Barriers and Coping Strategies Among Women in Food Deserts

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To: Graduate Program Committees, Huxley College

Total required funding for project: $535
Amount requested from Graduate Program Committees: $35 - $500 already covered by ENVS Dean’s Fund

Project Duration: start date: October 2018 finish date: May 2019

[Signature]
Date 9/27/18

Applicant signature

Approved by:

[Signature]
Kate Darby

[Signature]
Debora Santzar

Gigi Berardi (Off campus, will email approval)
i. Background and Purpose

Concerns over the accessibility of affordable and nutritious food options in the Birchwood neighborhood have increased in the past two years since the 2016 closure of Albertsons at Northwest Avenue. This grocery store had been in the community, in the most diverse part of Bellingham, since 1960. No other food retail can be in the space until 2042, and as of March 2018 a fitness center was planned for the space. This has left residents with limited access to a full-size grocery store, and the area has been identified by the USDA as a “food desert” or an area with no supermarket within 1 mile, for an urban setting (Ver Ploeg et al., 2009). Food deserts, neighborhoods with limited options for buying fresh food, are created through larger socio-economic and spatial inequalities that impact food access. The goal of this study is to explore how women living in a neighborhood identified as a “food desert” experience food insecurity, and to learn what coping strategies women are using in response and how limited food access in the Birchwood neighborhood impacts their day-to-day lives.

This research will be conducted through qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews and qualitative data analysis. A closer examination of the way women in particular experience food insecurity, and the mechanisms they describe to cope with food insecurity, can provide a deeper understanding of this complicated social and environmental issue surrounding food access in Bellingham.

ii. Methods

First, I plan to use flyers with a brief description of the study, participant incentive, and my contact information to recruit participants. I will create a Western Washington University supported Qualtrics survey to screen participants and provide more details
about the research and interview. Participants will be screened through email to make sure they are over 18 and understand the study. Participants must be willing to engage in an hour-long interview, fill out consent forms and be audio recorded.

I will use standard qualitative and ethnographic data collection techniques to interview 12 women about their experiences with food insecurity. These studies used similar semi-structured interview techniques and data analysis to uncover emerging themes surrounding food insecurity, among women specifically. The qualitative methods used come directly from scholars like Bernard (2006), where interview questions and follow-up questions serve as a guide but participants will be free to share other topics if it helps to enhance understanding of their experience. I will collect data with a voice recorder, securely upload the audio files to OneDrive and begin transcription before moving on to coding and analysis. Temi, a transcription service for Mac, will be used to help transcribe the interviews. The qualitative data analysis program Dedoose will allow for coding of responses, organization by themes, and creation of a matrix of responses (Bernard 2006).

iii. Research Design

To collect stories of food insecurity from participants, I will use semi structured interviews, identified in the literature as a way for researchers to develop a deeper understanding of social topics while including open ended questions that serve as a guide for the conversation (Bernard 2006). I will listen to each interview and transcribe the conversations. By using a semi structured interview format, interview questions will be shaped in a way to start conversations but allow participants to guide conversations to other relevant topics. To encourage participants to open up and share more of their
experiences, I will use additional follow-up prompts and use probes in order to use consistent interview strategies.

iv. Anticipated Results

Expected themes will emerge surrounding food access based on other existing literature, and additional themes unique to the participants living in a food desert in Birchwood. Other qualitative studies on women's experiences with food insecurity include studies from California on obesity, mental health impacts and race (Adams et al., 2003), food deserts in Minnesota and Iowa with barriers to food access (Smith, Morton 2009), where food insecurity is linked to financial circumstances (Tarasuk 2001). When food security is low, women frequently ration food to other household members first, skip and cut meals (Wehler et al. 1992; Hamilton et al. 1995; Beaumier, Ford 2010). The literature has identified other coping mechanisms, such as community and social support, nutritional assistance programs and soup kitchens, and other immediate ways like donating plasma, panhandling, and smoking to reduce hunger (Polit et al., 2000; Valera et al., 2009; Smith, Morton 2009).

By approaching this research using the transformative paradigm, a social justice focused research approach, I will consult with those most directly impacted by the inequalities of food deserts. The aim of this is to connect the real-life context of living in a food desert with the theoretical and existing literature on food insecurity and women. Studies on food security show the root causes of food insecurity are generated by social, economic, and racial injustices, and that food deserts are created by multiple socio-economic inequalities that influence both where and how people access food. This is closely tied to neighborhood demographics like racial identity and income. Food insecurity impacts
women on a personal level as they navigate barriers to food access, such as rationing food when resources are low, relying on community resources like food pantries, or spending additional time traveling to more affordable stores. A closer examination of the way women in particular experience food insecurity, and the mechanisms they describe to cope with food insecurity, can provide a deeper understanding of this complicated social and environmental issue surrounding food access in Bellingham.

v. Schedule

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall 2018</th>
<th>Recruit and Complete Interviews</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transcribe Interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete methods and literature review chapters</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Begin to Analyze Interview Data</td>
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<tr>
<th>Winter 2019</th>
<th>Finish Analysis</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Complete Results and Conclusion chapters</td>
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<tr>
<th>Spring 2019</th>
<th>Complete final edits</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Defend Final Thesis</td>
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<td>Share results with community</td>
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Vi. Budget
1. 12 $30 Amazon gift cards = $360

2. 100 flyers print @ $0.25 each = $25

3. Temi (transcription software) = $0.10/minute ~ 72 hours of material at $72.

4. Dedoose (analysis software) = $10.95/month student rate, approx 7 months (first month free) at $77

**Total Required: $534.00**

$500 has already been funded by the ENVS Dean’s Fund. Total requested for Huxley Small Grant: $34 to fund the rest of Dedoose.

If this source cannot fund my project, I will apply for the Enhancement Fund of Graduate Research. However, this source does not award funding until after November.

**References**


