and housing insecurity experienced by participants was described as being perpetuated by intergenerational poverty (Barba et al., 2021). Participants identified that intergenerational poverty puts students at a significant disadvantage compared to students who benefit from generational wealth, advantage, and privilege. Intergenerational poverty was described by participants as a socio-economic disadvantage of previous generations. For example, one participant shared a photo of living conditions in their parents’ home, revealing a wide hole in the ceiling. They describe the need to live on their own because their parents struggle too much to support them. Another participant also explained that while they have “to do everything on [their] own” there are often other family members desperate for housing or food who seek their support. Some of the consequences of intergenerational poverty described by participants included a lack of financial support; a lack of familial knowledge of systems; guilt for not being able to help their family; feeling a lack of control; low self-esteem; shame for having to seek support; and feeling an intense pressure to succeed. As a result, and not surprisingly, the major impact described in terms of school was lower academic performance.

Family Responsibilities and Support

A theme connected to ‘family responsibilities’ that emerged from the data involved maintaining and supporting a household or alternately not having any family support at all (Barba et al., 2021). Many participants reported primary and extended family responsibilities that involve caring for children, siblings, parents, and grandparents, often at the same time. Participants described other impacts, including not wanting to ask for financial help and increased stress and mental health impacts which caused them to miss classes. When students have a family relying on them for support, they have to prioritize those needs and often disregard school which in turn impacts their academic performance. One participant shared a picture of a wheelchair to illustrate how their mother’s heart attack and stroke had impacted their entire family. This event resulted in a constant struggle to care for their incapacitated mother while also trying to attend university and experiencing extreme financial distress. A lack of access to health care or immigration status (being undocumented or supporting family members who are) was cited as

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limiting available resources and caused students to fall behind academically or withdraw from school due to the need to provide financially for themselves and others.

Culture and Diversity

Participants described how issues relating to culture and diversity contribute to FHI (Barba et al., 2021). One participant shared that he had been kicked out of their home due to differing values and perspectives relating to cultural identity. Though difficult to generalize some of these cultural nuances, the participants felt that sometimes they do not recognize the impact. Some students identified feeling stigma around asking for help due to their cultural norms. Many also described their families as not seeing the value or importance of education. Attending college causes these participants to feel separate or different from their families. Some described not feeling connected to the university when they feel many other students and faculty do not come from a similar cultural or socioeconomic background. Students express feeling further disadvantaged when they feel like they do not belong, and experience this as being an outsider at the university. Some described belonging to a cultural/ethnic group that has food prohibitions (pork, roots, vegan, and vegetarian) that are not accommodated by food choices on campus. The link between poverty and ethnic, gender, and LGBTQ+ identities was also noted.

LGBTQ+

Several participants identified as LGBTQ+ and spoke of their experience with being rejected by their family which further exacerbates their experience of FHI (Barba et al., 2021). These students described having to “figure things out on their own” both financially and structurally. LGBTQ+ participants further described how suppressing feelings and sexuality causes stress, shame, and anxiety, and reduces overall mental health. These participants expressed reluctance to share their LGBTQ+ identities with professors and other students for fear that they may be treated differently, furthering feelings of a lack of belonging and inclusion in student life and academics. As with all of the other intersectional themes identified, these participants described feelings of isolation, lack of belonging, and inclusion in student life and academics

The Environment

Community Barriers

Community barriers were described by participants as a lack of jobs for students; employers who are not willing to accommodate students’ schedules; distance between home, school, and work; and lack of public transportation in the Central Valley for the largely commuter-based student population (Barba et al., 2021). These issues within the community make it difficult to earn the necessary income to purchase food, pay rent, buy gas, and other basic necessities. It also means there is less money and time available for school. Lack of affordable housing in the community, remaining on housing waitlists for years, and having to miss classes for housing and social support appointments were also noted. The result was described as diminished personal resources and energy required to succeed academically. Issues of systemic racism in the area were also raised. One participant shared a picture symbolizing concern for safety on campus, saying that as a student of color, “this really affects my mental health by affecting my anxiety and PTSD.” This intensifies the participant’s feelings of exclusion, isolation, and lack of support.

University Barriers

University barriers were framed as the result of restrictive campus policies (Barba et al., 2021). These were described as a lack of knowledge of how to apply and the lengthy hiring processes for student employment on campus; difficulty navigating financial aid; and lack of campus food affordability. Difficulty with campus hiring processes and the lack of child care availability on campus were reported as directly impacting students by forcing them to seek community employment, which further distracts them from the campus environment and their academics. The high cost of food provided on campus forces students to either not eat or spend money that they do not have. This is essentially a choice between buying food they can't afford or going hungry and experiencing difficulty focusing in classes. Student participants described being 'maxed' out chasing the fulfillment of basic needs, struggling to attend classes, and completing academic requirements. The idea of the college experience that involves socializing and utilizing resources on campus (like health care, counseling, workshops, and going to the gym) is not possible. The result again is feelings of exclusion and isolation.

The Impacts

Mental Distress

Participants identified that students who are FHI are likely to experience several mental distress concerns, including a range of factors encompassing psychological and emotional well-being (Barba et al., 2021). As a consequence of the negative impacts of FHI, student participants described hopelessness, stigma, and shame. One participant revealed that “I went through a depression funk, but the intensity was something I had never experienced”. Another said, “the reality is I just feel highly unmotivated, frustrated, and depressed”. One participant, who was a single parent raising three children, described going “to bed thinking of money, I wake up thinking of money, sometimes I dream of money. It is a sense of panic deeply imbedded in me as I have been the only provider for my family.” These experiences often result in severe stress, anxiety, and long-term depression. Left unaddressed, repercussions described by some participants involve engaging in risky behaviors, experiencing imposter syndrome, and feeling isolated. Impacts are poor academic performance and often withdrawing from college altogether. These affect students' academic productivity and performance and ultimately can result in withdrawing from college.

Physical Distress

Participants shared that FHI may result in a range of physical distress concerns (Barba et al., 2021). Affordable and convenient food options were described as fast food, which has low nutritional value and contributes to poor physical outcomes such as feeling tired and listless. Physical distress concerns reported in the data involved a range of factors including lack of health insurance, poor nutrition, and physical exhaustion. These factors may result in unaddressed illness or high medical bills. Many participants who cannot afford medication or medical care resort to self-medication through drug and alcohol misuse which is further exacerbated by poor nutrition or malnutrition. Physical distress was reported by multiple participants as negatively affecting academic performance and productivity.

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Survival Mode

Student participants described facing multiple, and complex challenges and disadvantages already described above as resulting in a stark perception as a struggle to survive (Barba et al., 2021). This phenomenon was described as being unique to students suffering from FHI, and one that they do not see their peers having to address. The chronic lack of resources, money, and choices throws them into survival mode, where they constantly need to prioritize which basic needs to meet. As one participant described, “I was working 20 hours a week and had 16-18 units of courses...I was always stressed and always on the verge of breaking down because between not eating and dealing with all the financial issues I still had to work and go to school. I couldn’t just quit my job because I use nearly all of that income to pay for a place to live.” This means students who are FHI concurrently experience extreme mental and physical distress that exacerbates this state of survival. They lack time or energy to dedicate to anything else – especially academic endeavors. Participants described this inability to focus outside of survival mode as impacting their grades, decisions around selecting a major, gaining aid and scholarships, organizing class schedules, as well as engaging in other necessary efforts to support their educational goals.

Research Conclusions

These research findings represent a significant contribution to and also complement the growing literature on food and housing insecurity among college students (Barba et al., 2021). They provide the PAR team with a deeper understanding of the diverse, intersectional, and complex experiences of CSU Stanislaus students struggling to meet their basic needs. While it may have been important, within a traditional research approach, to produce a research publication when the research was complete, instead the team collectively shifted its’ focus to taking action.

COMMUNITY ACTION AND PARTICIPATORY SOCIAL PLANNING

While existing PAR literature focuses on research and resulting action, it is difficult to find a specific focus on action or change strategies that follow from the research findings to transform community conditions (Pain et al., 2017). Therefore, for this project, after the team completed the research, community organizing literature provided a framework for action to focus on desired community intervention. Transformative approaches to community organizing, as discussed by Bobo et al. (1991), focus on altering and elevating broader community consciousness of involved issues - in this case, student FHI - in efforts to transform conditions that contribute to it. These approaches are often at the center of grassroots, or bottom-up approaches seeking to build awareness amongst the larger community about issues under focus.

A transformative community practice framework (see Appendix A) used in the action phase of the project was adapted from Bobo et al. (1991). It clearly sets out the steps necessary to 1) frame issues with desired outcomes or solutions; 2) identify relevant stakeholders; 3) develop strategies to facilitate solutions; and 4) plan tactics to achieve intended solutions. Desired outcomes must be coupled with direct results and improvement in the lives of community members who are most affected - as expressed by those members of the community. Much like PAR itself, emphasis is placed on including and relying on the experiences and expertise of impacted community members.

One of the central strategies the PAR team developed within this transformative community action approach was to promote participatory social planning processes as a way for impacted students to continue to be involved in implementing recommended strategies. Participatory social planning is used by those who know that the involvement of all stakeholders (most notably impacted community members) is critically important. The inclusion of impacted community members among program decision-makers has the potential to provide critical information needed for effective programming (University of Kansas, 2021). Program planning approaches often involve consulting with impacted stakeholder groups regarding their needs before making program decisions that affect them. Participatory social planning, like PAR itself, moves beyond mere consultation by including the target population in decision-making processes by providing access to relevant information, supporting them to engage the system user perspective, and considering their perspectives equally alongside other decision-makers.

Research to Action

The research phase of the project was completed in the spring of 2020 (Barba et al., 2021). Over the next two semesters of fall 2020, and spring 2021, the PAR team worked on developing the recommendations and developed strategies for action that flowed from the research. Using the transformative community practice framework outlined above the PAR team moved the project from the research phase to the action phase. The framework provided an effective complementary approach to introduce student PAR team members to principles of transformative community organizing practice (which like the research phase of PAR they may not have had previous experience with). While not specifically a feature of PAR, this approach provided a practical ‘roadmap’ grounded in grass-roots community-based action and practice (Bobo et al., 1991). Ongoing collective engagement of PAR team members through ‘praxis’, mentorship, and support throughout this process was critical. Working collectively takes time. However, to ensure the integrity of the PAR process the team worked on each aspect of action planning and strategy development together to ensure all team member’s perspectives were included in decisions and outcomes.

The research outcomes provided the evidence and context for how FHI issues impacting students on campus were framed (Barba et al., 2021). The PAR team worked through the research outcomes to develop corresponding recommendations. Recommendations were prioritized and actions developed, stakeholders identified, and strategies to engage campus decision-makers were developed. A research report and presentation were developed to engage administrative leadership and program administrators on campus to work toward implementing critically required change. Two priority actions emerged that the PAR team felt would be strategic in engaging campus partners and could ensure that an ongoing student-based perspective is centered.

Priority Action #1: Basic Needs Hub

The first priority action focused on the critical physical and mental health needs that students’ struggling with FHI encounter (Barba et al., 2021). Existing research, coupled with the findings from this study, suggest that FHI causes extensive physical and mental duress for students. The PAR team believes that immediate action should be taken to engage Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and the Student Health Center (SHC) to play a more direct and visible role in the support of students struggling with FHI. The Basic Needs program, CAPS, and SHC all fall under the Division of Student Affairs, so it

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was recommended to prioritize a single point of entry and coordinated approach to providing integrated and comprehensive resources (food, housing, physical and mental health support, and education).

A number of specific recommendations within this action involved dedicating additional counselors and health care providers educated in the needs of FHI students to engage in outreach efforts and expand direct intervention efforts (Barba et al., 2021). Assistance in helping students to obtain no-cost health care support was another recommendation. Creating educational and therapeutic programming to collectively target food and housing-insecure students was also recommended within this action. Individual interventions are critically important to individual FHI students. However, educational and therapeutic activities (including a mutual support group) specifically tailored to students facing FHI were suggested to assist to address the isolation, stigma and shame that accompanies the experience of FHI. More focus on marketing and promotion strategies (website, social media, tabling, etc.) for a Basic Needs ‘hub’ of services was also recommended within this action.

Priority Action #2: Student Participatory Social Planning Approach

Recognizing the need to sustain the meaningful engagement of students who are experiencing FHI in ongoing campus-level programming, and efforts to shift the campus climate to better support them, the second priority action was the development of a student participatory planning group (Barba et al., 2021). The team felt that the many recommendations that emerged from the PAR project provided valuable information that should not be passively turned over to institutional decision-makers. What was identified as most valuable about the research and recommendations was that they came from the impacted students themselves. Therefore, creating a mechanism to ensure FHI students become involved with campus decision-makers to provide the necessary insight and context to implement recommended changes was necessary. Participatory social planning approaches were explored as a means for FHI students to have a meaningful effect on the institutional response.

Using a participatory social planning approach can ensure the numerous recommendations that emerged from the project continue to be considered and prioritized. This will occur through a process of participatory social planning where students experiencing FHI continue to be directly involved with program decision-makers. The students collaborate directly with Student Affairs to provide direct input into decision-making regarding the implementation of recommendations from this report. They will also actively engage with other FHI students regarding emerging needs and possible institutional responses. The students then have an effective mechanism for ongoing engagement with other students on campus who are struggling with basic needs. Situated within the Basic Needs Program in Student Affairs, they have access to relevant program managers and critical programming functions. The PAR team identified that it would be critical for these students to be paid and provided approximately 10-12 hours a month to engage in participatory social planning processes.

Engaging in Campus-Based Action

After developing the priority actions outlined above, the PAR team identified relevant stakeholders and allies on campus. The team pooled existing knowledge of campus programs and stakeholders and engaged in asset mapping on campus to better understand the campus environment and identify relevant stakeholders. Existing partnerships with the Director of Basic Needs and the Vice President for Student Affairs created an opportunity to begin a series of meetings to address the two priority actions.

The PAR team developed a presentation and report that was used to engage with Student Affairs in an initial meeting in the spring of 2021. All PAR student team members were involved in the development of the presentation and many actively engaged in the Student Affairs meetings. There were other meetings and presentations on campus with other stakeholders to share the project findings. Developing and supporting PAR student members’ capacity to engage in these advocacy processes was and has been crucial. PAR team faculty members used their knowledge and connections to institutional stakeholders to initiate meetings. However, the PAR student members have been fully, and impactfully, involved in all presentations and meetings. The result of engagement with Student Affairs is a mutual commitment toward ongoing collaboration to address the two priority actions. A working group was established with CAPS to discuss the implementation of recommendations regarding direct service and broader psycho-educational awareness and planning on campus. Two PAR student members are now positioned within CAPS as MSW interns and working alongside CAPS professionals and the director to create a mutual support group for FHI students on campus.

The priority action concerning the development of a participatory planning approach that engages students experiencing FHI is also underway. The PAR team is working with a number of campus stakeholders (including Student Affairs) to support a group of FHI students, through a new College Corps initiative. These four new students will be positioned to engage in ongoing program-level assessment, engagement with other students, and evaluation activities to continue to consider the larger set of PAR recommendations alongside emerging needs. The author and two original PAR student team members support the new PAR students by providing an understanding of the project to date while assisting them to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to become effective partners in the participatory planning approach.

The ongoing partnership between the Basic Needs Program and the PAR team has resulted in a peer-based Basic Needs Ambassadors Ally program. The program’s goal is to increase campus community awareness regarding the prevalence and causes of FHI, the experience for students, effective cross-cultural approaches, and the range of campus resources and supports available. Workshops and training targeted at staff, faculty and students are delivered by PAR student members and MSW interns. Partnerships with the California Faculty Association, the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Student Affairs, and the MSW program have been important in promoting this program to shift the campus climate to one that is conscious and aware of the needs of students experiencing FHI and responding to them.

Strong collaboration and partnership between the PAR project team and Student Affairs has been and will continue to be critical to ongoing meaningful and sustainable student-engaged initiatives. A spirit of curiosity and possibility exists within the collaboration, and it is this type of commitment on behalf of institutional partners, who are open to seeing the possibilities, that is necessary to move forward. The intention is to expand the participatory planning approach beyond Student Affairs and engage other CSU Stanislaus programs like Financial Aid, Advising, Faculty Affairs, and others. The scope of the student-engaged approach may also move beyond the institution to address community and systemic barriers.

CONCLUSION: SYSTEMICALLY MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS AND PAR

To commit to and maintain integrity in PAR approaches involves embracing an intensely collaborative, power-leveled process committed to research and action objectives developed by and with impacted

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community members. This requires time and necessary resources. The environments in which academics and community-based practitioners find themselves are not necessarily conducive to PAR. Funded research opportunities seem to squarely favor traditional research approaches. The experience with PAR that CPPS directors brought to this project meant there was a focus on careful planning and support for the project: building relationships necessary for co-researchers to trust and engage in the PAR process: commitment to engage power structures for necessary change, funding that ensured co-researchers could be compensated and engaged over an extended period of time, and projecting and pursuing ongoing sustainable support for ongoing participatory planning structures. Recognizing that impacted community members are engaged in struggle means they need to be compensated for their time and commitment and meaningfully supported to learn and engage in research and change efforts within organizational and systemic structures.

Reconstructing perceptions of systemically marginalized groups requires a commitment to creating processes and approaches that provide meaningful opportunities for impacted group members to share their lived experiences, insights, and strengths to shape how they are perceived and to explore solutions capable of addressing unfair and harmful conditions. PAR projects, intentionally and carefully designed to engage affected community members in all aspects of research and community-based action, represent a viable approach to achieving this. This chapter demonstrates that supporting the engagement of community members who are most impacted by the issues in focus, has unique and profound potential to create meaningful and effective strengths-based interventions at the micro (direct impacts for the community partners themselves), mezzo (program level interventions) and macro (systemic impacts) levels of practice for systemically marginalized populations.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Basic Needs: Access to resources that adequately address the need for food, shelter, safety, security, and sleep.

Food Insecurity: As defined by the United States Department of Agriculture (2022) where low food security is reduced “quality, variety, and desirability” of diet but where the quantity of food intake is not substantially disrupted, and very low food security is “disrupted and reduced food intake because the household lacked money and other resources for food” (para. 5).

Housing Insecurity: Experiencing, or being at risk of experiencing, homelessness. This may include lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate residence (McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 2000).

Intersectional Identities: Social identities, such as gender, race, ethnicity, social class (poverty), religion, age, ability, sexual orientation, and gender identity, overlap in ways that intensify the impact of systemically based discrimination and oppression.

Participatory Action Research: Community members who are impacted by issues of concern work collaboratively with researchers to frame questions and methodological approaches to engaging in research and subsequently take action to address these issues within the community.

Participatory Social Planning: The meaningful engagement of community members who are impacted by issues of concern as decision makers in social planning, program development and evaluation.

APPENDIX A: TRANSFORMATIVE COMMUNITY PRACTICE FRAMEWORK (ADAPTED FROM BOBO ET AL., 1991)

Issue: Identify and frame the issue and subsequent action.

- Clear definition of the issue(s).
- How was the issue(s) identified?
- Who was included in the framing of the issue and why?
- Develop actions.
- Categorize.
- Prioritize actions.

Stakeholders: Identify and engage with stakeholders.

- Who are the stakeholders? What is their perspective and role in relation to the issue(s)? How do they, or do they not, hold the power to effect change in relation to the issue? Are they allies or opponents?
- Are you actively including people (community members) who are directly impacted by the issue? What roles are they playing (building consciousness, making them aware of their own power, altering the relations of power, building leadership (as all of these things are critical in ensuring sustainability)? How will they be involved in the organizing process? Is this a project that shares power with them? If you are not involving them, how are you addressing issues of power and oppression? How do you know that the identified issue and approach is of importance to them (and not just your idea of what you think should happen – which perpetuates “power over”)?

Organizing Model/Approach: Identify and provide a rationale for a model of organizing/development you will use.

- Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of using particular approaches – community organizing, community development, advocacy (consensus/cooperation), and social action (conflict approach).
- Identify the model/approach you will be using – discuss why you are using this approach.

Strategies and Tactics: What strategies and tactics will you use and why?

- Presenting/meeting with stakeholders who hold power to influence them to take desired and recommended action/change. Community meetings to raise awareness and engage in further action.
- Use of media/network campaigns to engage broader support for the desired action.
- March, protests, boycotts, strikes, etc.

How does the project address issues of Social/Economic/Racial Justice:

- Is this a transformative or status quo approach to change? What is your rationale?

- How are you organizing/engaging key constituents to start the process of bringing about change within a mezzo/macro (systemic) context?

Plan: Develop and outline the action plan – who is responsible for what part?

- Discuss how/why you developed the action plan in the way that you did.
- Discuss how you will implement the action plan (include timelines).
- Discuss particular actions that must be taken.
- Discuss the process in terms of how it will engage/empower those most affected by the issue?

Evaluation Plan: Process and outcome-based.

- What was the outcome of each action of the plan?
- Reflect on what happened. What worked well? What could have been done differently?
- What about your process was successful? What wasn't? What benefits were achieved through the process?
- How did the process engage those most affected by the issue and what opportunities/potential exist for their continued involvement (beyond yours)?
- Develop a plan to evaluate specific outcomes of the action taken – what types of information need to be collected and will they be evaluated to determine the success of the outcome?

APPENDIX B: PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

The research and data analysis indicate that there are a number of university policies and practices that negatively impact students struggling with food and/or housing insecurity. University barriers were separated into three broad categories. The largest was University Policies and Practices, University Culture and Diversity, and University Culture and Sensitivity to LGBTQ Concerns. In response to this the co-researchers developed several actions to change some policies and practices. They also identified a number of actions that can be implemented that can help address the existing barriers.

University Policies and Practices

The actions to address university barriers are grouped in the following categories: financial aid/scholarships, campus food distribution and pantry, student wellness, on-campus dining and housing, communication about resources and support, university employment, childcare, parking, student clubs and organizations, and additional barriers.

Financial Aid/Scholarships

Chasing the “American Dream”

- Increase financial aid and scholarship opportunities to keep pace with the increasing costs of going to school.
- Streamline the scholarship process so that students who qualify based on need for scholarships are automatically applied for them.
- Need scholarships that are open to all majors (look at programs with few scholarships).
- Take away limit on the grants that you can get (Cal Grant, Pell Grant, State Univ. grant) need more information about this.
- More work-study jobs available to low-income students.
- Make it easier and have more support for students to get work-study jobs.
- More support for first-gen college students from the Financial Aid office (Incorporate more remote workshops, tutoring, SI sessions, etc. so students can join when they are not on campus-Financial aid/loan workshops online and recorded) Let students know how they can get grants and loans.
- Financial aid office could do a better job of letting students know that they can get a grant for grad school if their income is low.
- Reduce student fees and course fees because classes are all online.
- Programs that prevent students from becoming food and housing insecure.
 - Allow access to Campus Cares before students have used all other fin aid (loans).
 - Campus Cares needs to respond faster (need resources, more staff).
 - More funding such as Campus Cares, Financial aid is not sufficient.
- Allow remaining grant (Pell) to transfer to graduate education.
- Loan forgiveness-loan reduction (taxable income).
- Reduce loans and use grant money instead.

Campus Food Distribution and Pantry

- More programs to help students-food pantry restrictions on the number of items More than 10 items.
- More food boxes for distribution and more items in boxes.
- Give students choices of what is in boxes.
- Location of food box distribution-stigma associated with having to walk long distance closer to the parking lot, closer to the resident hall, carts available.
- Temporary 15-minute parking for people using the food pantry.
- Make food assistance programs more known (advertising).
- Extend hours of assistance programs into the evening.
- Make it easier for Stockton students (make available on Stockton Campus).
- More than a canned food drive.
- Add fresh food.
- Basic needs committee needs to have students who are experiencing food and/or housing insecurity as committee members.
- Board of Directors for food pantry made up of students who are experiencing food and/or housing insecurity.
- University support for food distribution of more than just one-time money and donations (line item in university budget).
- More information so students know about this.

Student Wellness

- Counselling center needs more counselors, month long wait is too long.
- Health center open longer and on weekends.
- Stronger connection between mental health and physical health resources on campus.
- Counselling open on weekends.
- More access to the health center and gym after graduation.
- Reduce the price for alumni for Student Rec. center.

On-Campus Dining and Housing

- Cheaper meal options for students.
- Cheaper meal plan options and cheaper food options (but still healthy).
- Easier access to microwaves, (More of them) make it clear that it is for students to use. Put in eating areas.
- Make it so that students can use EBT on campus.
- More than a canned food drive.
- Add fresh food.
- Free lunch once a week.
- More affordable campus housing.
- Program to help students get housing off campus.
- Housing available without all the amenities.
- More laundry facilities in on-campus apartments.
- The university should provide information about off-campus housing.
- Faculty encouraged to find affordable learning resources for classes-need to extend this to campus food prices, and parking. (University Barrier).

Communication About Resources and Support

- More informative about programs for all students.
- More individual connections for students who do not know where to go.
- Create networking opportunities for students.
- Professors and advisors and department chairs.

University Employment

- When students apply to campus jobs, prioritize students who do not have off-campus jobs. This should be part of the application (University Barrier).
- Streamline employment process on campus. Make it easier and faster for students to get on-campus jobs.
- Connect students to EDD offices in the area.
- Need more training for students so they can learn computer programs while they are working.
- Provide on-the-job training.
- Let students work more than 20 hours for on-campus jobs.
- Pay students more per hour.
- On-campus jobs need medical benefits (workers comp).
- Make sure students have resources to make sure they are protected at work. (lifting heavy objects).
- More work-study jobs available to low-income students.

Childcare

Chasing the “American Dream”

- On-campus daycare needs to be expanded because we have a large student body. (University barrier, family support).
- Faculty encouraged to find affordable learning resources for classes-need to extend this to campus childcare.
- Needs to be more information about the resources that are available.

Parking

- Waivers for parking passes for students (All fees should consider student’s ability to pay).
- Commuting students should have more access to parking.
- Faculty encouraged to find affordable learning resources for classes-need to extend this to campus food prices, and parking (University Barrier).

Student Clubs and Organizations

- Some clubs have fees to help students with grad school-Fee waivers for students who experience financial hardships.
- Set course time in a major for activities of the student club for that major.
- Zoom meetings for student clubs.
- Clubs meet at more times.

Additional Barriers

- More hours for printing services and lower-cost printing.
- More credit on printing account.
- Offering a chat line or program where we are able to ask questions about our academic path or whatever questions we have, and this would be helpful for those of us with time constraints (Academic Advice).
- More after-graduation resources. Student loan help (financial and advising) Make any existing programs more visible. More known.
- Make more classes available on the Stockton Campus (commuting students).
- Make it clear if students can complete their degree on the Stockton campus.
- Lunch breaks in long classes.
- University adds student advisor to the student portal.

University Culture and Diversity

- University support groups for different issues to help students build more connections.
- Support a mentor who has been through it to help you get through it.
- Food/housing insecurity month.
- Art/statue/mural/pictures.
- Larger diversity center.
- Training for faculty and staff.
- Academic departments need to advertise food and housing programs.

University Culture and Sensitivity to LGBTQ Concerns

- LGBTQ clubs Mentor program and club-University need to commit funding and support.
- University support groups for different issues to help students build more connections.
- Support a mentor who has been through it to help you get through it.
- Art/statue/mural/pictures.
- Training for faculty and staff.
- Academic departments need to advertise food and housing programs.

- Larger diversity center.

First Generation College Student

- Fin. Aid office for first gen. college students.
- More support for first-gen college students from the Financial Aid office (Incorporate more remote workshops, tutoring, SI sessions, etc. so students can join when they are not on campus-Financial aid/loan workshops online and recorded) Let students know how they can get grants and loans.
- Financial aid office could do a better job of letting students know that they can get a grant for grad school if their income is low.
- Need more training for students working on campus so they can learn computer programs while they are working.
- Provide more on-the-job training for students working on campus.
- Some clubs have fees to help students with grad school-Fee waivers for students who experience financial hardships.
- Set course time in a major for activities of the student club for that major.
- Zoom meetings for student clubs.
- Clubs meet at more times.
- Offering a chat line or program where we are able to ask questions about our academic path or whatever questions we have, and this would be helpful for those of us with time constraints.
- More after-graduation resources. Student loan help (financial and advising).
- Make any existing programs more visible. More known.
- University support groups for different issues to help students build more connections.
- Support a mentor who has been through it to help you get through it.
- Increase financial aid and scholarship opportunities.
- Revise the scholarship program so that students who qualify for scholarships are automatically applied for them.
- Need more general scholarships.
- Limit on the grants that you are able to get (Cal Grant, Pell Grant, State univ. grant).
- More scholarships for social sciences majors.
- Allow remaining grant (Pell) to transfer to graduate education.

Intergenerational Poverty

- Waivers for parking passes for students. (All fees should consider student’s ability to pay.)
- University support groups for different issues to help students build more connections.
- Support a mentor who has been through it to help you get through it.
- Scholarships that address student need as well.
- Multiple scholarships each have a unique application-streamline the scholarship process.
- More work-study jobs available to low-income students.
- Financial aid office could do a better job of letting students know that they can get a grant for grad school if their income is low. Let students know how they can get grants and loans.
- Provide aid (Campus Cares) to students before they have used all other fin aid (loans).
- Campus Cares needs to respond faster (need resources, more staff).
- More funding or support for students experiencing intergenerational poverty.
- More funding such as Campus Cares, financial aid is not sufficient.

Chasing the “American Dream”

- Incorporate more remote workshops, tutoring, SI sessions, etc. so students can join when they are not on campus-Financial aid/loan workshops online and recorded.
- On-campus daycare needs to be expanded because we have a large student body (university barrier, family support).
- Faculty encouraged to find affordable learning resources for classes-need to extend this to campus childcare.
- More affordable campus housing.
- Program to help students get housing off campus.
- Housing available without all the amenities.
- More laundry facilities in on-campus apartments.

Family Support Responsibilities

- University support groups for different issues to help students build more connections.
- Support a mentor who has been through it to help you get through it.
- Provide aid (Campus Cares) to students before they have used all other fin aid (loans).
- Campus Cares needs to respond faster (need resources, more staff).
- Loan forgiveness-loan reduction.
- On-campus daycare needs to be expanded because we have a large student body (university barrier, family support).
- Faculty encouraged to find affordable learning resources for classes-need to extend this to campus childcare.
- Some clubs have fees to help students with grad school-fee waivers for students who experience financial hardships.
- Set course time in a major for activities of the student club for that major.
- Zoom meetings for student clubs.
- Clubs meet at more times.

Community Disadvantages

- Connect students to EDD offices in the area.
- The university should provide information about off-campus housing.
- More internships/information about what is available for students.