Queering Food Access: A Qualitative Analysis of Intersectional Lived Experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ University Students with Food Insecurity in the American South

by

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Abstract

Food insecurity affects 29% of adults (2.4 million people) annually in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, agender, asexual, and Two-Spirit (LGBTQIA2S+) community (Gates, 2014). The college and university student population has a similarly high rate of food insecurity with 39% of students reporting experiencing 30-day food insecurity in 2020 (Baker-Smith et al., 2020). However, little research has examined food insecurity amongst the LGBTQIA2S+ community or the college and university student population in detail. To address this, this research examines food access at the intersection of the LGBTQIA2S+ community and the university and college student population, as told by the community itself. A qualitative, community-based approach and methods of PhotoVoice and semi-structured interviews with eight self-identified LGBTQIA2S+ university students studying at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) were used to explore how food access was impacted by participants' individual LGBTQIA2S+ identities, in addition to physical, socio-cultural, and political environmental factors. Data were analyzed using thematic decomposition analysis guided by intersectionality and queer theories. Findings show that both LGBTQIA2S+ identities and university student status are correlated with increased risk of food insecurity. The research also identifies additional factors such as income and employment, support systems, and the socio-cultural environment, that influence food security for LGBTQIA2S+ university students. Individuals' lived experiences of food insecurity highlight the importance of an in-depth understanding of intersectionality and the complexity of identities in developing strategies to improve food access and thus decrease food insecurity. To my knowledge, the findings of this study represent the first evidence of community-based food studies research conducted with the guidance of both intersectionality and queer theories. Therefore, the findings of my thesis provide novel insights into experiences with food insecurity, a relevant issue that is increasingly influencing the health and well-being of LGBTQIA2S+ university students.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Eli Grey Lumens. Research ethics approval for the research project, of which this thesis is a part, was received from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, No. 00113537. November 22, 2021.

Chapter 2 of this thesis will be submitted for publication as E. G. Lumens, M. Beckie, and F. Fletcher, "Gender, Sexuality, and Food Access: An Exploration of Food Security with LGBTQIA2S+ University Students," *Journal of the Agriculture and Human Values*. I contributed to research design, and I was responsible for the data collection, data analysis, and manuscript writing. F. Fletcher and M. Beckie contributed to research design and manuscript edits.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, and Two-Spirit (LGBTQIA2S+) community; to the people who are committed to engaging with and uplifting the voices of systemically marginalized communities; to the food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, group homes, and so many more that fight food insecurity every day; and to everyone who is learning to reclaim their voice and take up space, just like I am.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of so many amazing people. First and foremost, words cannot express my gratitude towards all of the participants that took part in my study and shared their experiences with me. I am also extremely grateful to Andrew and Emily Mails-Saine, the Director and Associate Director respectively of the Spartan Open Pantry (SOP), as well as student staff and volunteers at the SOP for their support during data collection and for their friendship and mentorship over the years.

I could not have undertaken this journey without my research supervisors, Dr. Fay Fletcher and Dr. Mary Beckie, who have provided endless guidance, patience, support, and thoughtful encouragement. For helping make sense of my often vaguely incoherent late-night writings, encouraging me to put myself and my health first when I was hurtling towards burnout, calming me down when the pressure of deadlines started to build, and so much more, I am sincerely grateful. Their advice, feedback, and care helped me to become a better researcher and writer.

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to my external committee member, Dr. Jessica Kolopenuk, for her valuable feedback and support. The class she taught in winter 2021, GSJ598-X50: Special Topics - Topics in Gender and Social Justice Studies, was my favourite of my entire graduate career, even though it was 7:00pm to 10:00pm in my time zone. I truly would not have been able to do justice to this research without what I learned throughout that course, especially through conversations with Dr. Kolopenuk and my peers.

I am deeply thankful for my colleagues at the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina for supporting me as I have navigated working full-time as a full-time graduate student conducting my research at a university several hours away. Their understanding, encouragement, and interest in my research has been invaluable and so very much appreciated.

I would like to acknowledge the organizations that allowed me incredible opportunities to present subsets of my findings: the Canadian Association for Food Studies 17th Annual Assembly: Transitions to Just and Sustainable Food Systems; meetings both of the Executive Management Team and of the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) team of the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina; and Feeding America's Feed Nourish Connect: Connected Together 2022 Conference.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest appreciation for my dad and my sibling, and my friends and partners, both past and present, for their support, encouragement, and patience throughout the past two years. They have heard me rant and talked things out with me, even when they were also facing long days and difficult times. They have balanced checking on me when I fell off the grid analyzing data and writing for days on end with pulling me (at times, physically) out into the world to take breaks. They have brought me snacks and coffee to fuel my analysis and writing sessions. Their unwavering love and support has not only sustained my research, but also shaped me into the person I am today.

This research was supported by immeasurable amounts of caffeine, dark chocolate, and love.

Table of Contents

List of Figures or Illustrations

Prologue

This research is not just a requirement for my Master of Arts in Community Engagement; this research represents a part of who I am. Translating my lived experiences into ink on paper is difficult, but nothing has ever felt more overwhelming than translating the lived experiences of my community into one document. The complexity of doing research with a community to which I belong and the responsibilities that come with that has been quite overwhelming, but I know that nothing has ever been more important in my academic journey than this.

First, let me introduce myself. My name is Eli Grey Lumens, and I use they/them/theirs pronouns. I believe that labels are used primarily to try to communicate parts of ourselves to others that we could never truly capture in words and to find community with those who have similar lived experiences, identities, values, etc. When describing myself, I would say that I am empathetic, funny (at least to myself), and passionate before I would think to consider my gender, sex, or sexuality. However, society has placed an emphasis on those labels and, for the purposes of this research and how I live my life, I consider it vitally important to share those as well.

In terms of sex, I was assigned female at birth (AFAB), based on my reproductive organs and functions. However, I am a transgender person, meaning that my gender identity and expression differs from my assigned sex at birth, so my birth certificate says 'female,' but I am not female. More specifically, I am genderfluid, so my gender identity and expression is fluid and flows around the gender spectrum. Some genderfluid people identify under the umbrella term 'non-binary,' which is a gender identity open to a spectrum of gender expressions, but I do not because I do not identify in relation to the imperialist gender binary of 'male' and 'female' and their corresponding expected gender roles. Gender is a vastly complicated construct, and I

like to say that there are as many genders as there are people because we all experience gender in our own ways.

I would define my sexuality as encompassing several factors: my sexual orientation; my romantic orientation; my preferences; and my practices. My sexual orientation is just as fluid as my gender identity, perhaps even more so. Sexually and romantically, I identify as a queer person. The term 'queer' can be used as an umbrella term to describe anyone that is not cishet, or cisgender and/or heterosexual, but it has a very complicated history. It was used as a derogatory term for the LGBTQIA2S+ community until the 1980s, when HIV/AIDS activists reclaimed the word to take ownership of their identities (Davis, 2021). However, while it has been largely reclaimed as an inclusive term for those who have been historically marginalized due to sexuality, gender identity, and/or gender expression, not every member of the LGBTQIA2S+ community is comfortable with this term and refrain from using it due to negative connotations (Davis, 2021). For me, I use 'queer' to eliminate limitations: both my sexual attraction and my romantic attraction are not conditional upon my own sex or gender, or that of my partner. When it comes to my partners, I would say that my primary considerations are whether a partner and I have compatible values, morals, goals, and lifestyles. I practice polyamory, meaning that I may have multiple physically or emotionally intimate relationships at once, with the knowledge and consent of all individuals involved.

Now, I will position myself relative to my research and participants. I chose to focus on food insecurity in the LGBTQIA2S+ community not only because I found the community to be notably absent from contemporary research and food policy, but also because it is my community. I am a proud queer, genderfluid, polyamorous (poly) individual who has experienced food insecurity in more than one stage of my life, and that positionality shapes the

way that I approach this research. Having served as the on-site director of the Spartan Open Pantry in Greensboro, North Carolina, I want to fill a research gap to inform future organizational policy and give my community the respect it deserves whilst doing so.

In no way do I approach this research as being somehow better than the participants I engage. Instead, I use my own queer identity to remind myself and others that my participants are not just subjects to collect data on and from; they are also human beings deserving of time and respect. Being part of the community that I am centering my research around is a delicate positionality to balance, but I believe that it is what makes me the perfect person to do this research. Rather than looking at each person as just another part of the data set, I highlight their experiences and stories. Upon completion of my undergraduate degree, I realized that my personal lived experiences were actually reflective of the collective LGBTQIA2S+ community. While I cannot speak for the entire community, I am not the only person to have ever been queer and food insecure. The problem is that no one ever spoke about it, so I never recognized it as a problem, only as my normal. However, now that I am in a position to call attention to the needs of my community, I want to help build a world where we can also recognize that not only does the LGBTQIA2S+ community deserve the same resources as the dominant group, but also that the LGBTQIA2S+ community deserves the space and the respect to share their experiences. Throughout my thesis, I will be doing just that: reclaiming my voice and taking up space.

Chapter One: Introduction

Food insecurity refers to the insufficient availability of adequate quantities of nutritious, affordable foods and affects a significant percentage of the world's population (Patterson et al., 2020a). In the United States, 37 million individuals, or over 11.5% of the population, reported experiencing food insecurity in 2020, with one-third suffering from disrupted eating patterns, reduced food intake, and nutritional insufficiency due to lack of finances and resources (Patterson et al., 2020a). Individuals outside of and positioned in subordination to the assumed demographic norm, being "white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure," are more likely to experience food insecurity due to the hierarchical relations of power that drive food policy to try to change those individuals rather than to address the sources of inequity (Kepkiewicz et al., 2015; Lorde, 2016). Systemically marginalized individuals are uniquely situated within systems of oppression due to their specific markers of identity and distinction, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic class (Manuel, 2007). Given how positionality affects availability and access to food, it is critical that food security policies be designed and implemented that address systemic identity-specific minority stressors to maximize effectiveness.

The consequences of contemporary food security policies that cater only to dominant groups are highlighted when focusing on the experiences of a specific systemically marginalized group, such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, agender, asexual, and Two Spirit (LGBTQIA2S+) community, or the college and university student population. When looking specifically at the LGBTQIA2S+ community, research shows more than 29% of adults, or 2.4 million people, experience food insecurity per year (Gates, 2014). This positions LGBTQIA2S+ adults to have diminished food access for themselves or their

households at a likelihood of 1.7 times in comparison to non-LGBTQIA2S+ adults (Gates, 2014; Patterson et al., 2020a). College and university students also experience statistically significantly higher rates of food insecurity than non-students, with 39% of students reporting experiencing previous 30-day food insecurity in 2020 (Baker-Smith et al., 2020). Despite these statistics, little research has been done to examine food insecurity amongst the LGBTQIA2S+ community or the college and university student population in detail. To address these gaps in the literature and to specifically explore food insecurity at the intersection of these two categories, in this research I examine the food insecurity experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ students at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) and the physical, socio-cultural, and political factors that pose barriers and create opportunities to improve food access.

To combat the prevalence of basic needs insecurity on college campuses by providing emergency and short-term access to food and nutrition resources, many college and university campuses have founded their own food pantries (Thompson et al., 2019). Given that these pantries are operated by different actors on campuses across the country, such as student volunteers, school administrators, and local faith-based organizations, the exact number of campuses that offer food pantries is unknown, but the College & University Food Bank Alliance identified over 700 in 2020, up from 88 in 2012 (Vespoli, 2020). One such campus is the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), a four-year university. Founded in 2009 by Wesley-Luther, a non-profit campus ministry, the Spartan Open Pantry (SOP) is a food pantry that serves students, staff, and faculty of UNCG and students of Greensboro College (Wesley-Luther, n.d. b). I selected UNCG as the site of my research because I am personally familiar with the UNCG, the SOP, and the students I would be working with. Additionally, I wanted to fully capture LGBTQIA2S+ students' experiences in relation to the positionality of the UNCG within

the American South, the region of the United States with the highest rate of food insecurity (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021).

1.1 Research Purpose and Objectives

My research asks: What are the experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ college and university students with initial and sustained food access? The research objectives are: 1) to capture the stories of LGBTQIA2S+ university students in relation to the physical, socio-cultural, and political environmental factors that impact their experiences with food insecurity in Greensboro, North Carolina; 2) to explore the strategies, if any, that LGBTQIA2S+ individuals utilize to mitigate their risk of food insecurity; and, 3) to reflect on the ways that the identified strategies can be used to inform organizational policy changes at the Spartan Open Pantry. I utilized qualitative, community-based methodology and methods of PhotoVoice and semi-structured interviews to gather data.

The remainder of this introductory chapter includes an overview of the guiding theoretical frameworks, a review of relevant literature, details of the methodology and methods employed, and the context within which the study is situated. I will conclude with an outline of subsequent chapters.

1.2 Guiding Theoretical Frameworks

Informed by intersectionality theory and queer theory, my research explores food access at the intersection of specific markers of identity and distinction, specifically gender, sexuality, and status as a college or university student. These theoretical frameworks are described as follows.

1.2.1 Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality theory examines the ways individuals occupy multiple social positions simultaneously, which creates complexities in how they interact with the world (Manuel, 2007; Patterson et al., 2020a). The introduction of intersectionality theory has been credited to Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), who coined the term in 1989 as a legal term to describe "the various ways in which race and gender intersect in shaping structural, political, and representational aspects of violence against women of color" (p. 1244). The groundwork for Crenshaw's intersectionality theory was laid 12 years prior when the Combahee River Collective (CRC) published *The Combahee River Collective Statement* in 1977 as *A Black Feminist Statement* (Combahee River Collective [CRC], 1977). The CRC's *Statement* emphasizes the collective's focus as being "actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression" with their goal being "the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking" (1977, p. 210).

Using this theoretical framework allowed me to explore how the intersections of specific markers of identity and distinction affect food insecurity as a social determinant of health for LGBTQIA2S+ university students (Manuel, 2007; Patterson et al., 2020a). There are few health-related studies that focus on how intersectionality and food insecurity interact at the population-level. Most contemporary research focuses on individual-level factors and individual failings as reasoning for poor health and food insecurity, rather than identifying decreased food access as the result of institutional influences and contemporary biopolitics (Carney, 2014; Kapilashrami & Marsden, 2018). Taking the approach chosen here created an opportunity to explore the experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ university students with food access, the various factors that impact this, and how this information can inform effective and inclusive organizational food

policies. While the distinctions between systemically dominant and marginalized groups are nuanced, and their effects are difficult to measure, food policy centered on dominant groups will not create meaningful change for systemically marginalized groups. This continued exclusion only further widens the divide between systemically marginalized and dominant groups and underlines an even greater need for using intersectionality theory to prompt reflection on how systemically marginalized groups need to be accounted for in food policy at every level.

1.2.2 Queer Theory

This research is also informed by queer theory, which has no singular definition, but rather like the term 'queer' itself is constantly in flux, used in a variety of ways by different academics and activists (Barker & Scheele, 2016). Emerging from gay and lesbian, and feminism studies, sexual subcultures, and queer and black activism in the 1980s and 1990s, queer theory resists the concepts' simplistic explanations and universal truths (Jagose, 1996; Barker & Scheele, 2016; Meyer et al., 2022). Barker and Scheele (2016) argue that most queer theories have the following unifying features: "1) resisting the categorization of people; 2) challenging the idea of essential identities; 3) questioning binaries like gay/straight, male/female; 4) demonstrating how things are contextual, based on geography, history, culture, etc.; 5) examining the power relations underlying certain understandings, categories, identities, etc." (p. 31).

My research draws upon queer theory as a guide to challenge exclusionary tendencies of sex, sexuality, and gender identity categories and goes so far as to celebrate the fluidity of relations to categories of identification, positioning my participants as self-determining individuals each with their own self-evident truth of identity (Jagose, 1996). Queer theory also promotes self-reflexivity and autoethnography by positioning the researcher as a subject within

social research, rather than as an objective outside observer (Harris, 2001; Meyer et al., 2022). I used this aspect of queer theory to explicitly question my own attitudes, biases, and thoughts as a queer, genderfluid person and as a researcher so that I could challenge the perceived objective relationship between researcher, participants, and research (Harris, 2001; Meyer et al., 2022). My intentional self-reflexivity as a member of the community I was researching allowed me to mitigate power relations between myself as the researcher and my participants, prompting willingness for participants to share their experiences with me due to our shared identities.

1.3 Literature Review

Existing research provides limited insights into the influences of place-based food environments and personal identities on food insecurity and food access for the LGBTQIA2S+ community and/or the college and university student populations. Understanding the true depth of these communities' experiences is necessary to enact relevant and effective policies and programs. Food insecurity is a serious problem in the United States, and the experiences of systemically marginalized populations like the LGBTQIA2S+ community and the college and university student population need to be explored. In this section, I provide an overview of the literature relevant to my research. I begin with the general topic of food insecurity, including definitions of food insecurity, food access, and food apartheid, and factors that contribute to an increased risk of food insecurity, such as those arising from the physical, socio-cultural, and political dimensions of place-based food environments. Next, I examine food insecurity in the United States and North Carolina, focusing on the connections between food insecurity and the environment and personal identities (e.g., gender), respectively, for populations at risk.

1.3.1 Definitions of Food Insecurity, Food Access, and Food Apartheid

Food Insecurity

While there are many definitions of food insecurity, the unifying theme is the reference to the insufficient availability of adequate quantities of nutritious, affordable foods (Patterson et al., 2020a). For the purposes of my research, I chose to define food insecurity as: "the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate or safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways" (Anderson, 1990). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) introduced new language to describe the ranges of severity of food insecurity in 2006, dividing the range between 'food security' and 'food insecurity' (Economic Research Service [ERS], 2022). For food secure households, the USDA further characterizes households as having either 'high food security,' where there were no reported indications of problems or limitations with food access, or 'marginal food security,' in which there were little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake, but there were one or two reported indications of problems or limitations with food access, usually regarding anxiety over food sufficiency or shortages in the home (ERS, 2022). Food insecure households are further categorized as either 'low food security,' with reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet and little to no indication of reduced food intake or 'very low food security,' where the household reported multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake (ERS, 2022). It is also important to note that while the terms 'food insecurity' and 'hunger' are often used interchangeably, there is a clear distinction between the two. The USDA uses the term 'food insecurity' as "a household-level economic or social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food," whereas 'hunger' is "an individual-level physiological condition that may result from food insecurity" (ERS, 2022).

Food Access

Food access is a contributing factor to whether a household experiences food insecurity and is determined by the spatial accessibility, affordability, and quality of food retailers (Ver Ploeg et al., 2009). To measure the availability and affordability of food, many national studies use the existence of supermarkets and grocery stores to approximate their data, often ignoring smaller grocery stores, convenience stores, farmers' markets, meat markets, etc. (Ver Ploeg et al., 2009). However, more localized studies are able to collect extensive data on the place-based food environment and consider the locations of such food retailers or measure a store's products to determine if "healthy foods" are sold, the shelf space they are allotted, and the forms they are sold in, such as fresh or frozen (Ver Ploeg et al., 2009). Once the availability and price of food has been measured, spatial accessibility is determined based on the ease or difficulty of food access, primarily through distance and density measures (Ver Ploeg et al., 2009). Distance measures consider the distance from consumers' residences to the nearest food retailer with nutritionally-dense, affordable foods, while density measures count the number of stores in a certain geographic area to add the dimension of consumer choice (Ver Ploeg et al., 2009). Both types of measures, though, only measure "potential access," or where consumers could possibly shop, rather than where consumers actually shop or "realized access" (Ver Ploeg et al., 2009).

Food Apartheid

Although the term "food desert" has been commonly used in the United States to describe geographic areas with little to no reasonable food access, the term "food apartheid" is gaining traction as a way to better capture the reality of the conditions of these communities. Food activists argue that the reference to a desert detracts from the inherent life and vibrancy of a community, while also implying that this is similar to a naturally occurring ecosystem (Lu,

2020). The term also creates the impression that the issue is a general scarcity of food, rather than the reality that there is a scarcity of fresh produce and nutritionally-dense, affordable food (Lu, 2020). The shift in language to use the word "apartheid" is significant, as it represents the man-made political and economic systems that have perpetuated unequal access to resources and networks through racial discrimination and segregation in South Africa (Lu, 2020). Comparatively, food insecurity is greatly impacted by systemic racism, which has created the political and economic systems that segregate communities of colour and historically marginalized communities into lower income neighbourhoods that grocery stores do not cater to (Jang & Kim, 2018; Lu, 2020; Ver Ploeg et al., 2009).

1.3.2 Who is Food Insecure in America?

Each year, over 11.5% of the American population, or roughly 37 million individuals, experience food insecurity (Patterson et al., 2020a). However, food insecurity does not affect every population, community, household, or individual in the same way. Research shows that those who deviate from the assumed norm of being "white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure," are more likely to experience food insecurity (Kepkiewicz et al., 2015, p. 100). Specific populations are at a statistically higher risk of being food insecure and there are certain factors that influence this.

Food Insecurity in the United States

In 2020, the USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) found that 10.5% (13.8 million) households in the United States were food insecure, meaning they had difficulty at some point throughout the year providing an adequate quantity of food for all members of the household due to a lack of resources (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). Their data is based on the 18-question Food Security Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the United States

Bureau of the Census in December 2020 (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). The ERS classifies households without children as food insecure if they report three or more food insecure conditions, whereas households with children are classified as food insecure if they report two or more food insecure conditions (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). Food insecure households are further categorized as having either low food security or very low food security, with the dichotomy between the two relying on the "extent and character of the adjustments the household makes to its eating patterns and food intake" (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021, p. 3). Households with low food security report multiple indications of difficulties acquiring food and reduced diet quality but little to no indications of reduced food intake, whereas households with very low food security report multiple indications of reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns due to inadequate resources for food (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). Low food secure households and very low food secure households were combined in the 10.5% (13.8 million) households in the United States that were found to be food insecure in 2020 (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). Nationally, 6.6% (8.7 million) households were classified as having low food security, and 3.9% (5.1 million) had very low food security (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021).

Food Insecurity in North Carolina

North Carolina (Figure 1.1) was ranked 17 of the top 20 states with the highest rates of food hardship in the United States in 2016 - 2017, and the Greensboro-High Point Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) was ranked 14 of the top 20 MSAs (FRAC, 2019). FRAC (2019) defines food hardship as a measure of whether households had adequate financial resources to purchase food over the past 12 months in 2016 and 2017. Environmental factors that contribute to food insecurity in North Carolina include: the physical environment; the socio-cultural environment; and the political environment.
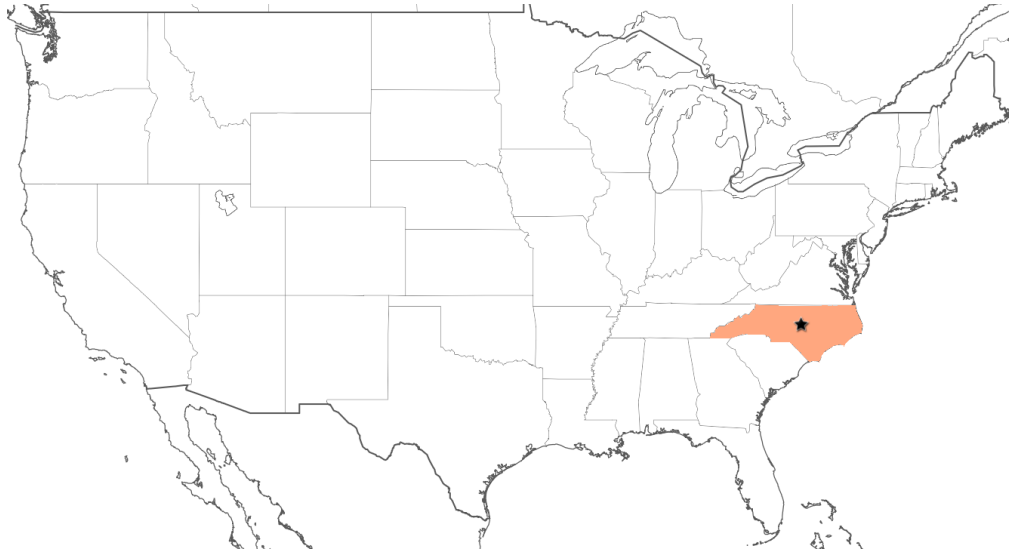
Figure 1.1. North Carolina highlighted on a map of the continental United States.

Physical environment. The physical environment refers to a geographic area and the opportunities and barriers that it allows for, such as place-based food environments in addition to the characteristics of the built environment like sidewalks and availability of public transportation (Ver Ploeg et al., 2009). Place-based food environments, referring to the agri-food systems existing within a geographical area, play a large role in food access at the community level because the agri-food systems determine the available food access options (Jang & Kim, 2018). A significant limitation at the community level is having little to no reasonable food access, also known as living in food apartheid[1].

Based on the 2000 Census of the Population data, researchers in 2012 designated 6,529 census tracts across the continental United States as low-income and as meeting the USDA's definition of being food deserts, translating to 10.0% of the total population living in food deserts

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[1] Throughout this thesis when referring to food apartheid in others' research, I use the terms the authors utilized in their own work, most commonly 'food desert.' Using the terms as originally used by the researchers best reflects their findings because the terms used affect how findings are interpreted.

(Dutko et al., 2012). Urban and rural food deserts differ in classification, according to the USDA, with urban food deserts existing where at least 33% of a census tract population lives more than one mile from a supermarket or food store, whereas that distance is increased to 10 miles in rural areas (Dutko et al., 2012). Multivariate analysis comparing economic and demographic characteristics of both urban and rural food desert tracts and non-food desert tracts showed that food desert tracts often have smaller populations, more abandoned or vacant homes, lower levels of education, lower average incomes, and higher rates of unemployment than non-food desert tracts (Dutko et al., 2012). However, when urban and rural tracts were separated for comparison, there was no significant difference between the two, suggesting that the physical environment alone is not the only barrier to food access; systemic marginalization also plays an important role in food access (Dutko et al., 2012).

An example of a food apartheid would be the Greensboro-High Point, NC Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), defined by the Census Bureau as areas that include central cities plus the surrounding counties with strong socio-economic relations to the central cities (FRAC, 2019). This MSA has a 19.2% rate of food hardship, as defined by the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC, 2019) as a measure of whether households had adequate financial resources to purchase food over the past 12 months in 2016 and 2017. However, the 2018 National Survey of Student Engagement found that half of the UNCG student population worries about paying their basic bills and 20% of students skip meals because they do not have enough money (Wesley-Luther, n.d. a). Furthermore, a 2017 study conducted by Wesley-Luther and the Dean for Students Office found that 34.9% of UNCG students are food insecure in a given year (Wesley-Luther, n.d. a). While this statistic is in line with the Hope Center's five-year findings of students experiencing food insecurity at a rate of between 33% and 42% at four-year institutions, it is significantly

higher than the local MSA rate of food hardship (19.2%) (Baker-Smith et al., 2020; FRAC, 2019). Although FRAC ranks the Greensboro-High Point, NC MSA at number 14 on the list of MSAs with the worst food hardship rates in 2016 - 2017, the UNCG rate of 34.9% shows that there is a concentrated rate of food insecurity specifically on the university campus, shown in Figure 1.2 (FRAC, 2019; Wesley-Luther, n.d. b).
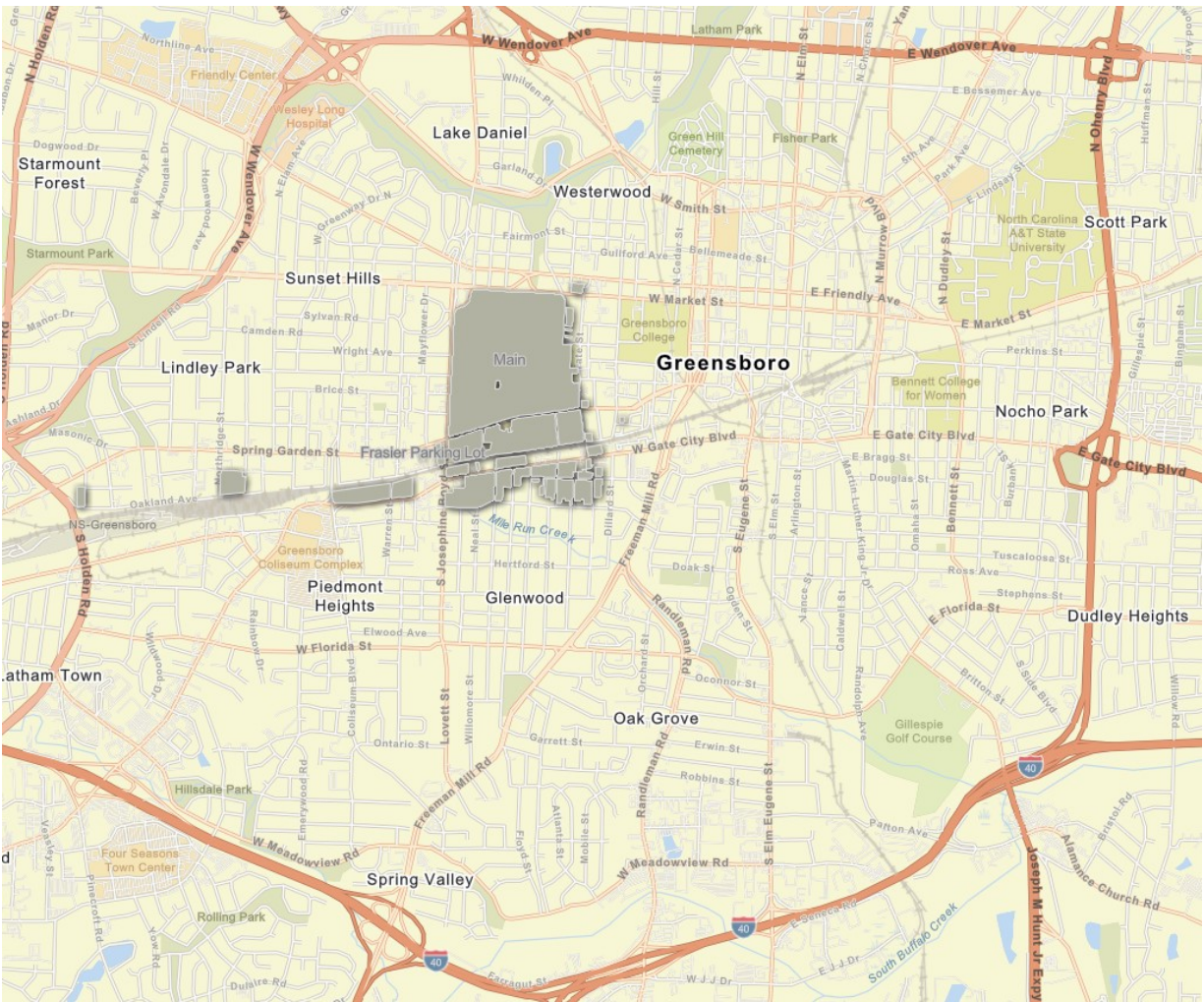
Figure 1.2. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) campus positioned within the Greensboro metropolitan area.

Socio-cultural environment. Socio-cultural environmental factors include those within immediate physical surroundings, social relationships, and social groups as created by distinguishing categories within society (Barnett & Casper, 2001; Manuel, 2007). For the LGBTQIA2S+ community specifically, the socio-cultural environment of North Carolina is greatly influenced by factors such as power relations, including social inequality and religious institutions and practices, largely due to the state's location in the American South (Barnett & Casper, 2001). The South is part of a region often referred to as the "Bible Belt," known for conversative views on gender and sexuality, in addition to an intense devotion to church (Worthen, 2018). Those beliefs often include acute stigmatization, or societal disapproval, driven by a strong narrative of the "sin" and "immorality" related to being in the LGBTQIA2S+ community, as well as overall societal rejection of those who are different from the perceived norm due to misconceptions and fear (Worthen, 2018). This stigma is present in every aspect of life from birth through adulthood, and is often internalized, especially during and after the initial process of coming out (Worthen, 2018). In fact, research has shown that people in the American South are the most likely to have negative attitudes towards the LGBTQIA2S+ community compared to the rest of the country (Worthen, 2018). Compared to students aged 13 to 21 attending school in other regions, students in the South were found to be the most likely to experience anti-LGBTQIA2S+ discrimination due to school policies and practices, more likely to be verbally or physically harassed or assaulted based on sexual orientation or gender expression, and least likely to have access to LGBTQIA2S+-related resources and supports (Kosciw et al., 2015). These minority stressors can have a significant impact on health and quality of life, positioning LGBTQIA2S+ individuals to have an increased risk of health disparities such as poor physical and mental health, however a lack of culturally sensitive and competent care often

exacerbates these disparities by driving said individuals to avoid preventative and regular healthcare (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2017; Frost et al., 2022; Hoy-Ellis, 2016; Rowan & Beyer, 2017; Vale & Bisconti, 2021).

Political environment. The LGBTQIA2S+ community experiences a different political environment in North Carolina than their non-LGBTQIA2S+ counterparts. Many LGBTQIA2S+ individuals are excluded from the protections that come with legislative policies and programs, such as those for employment, which lessens their ability to sustain adequate food access through financial uncertainty. To further illustrate how the American South creates blanketed oppression towards gender minority individuals, an example of a North Carolinian law with clear ramifications is presented: the 2016 House Bill 2 (HB2), or the Bathroom Bill. House Bill 2 came on the heels of the Charlotte City Council's decision to allow transgender individuals to choose to use public bathrooms that correspond to their gender identity (Harrison, 2016). North Carolina passed HB2 as a counter to the ordinance and to further restrict anti-discrimination policies. In terms of employee rights, North Carolina is an employment-at-will state, meaning that employers can treat their employees as they see fit and fire employees at will for any or no reason if there is no specific law to protect employees or there is no employment contract providing protection (North Carolina Department of Labor, n.d.). Given that sexual orientation and gender identity were not explicitly protected under state or federal law, local city, town, and county ordinances had been in place throughout the state to expand protections for LGBTQIA2S+ community (Gordon et al., 2016). HB2 nullified these existing ordinances and took away the rights of cities and counties to pass and establish their own in-house anti-discrimination policies and practices and to put certain anti-discrimination requirements on private contractors (Gordon et al., 2016).

Without employment protections, members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community face significant ramifications of stigmatization. At the political level, public policies such as HB2 contributed to loss of self-esteem and confidence for LGBTQIA2S+ individuals. Such policies showed that policymakers and employers did not care about the well-being of employees and would not protect them. In addition to the mental and emotional declines in well-being that contribute to the prevalence of depression, its consequences, and its severity, the lack of protections also endangered the financial livelihoods of LGBTQIA2S+ employees, which also jeopardized their housing, healthcare, and food access stability. This perfect storm of echoing ramifications from such a conservative political environment contributed to harmful consequences for members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. Although this regressive period cannot be reclaimed, some hope does exist to improve conditions.

While HB2 was partially repealed in April 2017, the ban on local governments passing non-discrimination ordinances was left in effect until December 2020 (Silva, 2017). In the time since the ban's expiry, several towns, cities, and counties have introduced and approved ordinances to protect individuals in the LGBTQIA2S+ community against discrimination from businesses and public services, such as lodging and dining, although there is still a great deal of ground to cover to make up for the past several years of lacking protections and politically-backed discriminatory practices (Robertson, 2021). Additionally, soon after the ban's expiry, the United States House of Representatives passed the Equality Act in February 2021, which is intended to amend existing civil rights laws to add sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes (Freking, 2021). While the Act faces significant opposition in the United States Senate at present, successful passage of this legislation would create uniform protections for the LGBTQIA2S+ community across the country, rather than having protections vary by state

(Freking, 2021). Should the Equality Act not pass, North Carolina will be solely responsible for recovering post-HB2. Legal protections are vitally important because discrimination in employment, healthcare, and housing access impacts economic stability and long-term physical and mental health outcomes.

1.3.3 Determinants of Food Insecurity

Economic Factors

Economic conditions that influence a household's available resources to acquire food are strongly associated with food insecurity. Factors such as household income, unemployment rates, poverty rates, and public assistance benefits received play a key role in a household's ability to meet its food needs (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021; Dutko et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2022). In 2020, the USDA found that over half (53.4%) of households experiencing food insecurity were low-income households with reported incomes below 185% of the poverty threshold. The poverty threshold was set at $26,246 USD for a family of four (two adults and two children), and so low-income households had an income of less than $48,555 USD (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). Households with incomes below 185% of the poverty threshold had a rate of food insecurity of 28.6%, with 17.8% having low food security and 10.8% having very low food security (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). Over half of all food-insecure households (55%) and specifically of households with very low food security (50.6%) reported receiving assistance from one of the three largest Federal nutrition assistance programs during the month before the USDA December 2020 food security survey: the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), or free or reduced-price school meals; and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Woman, Infants, and Children (WIC) (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021).

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the most significant Federal nutrition assistance program in the United States to provide food assistance to low- and no-income individuals, and has been shown to alleviate food insecurity by 20% to 35% (Gates, 2014; Wilson et al., 2020a). An estimated 41.6% of food-insecure households and 42.5% of households classified as having very low food security reported participating in SNAP (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). The second most utilized Federal nutrition assistance program was NSLP with 19.5% of food-insecure households and 12.9% of households with very low food security participating (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). Women or children in 8.4% of food-insecure households and in 4.2% of households with very low food security utilized WIC to receive food vouchers (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). However, each of these Federal nutrition assistance programs has its own set of qualification requirements, including guidelines for recipients' gross incomes in relation to the federal poverty line (FPL) and criteria that account for all household assets (Chang et al., 2017; Patterson et al., 2020b). Those who have a gross household income above the FPL but are still low-income are more likely to recurrently use community-based emergency food assistance services, such as food pantries and soup kitchens (Patterson et al., 2020b).

Geospatial Positionality

Geospatial positionality or location can greatly influence rates of food insecurity. Of all food-insecure households, those in the Northeast (9.3%), Midwest (9.5%), and West (9.5%) were found to have a significantly lower than average rate of food insecurity, whereas households in the South were significantly higher than the US average at 12.3% (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). This data is consistent with the 2018 analysis of the Gallup-Sharecare Well-Being Index data by the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), which identified the Southeast and Southwest

regions of the United States as defined by Food and Nutrition Services to have the highest rates of food hardship (Food Research & Action Center [FRAC], 2019). Of the top 20 states with the worst rates of food hardship, eight were in the Southeast and five were in the Southwest (FRAC, 2019). Looking more locally at Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), defined as areas that include central cities plus the surrounding counties with strong socio-economic relations to the principal cities, 10 were in the Southeast and seven in the Southwest (FRAC, 2019). While there is no one single shared characteristic among the Southern United States to explain these findings, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles data from the United States Census Bureau does show that there is a higher concentration of non-white individuals, higher unemployment rates, and lower educational attainment rates in the South as compared to other regions (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

Demographic Characteristics

The risk of food insecurity can vary according to the demographic characteristics of a household, especially when those characteristics are not in alignment with the assumed societal norm (Kepkiewicz et al., 2015). An analysis of lived experiences with meeting nutritional needs shows that decreased food access and security is the result of contemporary biopolitics in which institutional influences create uneven access to vital resources that disproportionately negatively impact historically marginalized households (Carney, 2014; Kapilashrami & Marsden, 2018). For example, of the 13.8 million American households found to be food insecure in 2020, 7.7 million (55.8%) were households with Black, non-Hispanic, and Hispanic household reference persons (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021).

Another group at increased risk for food insecurity is households with children, found to experience food insecurity at a rate of 14.8% in 2020 (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). Within that

category, 15.3% were households with children under 6 years of age and 44% were single-parent households (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). Among single-parent households, 27.7% were headed by a single woman and 16.3% by a single man; no data was available on single-parent households headed by transgender, non-binary, or gender variant individuals (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). In comparison to the prevalence for all households with children in 2020 (0.8%), very low food security among children was found to be significantly more prevalent in households headed by a single woman (1.7%) and less in households headed by different or same sex couples (0.5%) (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021).

The LGBTQIA2S+ community and the college and university student population are also considered at an increased risk for food insecurity, though limited research has been conducted to date on either group. Studies show that 29% of American LGBTQIA2S+ adults experienced food insecurity in 2014, and that 39% of college and university students reported experiencing previous 30-day food insecurity in 2020 (Gates, 2014; Baker-Smith et al., 2020). These statistics are significantly higher than the US household average (10.5%), suggesting that both groups have exacerbated degrees of food insecurity, which is the primary focus of this thesis.

1.3.4 Food Insecurity and Identity

Food security policies tend to cater only to historically dominant groups, leaving those that deviate from the assumed demographic norm at an increased risk of experiencing food insecurity due to systemic identity-specific minority stressors (Kepkiewicz et al., 2015). There were few population-level health-related studies that looked at either the LGBTQIA2S+ community or the college and university student populations until recently, perpetuating systemic marginalization of these groups by failing to identify their agri-food needs (Baker-Smith et al., 2020; Gonzales & Henning-Smith, 2017; Nazmi et al., 2019). Although there is a

lack of research on the prevalence of food insecurity for each group and especially little to no data on the root causes contributing to their rates of food insecurity, there is research showing that both the LGBTQIA2S+ community and the college and university student population experience systemic identity-specific minority stressors that position them at an increased risk of basic needs insecurity (Kepkiewicz et al., 2015; Willis, 2019).

Food Insecurity in the LGBTQIA2S+ Community

The LGBTQIA2S+ community faces limitations to food access, some of which are shared with their cisgender, heterosexual counterparts, and some of which are unique to the community. At younger ages, individuals in the LGBTQIA2S+ community grow up feeling different from their family of origin or household, exacerbated by underlying sentiments of rejection and judgment from their families, friends, peers, and teachers (Abramovich, 2012). Those sentiments have even greater impact when they manifest beyond creating tense or even hostile living spaces and decreased social support networks, escalating to higher rates of housing insecurity for LGBTQIA2S+ youth who are less likely to have options for alternative accommodations (Abramovich, 2012; Applied Survey Research, 2017; Johnson, 2018; Romero et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2020b). Youth are also less likely to have an established chosen family, or a network of friends that act as a family, outside of their family of origin or household to act as a support system to buffer against the negative effects associated with social isolation (Abramovich, 2012; Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2013). While these characteristics may change as LGBTQIA2S+ individuals age, there are additional factors that impact food security, especially for those who are also situated within one or more additional historically marginalized communities.

Patterson et al. (2020a) conducted a study at the intersection of women's race and sexual orientation to look at the population-level prevalence of food insecurity, the relative prevalence of food insecurity in black and white sexual minority women versus white heterosexual women, and the excess prevalence of food insecurity due to belonging to two or more systemically marginalized groups. They found that 9.85% of white heterosexual women in the United States experienced food insecurity over the past 12 months, compared to 24.16% of white sexual minority women (Patterson et al., 2020a). However, when Patterson et al. (2020a) looked at the intersection of race and sexual orientation with black sexual minority women, they found a rate of 38.07%, an increase of 386% over their white heterosexual counterparts. Their study shows that not only do individual markers of identity and distinction affect food access, but the intersectionality of those markers can drastically affect food access and, consequently, health. In an attempt to mitigate barriers to food access, many LGBTQIA2S+ individuals turn to public food assistance programs, such as supplemental nutrition financial programs and community-based emergency food assistance services.

Approximately 21% of sexual minority adults received benefits through SNAP in 2013 and sexual minority individuals were more likely to participate in SNAP than their heterosexual counterparts (Gates, 2014; Patterson et al., 2020b). Among transgender and cisgender adults, food insufficiency was found to affect transgender adults at a rate of 19.9%, compared to 8.3% of cisgender adults (Conron & O'Neill, 2021). However, less than one-third (28.7%) of income-eligible transgender adults reported that they or a household member currently received SNAP, with their cisgender peers reporting at 38.5% (Conron & O'Neill, 2021). For transgender adults specifically, a barrier to enrollment in public benefits programs like SNAP is obtaining identity documents that align with a person's gender presentation, as prior negative experiences like

verbal harassment and being denied benefits or service on the basis of being transgender can inhibit seeking food resources (Conron & O'Neill, 2021). In an effort to mitigate barriers to benefits and services and promote equitable access for LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a policy in May 2022 to improve equitable access to SNAP by including discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in the prohibition against sex discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Cheyne, 2022). Given how recent this policy was enacted, there is no current data on its effects, if any, thus far. In addition to or instead of supplemental nutrition financial programs, many individuals in need turn to community-based emergency food assistance services.

Oftentimes, community-based emergency food assistance services like food pantries and soup kitchens are a vital source of food access, but a lack of comprehensive coverage and support from the political environment threatens this access by failing to protect LGBTQIA2S+ individuals from discriminatory practices (Abramovich, 2012; Patterson et al., 2020b). Most community-based emergency food assistance services in the United States are run by faith-based organizations, which may display pervasive anti-LGBTQIA2S+ bias (Patterson et al., 2020a; Russomanno & Jabson Tree, 2020; Wilson et al., 2020a). Additionally, the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) and related state laws allow institutions, such as food banks and community-based emergency food assistance services, to deny services to community members based on religious beliefs (Russomanno & Jabson Tree, 2020). While research suggests that personal pride in one's gender identity or sexual orientation may buffer against potential issues of discrimination or transphobia while utilizing local community-based emergency food assistance services, anti-LGBTQIA2S+ bias can decrease available resources even further for already systemically marginalized individuals (Russomanno & Jabson Tree, 2020). At the time

of this study, there is no definitive data on if or how the USDA's expansion of protections under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 will impact the RFRA.

Food Insecurity on Campuses

While food insecurity among college students has been a known public health issue for many years, it was not until 2009 when Chapparo et al. (2009) published their 2006 study from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa that the topic appeared in literature. When the post-Great Recession economic landscape saw an increase in the gap between financial aid packages and actual costs of higher education with the rising costs of tuition, basic needs insecurity among college students gained traction in the media (Nazmi et al., 2019). Many students pursue higher education to increase job options, learn new skills, and explore their passions, but basic needs insecurity compromises their ability to succeed at two- and four-year institutions alike in the United States (Baker-Smith et al., 2020). Basic needs insecurity refers to an environment in which basic needs are not being met, including: access to nutritious and sufficient food; safe, secure, and adequate housing; sustainable mental and physical healthcare; affordable technology and transportation; personal hygiene resources; and childcare and related needs (The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice [The Hope Center], 2021). The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice administers the nation's largest, longest-running annual assessment of basic needs insecurity among college students: the #RealCollege Survey (Baker-Smith et al., 2020). When the #RealCollege Survey was established in 2015, no federal or state government agency was collecting data on students' basic needs insecurity, and so The Hope Center created this survey to fill that gap by evaluating access to affordable food and housing among college students (Baker-Smith et al., 2020; The Hope Center, 2021). Using this survey, they collect and report on the security of students' basic needs each year, highlighting three

primary measures of basic needs insecurity that students face: food insecurity; housing insecurity; and homelessness (The Hope Center, 2021).

In the fall of 2019, The Hope Center administered its fifth iteration of the #RealCollege Survey with expanded questions to collect data on transportation, childcare, stress, and mental health, and their report includes cumulative evidence on campus basic needs insecurity from five surveys between 2015 and 2019 (Baker-Smith et al., 2020). From the almost 167,000 students from 171 public two-year institutions and 56 public four-year institutions that responded to their 2019 #RealCollege Survey, the Hope Center found that 39% of respondents were food insecure in the prior 30 days (Baker-Smith et al., 2020). When considering the data collected from 2015 to 2019, their findings showed that rates of food insecurity among students at two-year institutions ranged from 42% to 56% and from 33% to 42% at four-year institutions (Baker-Smith et al., 2020). Additionally, The Hope Center found that food insecurity was more prevalent in students of historically marginalized racial or ethnic backgrounds, especially Indigenous (60%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (55%), and Black students (54%) (Baker-Smith et al., 2020). Rates of food insecurity were found to be the lowest amongst male (35%) or heterosexual students (37%) and highest among non-binary (55%), transgender (52%), and bisexual students (50%) (Baker-Smith et al., 2020). The 2019 #RealCollege Survey also showed a higher rate of food insecurity for part-time students (41%) and students who are former foster youth (62%) or returning citizens (59%) (Baker-Smith et al., 2020).

1.4 Methodology and Methods

In this study, I utilize a qualitative, community-based methodology and methods of Photovoice and follow-up semi-structured interviews for gathering data. The students, staff, and faculty at UNCG are served by the Spartan Open Pantry (SOP), which is currently located off-

campus at College Place United Methodist Church (Figure 1.3). The SOP provides services including a client choice food pantry and a to-go hot meal service, in addition to a clothing pantry that is currently unavailable due to COVID-19. The client choice food pantry is set up to mimic a traditional grocery store with shelving, a fridge, and a freezer, and clients are given shopping bags so that they can walk through the pantry and choose their own food and non-food items. The SOP assisted in disseminating information about the study.

1.4.1 Study Population and Sampling Method

Eight self-identified LGBTQIA2S+ students currently enrolled at UNCG participated in this research. No other requirements were placed upon participants to promote a diverse array of experiences from participants with varied demographics and backgrounds. Self-selection sampling was used to allow individuals to choose to reveal their LGBTQIA2S+ identities, which decreased the influence of any biases or preconceived notions of real or assumed LGBTQIA2S+ identities. Information about the study was disseminated through multiple channels at UNCG, including through the SOP, the Office of Leadership and Civic Engagement (OLCE), the LGBTQ+ Education & Research Network (LEARN) listserv, master's and doctoral listservs, and more. (See Appendices 5.1 and 5.2 for recruitment materials, Appendices 5.3 through 5.5 for information sheets).
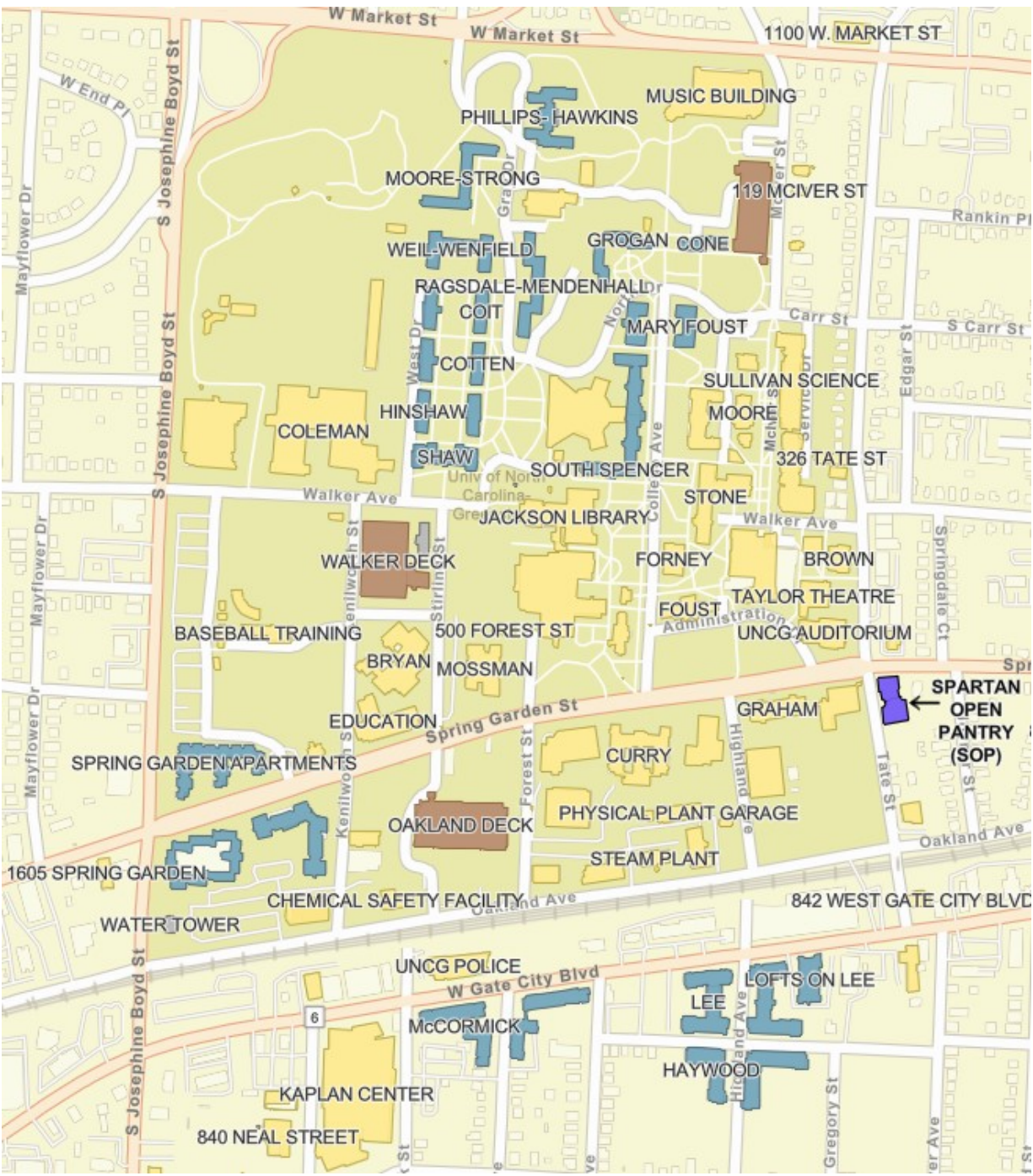
Figure 1.3. The Spartan Open Pantry (SOP) shown in relation to the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) campus.

1.4.2 Data Collection

Data were gathered through two iterative phases. In Phase 1, participants used the

PhotoVoice method to identify and take photos of local physical, socio-cultural, and political

environmental factors influencing their food access. Following the PhotoVoice activity, in Phase

2, I conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with each participant to discuss their

PhotoVoice materials, and if and how their self-identification as LGBTQIA2S+ has impacted

their initial and sustained food access. This phased approach was designed to promote participant

self-reflection on the impacts that place-based food environments have on food access and to

identify any overlap between environmental factors and personal identities in the context of their

individual relationships with food and food access.

PhotoVoice Activity

PhotoVoice was chosen to prompt participants to explore local physical, sociocultural,

and political environmental factors and their perceived influence on food access. Wang and

Burris (1997) define PhotoVoice as an image-based technique by which individuals can

"identify, represent, and enhance their community" through capturing their surroundings and

experiences in photographs (p. 369). PhotoVoice was used as a participatory method to prompt

reflection on the environmental spheres that participants interact with (Kapilashrami & Marsden,

2018).

Each participant was given an orientation on the PhotoVoice technique during their initial

information meeting. Definitions of each environmental sphere and examples of various

environmental factors were given to each participant to guide them through the activity. As

participants took photos, they were asked to also take notes on why they chose to photograph

that particular environmental factor. Prior to the semi-structured interview, each participant sent me their PhotoVoice materials, both the photos and their attached notes, for me to review in advance.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Following the PhotoVoice activity, I conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with each participant. These interviews were used to help understand participants' perspectives on their environments through reflecting and elaborating on their PhotoVoice materials with an emphasis on how each photo represents an opportunity or barrier to food access. Interviews were also used to explore how participants' individual LGBTQIA2S+ identities affected their food access and to identify any overlap between environmental factors and LGBTQIA2S+ identities.

Interviews were semi-structured with the use of open-ended questions (Appendix 5.4) and general topics to promote free flow of conversation. The same questions were used for each interview with allowances made for spontaneous topics that may have come up throughout the dialogue or overlap between the questions or answers provided. I first reviewed the PhotoVoice materials with each participant to see if they had any additional thoughts or experiences that they wanted to share in relation to the environmental factors they identified in each photo. Then, I asked participants to reflect on if and how their self-identification as LGBTQIA2S+ has impacted their initial and sustained food access and if there was anything else they would like to share relevant to the study. Interviews spanned between 15 minutes and 76 minutes, with an average duration of 34 minutes. All interviews were conducted via Zoom Cloud Meetings and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The audio transcription feature of Zoom Cloud Meetings was enabled to create preliminary transcripts that were then reviewed and edited for accuracy.

1.4.3 Data Analysis

All data (PhotoVoice materials and interviews) were subjected to thematic analysis, a data-analytic process of identifying, coding, and analyzing data into patterns, or themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Specifically, Stenner's thematic decomposition analysis was used, being a thematic data analysis process that attempts to separate the text into themes reflective of individuals' social positions (as cited in Ussher & Mooney-Somers, 2000). Thematic decomposition analysis is an appropriate data analysis tool to identify themes in data from qualitative research methods such as PhotoVoice (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

When starting to analyze the data, I reviewed participant interview transcripts and PhotoVoice materials (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Then, I conducted preliminary coding line-by-line alongside data extracts, which were identified within and extracted from a data item to then analyze, such as the individual answer a participant provided to a specific question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A code identifies "a feature of the data that appears interesting to the analyst" regarding the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Following the initial coding, I aggregated the codes into a singular document to group like codes into fewer main categories for meaningful, yet manageable data analysis, and to organize them based on potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I then reviewed those potential themes to ensure all of the codes fit within the theme before refining the themes to produce an accurate representation of the data set based upon my research question and the available literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is of note that thematic decomposition analysis is an interactive process and so codes and themes changed throughout the analysis process to accurately represent the data. Additionally, coding was done by hand without the use of a software program.

Once the themes were refined, I divided them for further analysis and development into one primary academic paper, presented in Chapter 2, in addition to topics to be explored in future papers not included in this thesis.

1.4.4 Ethical Considerations

An ethical consideration for this research includes informed consent. Informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to the initial information meeting, as well as before the one-on-one semi-structured interview. During the initial information meeting, I went through an information and informed consent sheet (see Appendix 5.3) with each participant to explain and obtain verbal consent for the study procedures. This sheet explains the research topic and purpose, how data from the interviews would be used, the benefits and risks of participation, confidentiality, and how participants would be able to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. I discussed with participants that absolute confidentiality of their participation and data provided through Zoom Cloud Meetings could not be guaranteed due to the limited protections of internet access. However, I encouraged all participants to take any measures they felt necessary to promote their confidentiality, including where they chose to be when participating in either Zoom Cloud Meeting session and whether they turned their cameras on during said sessions.

1.5 Summary and Outline of Subsequent Chapters

This chapter included an overview of key issues and concepts in addition to current research relevant to this research study, theoretical frameworks that guide this research, methodology and methods used, and the university setting context to situate the study. In Chapter Two: Gender, Sexuality, and Food Access: An Exploration of Food Security with LGBTQIA2S+ University Students, I analyze data collected from eight self-identified LGBTQIA2S+ students at

the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. In this chapter, I identify similarities and

differences in participants' perspectives of factors shaping their food access. In Chapter Three:

Summary and Conclusions, I provide a summation and final analysis of this research and its

implications for future research.

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Chapter Two: Gender, Sexuality, and Food Access: An Exploration of Food Security with LGBTQIA2S+ University Students

This manuscript will be submitted as a research article to the *Journal of the Agriculture and Human Values*. The style of manuscript is according to journal requirements.

Gender, Sexuality, and Food Access: An Exploration of Food Security with LGBTQIA2S+

University Students

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Statements and Declarations

Abstract

Although research has been limited to date, food insecurity has been shown to be more pervasive in the USA among the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, agender, asexual, and Two-Spirit (LGBTQIA2S+) community, affecting 29% of adults or 2.4 million people annually (Gates, 2014). College and university students also experience statistically significantly higher rates of food insecurity than non-students, with 39% of students reporting experiencing previous 30-day food insecurity in 2020 (Baker-Smith et al., 2020). The purpose of this research is to examine food access at the intersection of the LGBTQIA2S+ community and the university and college student population, as told by the community itself. A qualitative, community-based approach and methods of PhotoVoice and semi-structured interviews with eight self-identified LGBTQIA2S+ university students studying at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) are used to explore how participants' individual LGBTQIA2S+ identities, as well physical, socio-cultural, and political environmental factors, impact food access. Data were analyzed using thematic decomposition analysis guided by intersectionality and queer theories. LGBTQIA2S+ identities were found to significantly impact food access, which was further influenced by the physical, socio-cultural, and political environments. Barriers to food access include experiences with discrimination on- and off-campus, poor support systems, a lack of full-selection grocery stores on- or near campus, religious influences, the stigma associated with needing food assistance, mental and physical health conditions, financial constraints, time limitations, and lacking transportation options. Understanding the intersectionality of LGBTQIA2S+ students experiences and providing relevant and effective support is needed to improve equitable access to nutritious and affordable foods. The findings of this research provide novel insights into food insecurity, an issue that is increasingly influencing the health and well-being of LGBTQIA2S+ university students.

Keywords: LGBTQIA2S+; university students; food insecurity; food access; health; intersectionality theory; queer theory; PhotoVoice; thematic analysis

2.1 Introduction

In the United States, 37 million individuals, or over 11.5% of the population, reported experiencing food insecurity in 2020, with one-third suffering from disrupted eating patterns, reduced food intake, and nutritional insufficiency due to lack of finances and resources (Patterson et al., 2020a). Individuals outside of the demographic norm, being "white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure," are more likely to experience food insecurity due to hierarchical relations of power steering food policy, attempting to change individuals rather than address sources of inequity (Kepkiewicz et al., 2015; Lorde, 2016). Systemically marginalized individuals are uniquely situated within systems of oppression due to specific markers of identity and distinction, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or socio-economic class (Manuel, 2007). Given how positionality affects availability and access to food, food security policies designed and implemented in ways that address systemic identity-specific minority stressors will maximize their effectiveness.

The consequences of contemporary food security policies catering to dominant groups are highlighted when focusing on the experiences of a specific systemically marginalized group, such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, agender, asexual, and Two Spirit (LGBTQIA2S+) community. More than 29% of adults in the LGBTQIA2S+ community, or 2.4 million people, experience food insecurity each year (Gates, 2014). LGBTQIA2S+ adults are 1.7 times more likely to have diminished food access for themselves or their households in comparison to non-LGBTQIA2S+ adults (Gates, 2014; Patterson et al., 2020a). Despite these statistics, there is a lack of in-depth research on factors influencing food insecurity amongst LGBTQIA2S+ university students. To address this gap, this research examines the food insecurity experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ students at the University of North

Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) and physical, socio-cultural, and political factors that pose barriers and create opportunities to improve food access.

The UNCG is a four-year university located in North Carolina (see Figure 2.1, Figure 2.2), a state with a food insecurity rate of 16.4% in 2016-2017 (Food Research & Action Center [FRAC], 2019). In 2017, 34.9% of students at UNCG were food insecure, and 20% of students reported skipping meals because they did not have enough money in 2018 (Wesley-Luther, n.d. a). To address food insecurity on campus, the Spartan Open Pantry (SOP) was established in 2009 by Wesley-Luther, a non-profit campus ministry. The SOP serves students, staff, and faculty of UNCG and students of Greensboro College, and is located off-campus at College Place United Methodist Church (Figure 2.3) (Wesley-Luther, n.d. b). The SOP is open twice a week in the evening and provides a client choice food pantry that mimics a traditional grocery store. Individuals choose their own food and non-food items, including a to-go hot meal service offering one entree and one or two side dishes with vegetarian options, a water bottle, and condiment packets.
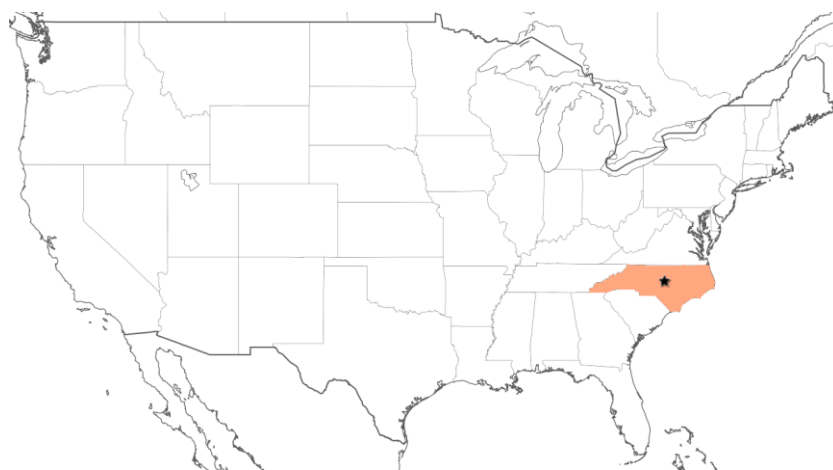
Figure 2.1. North Carolina highlighted on a map of the continental United States.
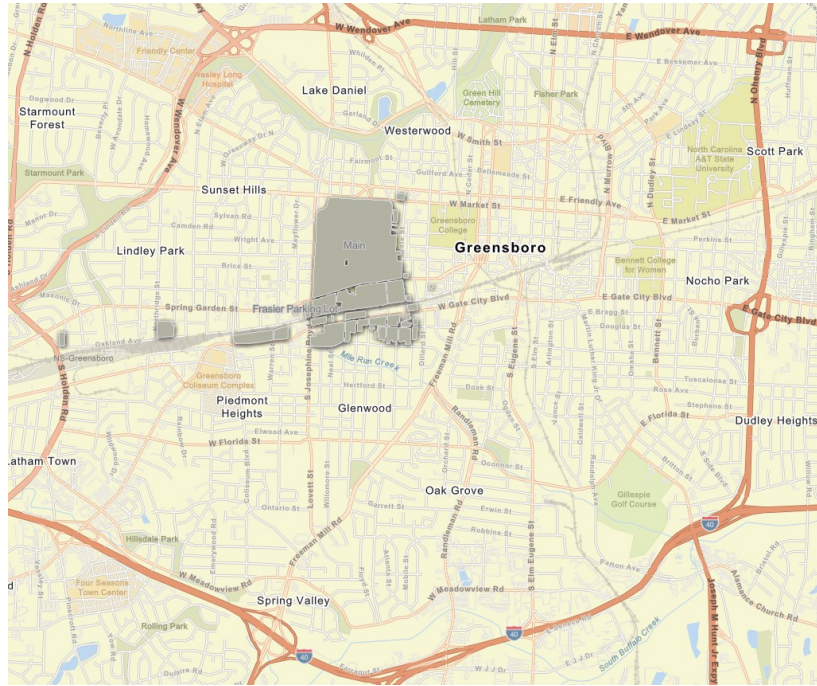
Figure 2.2. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) campus positioned within the Greensboro metropolitan area.
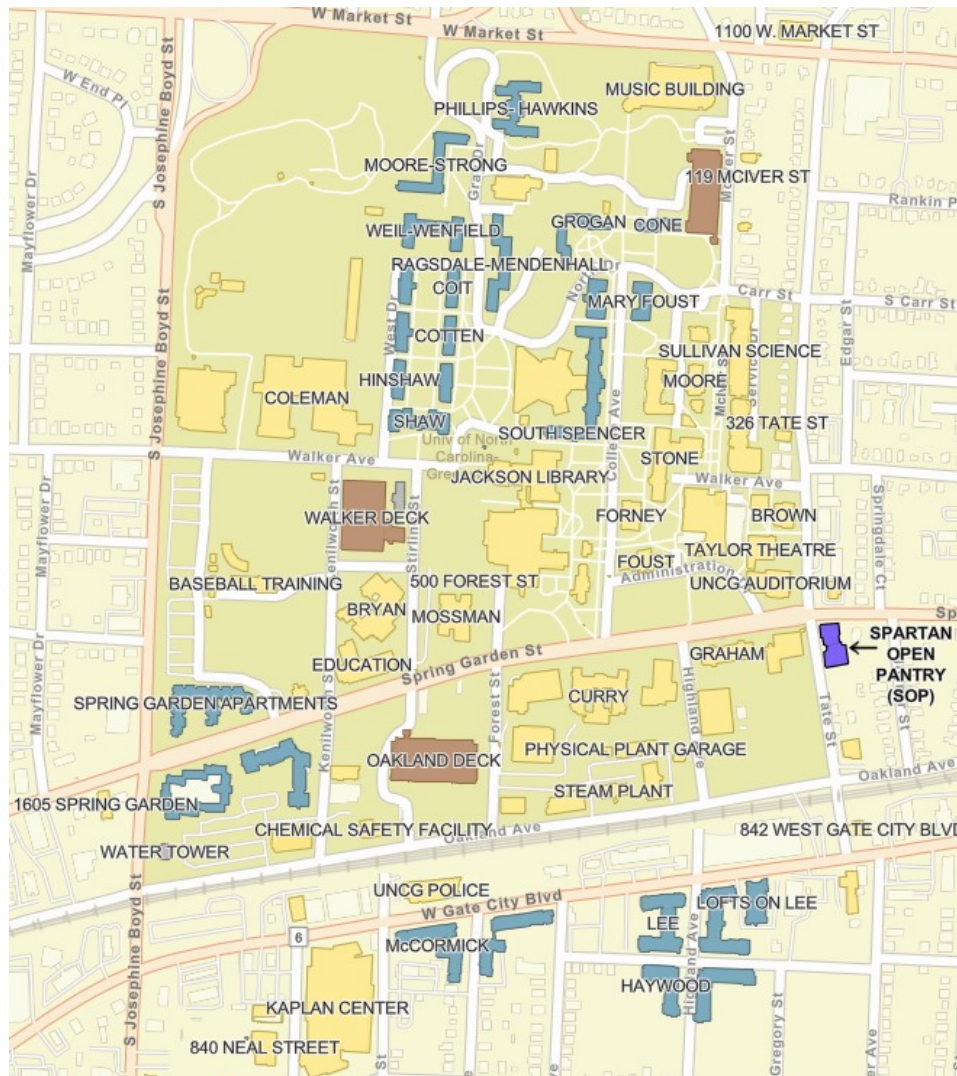
Figure 2.3. The Spartan Open Pantry (SOP) shown in relation to the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) campus.

I selected UNCG as the site of my research because, having worked there, I am

personally familiar with UNCG and the SOP. As a genderfluid, queer researcher born and raised

in North Carolina, I wanted to fully capture LGBTQIA2S+ individuals' experiences in relation to

the positionality of UNCG within the American South, the region of the United States with the

highest rate of food insecurity (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). While there is no single shared

characteristic among the southern states to explain the high incidence of food insecurity, there is a higher concentration of non-white individuals, higher unemployment rates, and lower educational attainment rates in the South compared to other regions (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

The purpose of this research is to examine food access at the intersection of the LGBTQIA2S+ community and the university and college student population, as told by the community itself. Intersectionality theory and queer theory informed the development of the methodology and methods, as well as subsequent data analysis. Both theories were chosen to explore food access of individuals who identify simultaneously within different social positions: the LGBTQIA2S+ community as well as the university student population. While intersectionality theory has been used more prevalently than queer theory, few if any food studies research have utilized either theoretical framework. To my knowledge, the findings of this study represent the first evidence of community-based food studies research conducted with the guidance of both intersectionality and queer theories. Intersectionality theory examines ways individuals occupy multiple social positions simultaneously, creating complexities in how they interact with the world. This theory challenges the established notion that individual-level factors and failings are the reason for poor health and food insecurity, as opposed to decreased food access being the result of institutional influences and contemporary biopolitics (Carney, 2014; Kapilashrami & Marsden, 2018; Manuel, 2007; Patterson et al., 2020a). Queer theory challenges exclusionary tendencies of sex, sexuality, and gender identity categories and promotes intentional self-reflexivity by the researcher (Harris, 2001; Jagose, 1996; Meyer et al., 2022). As a member of the LGBTQIA2S+ community, queer theory allowed me to mitigate power relations between myself and participants, prompting willingness for participants to share their experiences due to shared identities.

I begin with an overview of literature relevant to this examination of food insecurity among the LGBTQIA2S+ community and university students, within the context of the United States and North Carolina. I will then provide an overview of the methodology and methods followed by a presentation of key findings from the study. These findings are then analyzed in relation to the literature and guiding theoretical frameworks before providing concluding comments.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 Food Insecurity in the United States

In December 2020, the United States Bureau of the Census found 10.5% of households (13.8 million) in the United States were food insecure, meaning they had difficulty at some point throughout the year providing an adequate quantity of food for all household members household due to a lack of resources (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). Food insecure households are categorized as having either low food security or very low food security, determined by the "extent and character of the adjustments the household makes to its eating patterns and food intake" (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021, p. 3). Households with low food security report multiple indications of difficulty acquiring food and reduced diet quality but little to no indication of reduced food intake, whereas households with very low food security report multiple indications of reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns due to inadequate resources for food (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). Low and very low food secure households were combined in the 10.5% of food insecure American households (13.8 million) in 2020 (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021). Nationally, 6.6% of households (8.7 million) were classified as having low food security, and 3.9% (5.1 million) had very low food security (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021).

In the LGBTQIA2S+ Community

The LGBTQIA2S+ community faces barriers to food access, some of which are shared with their cisgender, heterosexual counterparts, and some of which are unique to the community. At younger ages, individuals in the LGBTQIA2S+ community grow up feeling different from their family of origin or household, exacerbated by underlying sentiments of rejection and judgment from their families, friends, peers, and teachers (Abramovich, 2012). Those sentiments may result in tense or even hostile living spaces and decreased social support networks and have even greater impact when they escalate to housing insecurity for youth who are less likely to have options for alternative accommodations (Abramovich, 2012). Youth are also less likely to have support systems through established chosen family, or a network of friends that act as a family outside of their family of origin or household (Abramovich, 2012). While these characteristics may change as LGBTQIA2S+ individuals age, additional factors impact food security, especially for those who are also situated within one or more other systemically marginalized communities.

Patterson et al. (2020a) conducted a study in the United States at the intersection of women's race and sexual orientation to look at the population-level prevalence of food insecurity, the relative prevalence of food insecurity in black and white sexual minority women versus white heterosexual women, and the excess prevalence of food insecurity due to belonging to two or more systemically marginalized groups. They found 9.85% of white heterosexual women experienced food insecurity over the past 12 months, compared to 24.16% of white sexual minority women (Patterson et al., 2020a). However, when Patterson et al. (2020a) looked at the intersection of race and sexual orientation with black sexual minority women, they found a rate of 38.07%, an increase of 386% over their white heterosexual counterparts. Their study

shows not only that individual markers of identity and distinction affect food access, but also the intersectionality of those markers can drastically affect food access and, consequently, health. In an attempt to mitigate barriers to food access, many LGBTQIA2S+ individuals turn to public food assistance programs, such as supplemental nutrition financial programs and community-based emergency food assistance services.

Research shows that sexual minority individuals are more likely than heterosexual individuals to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and approximately 21% of sexual minority adults received SNAP benefits in 2013 (Gates, 2014; Patterson et al., 2020b). Among transgender and cisgender adults, Conron & O'Neill (2021) found that transgender adults experienced food insecurity at a rate of 19.9%, compared to 8.3% of cisgender adults. However, less than one-third (28.7%) of income-eligible transgender adults reported they or a household member currently received SNAP, in contrast to 38.5% of cisgender adults (Conron & O'Neill, 2021). For transgender adults, a barrier to enrollment in public benefits programs like SNAP is obtaining identity documents aligning with a person's gender presentation, as prior negative experiences like verbal harassment and being denied benefits or service on the basis of being transgender inhibits seeking food resources (Conron & O'Neill, 2021). In an effort to mitigate barriers and promote equitable access to SNAP for LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a policy in May 2022 including discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in the prohibition against sex discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Cheyne, 2022). There is no data on its effects, if any, thus far. In addition to, or instead of supplemental nutrition financial programs, many individuals in need turn to community-based emergency food assistance services.

Community-based emergency food assistance services like food pantries and soup kitchens are a vital source of food access, but a lack of comprehensive coverage and support from the political environment threatens this access by failing to protect LGBTQIA2S+ individuals from discriminatory practices (Abramovich, 2012; Patterson et al., 2020b). Most community-based emergency food assistance services in the United States are run by faith-based organizations, which may display pervasive anti-LGBTQIA2S+ bias (Patterson et al., 2020b; Russomanno & Jabson Tree, 2020; Wilson et al., 2020a). Additionally, the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) and related state laws allow institutions, such as food banks and community-based emergency food assistance services, to deny services to community members based on religious beliefs (Russomanno & Jabson Tree, 2020). While research suggests personal pride in one's gender identity or sexual orientation may buffer against potential issues of discrimination or transphobia while utilizing local community-based emergency food assistance services, anti-LGBTQIA2S+ bias can decrease available resources even further for already systemically marginalized individuals (Russomanno & Jabson Tree, 2020). At the time of this study, there is no definitive data on if or how the USDA's expansion of protections under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 will impact the RFRA.

2.2.2 Food Insecurity in North Carolina

North Carolina (Figure 2.1) was ranked 17 of the top 20 states with the highest rates of food hardship in the United States in 2016 - 2017, and the Greensboro-High Point Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) was ranked 14 of the top 20 MSAs (FRAC, 2019). FRAC (2019) defines food hardship as a measure of whether households had adequate financial resources to purchase food over the past 12 months in 2016 and 2017. Factors contributing to food insecurity in North Carolina include the physical, socio-cultural, and political environments. While the exact

LGBTQIA2S+ population of North Carolina or Greensboro is unknown, population density is heavily influenced by these environmental factors, which systemically marginalized groups are especially sensitive to.

Physical Environment

The physical environment refers to a geographic area and the opportunities and barriers it allows for, such as place-based food environments in addition to characteristics of the built environment like sidewalks and availability of public transportation (Ver Ploeg et al., 2009). Place-based food environments play a large role in food access at the community level because agri-food systems determine available food access options (Jang & Kim, 2018). A significant limitation at the community level is having little to no reasonable food access, also known as living in food apartheid, previously referred to as food deserts[2]. Based on the 2000 Census of the Population data, researchers in 2012 designated 10.0% of the total population across the continental United States as living in food desert census tracts (Dutko et al., 2012). Compared to non-food desert tracts, food desert tracts often have smaller populations, more abandoned or vacant homes, lower levels of education, lower average incomes, and higher rates of unemployment (Dutko et al., 2012). However, when urban and rural food desert tracts were separated for comparison, there was no significant difference between the two, suggesting that systemic marginalization is a key determinant of food access, in addition to the physical environment (Dutko et al., 2012).

An example of food apartheid would be the Greensboro-High Point, NC Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), defined by the Census Bureau as areas that include central cities plus

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[2] Throughout this thesis when referring to food apartheid in others' research, I use the terms the authors utilized in their own work, most commonly 'food desert.' Using the terms as originally used by the researchers best reflects their findings because the terms used affect how findings are interpreted.

surrounding counties with strong socioeconomic relations to the central cities (FRAC, 2019).

This MSA was ranked 14 of MSAs with the worst food hardship rates in 2016 - 2017 with a

19.2% rate of food hardship, as defined by the Food Research & Action Center as a measure of

whether households had adequate financial resources to purchase food over the past 12 months in

2016 and 2017 (FRAC, 2019). However, the 2018 National Survey of Student Engagement

found half of the UNCG student population worries about paying their basic bills and 20% of

students skip meals due to finances (Wesley-Luther, n.d. a). Furthermore, a 2017 study

conducted by Wesley-Luther and the Dean for Students Office found 34.9% of UNCG students

are food insecure in a given year (Wesley-Luther, n.d. a). This is significantly higher than the

local MSA rate of food hardship (19.2%), showing there is a concentrated rate of food insecurity

specifically on the university campus, shown in Figure 2.2 (FRAC, 2019; Wesley-Luther, n.d. a).

Socio-Cultural Environment

Socio-cultural environmental factors include those within immediate physical

surroundings, social relationships, and social groups as created by distinguishing categories

within society (Barnett & Casper, 2001; Manuel, 2007). For the LGBTQIA2S+ community

specifically, the socio-cultural environment of North Carolina is greatly influenced by factors

such as power relations, including social inequality and religious institutions and practices,

largely due to the state's location in the American South (Barnett & Casper, 2001). The South is

part of a region referred to as the "Bible Belt," known for an intense devotion to church and

conversative views on gender and sexuality (Worthen, 2018). Those beliefs often include acute

stigmatization, or societal disapproval, driven by a strong narrative of "sin" and "immorality"

related to being in the LGBTQIA2S+ community, as well as societal rejection of those who are

different from the perceived norm due to misconceptions and fear (Worthen, 2018). This stigma

is present from birth through adulthood, and is often internalized, especially during and after the initial process of coming out (Worthen, 2018). Research has shown people in the American South are the most likely to have negative attitudes towards the LGBTQIA2S+ community compared to the rest of the country (Worthen, 2018). These minority stressors can have a significant impact on health and quality of life, positioning LGBTQIA2S+ individuals to have an increased risk of health disparities such as poor physical and mental health; however, a lack of culturally sensitive and competent care often exacerbates these disparities, causing individuals to avoid preventative and regular healthcare (Rowan & Beyer, 2017).

Political Environment

The LGBTQIA2S+ community experiences a different political environment in North Carolina than their non-LGBTQIA2S+ counterparts. Many LGBTQIA2S+ individuals are excluded from protections that come with legislative policies and programs, such as those that protect individuals from loss of employment, which lessens their ability to sustain adequate food access due to financial uncertainty. To further illustrate how the American South creates blanketed oppression towards gender minority individuals, an example of a North Carolinian law with clear ramifications is presented: the 2016 House Bill 2 (HB2), or the Bathroom Bill. House Bill 2 was passed to counter an ordinance from the Charlotte City Council allowing transgender individuals to choose to use public bathrooms corresponding to their gender identity (Harrison, 2016). Additionally, HB2 nullified existing anti-discrimination ordinances across the state and prevented cities and counties from passing and establishing their own in-house anti-discrimination policies and practices and from putting anti-discrimination requirements on private contractors (Gordon et al., 2016).

At the political level, public policies such as HB2 contribute to loss of self-esteem and confidence for LGBTQIA2S+ individuals. Such policies show policymakers and employers do not care about the well-being and protection of employees. In addition to declines in mental and emotional well-being contributing to depression, its consequences, and its severity, the lack of protections also endangers financial livelihoods of LGBTQIA2S+ employees, jeopardizing their housing, healthcare, and food access stability. While HB2 was partially repealed in April 2017, the ban on local governments passing non-discrimination ordinances remained in effect until December 2020 (Silva, 2017). Since the ban's expiry, several towns, cities, and counties have approved ordinances to protect LGBTQIA2S+ individuals against discrimination from businesses and public services, such as lodging and dining. It will take more progress for the LGBTQIA2S+ community to recover from several years of lacking protections and politically-backed discriminatory practices, though (Robertson, 2021). In February 2021, the United States House of Representatives passed the Equality Act, intended to amend existing civil rights laws to add sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes. This Act continues to face significant opposition in the United States Senate at the time of this study (Freking, 2021). Successful passage of this legislation would create uniform protections for the LGBTQIA2S+ community nationally (Freking, 2021). Legal protections are vitally important because discrimination in employment, healthcare, and housing access impacts economic stability and long-term physical and mental health outcomes.

2.3 Methodology and Methods

I utilize a qualitative, community-based methodology in this research. Participants in this study were self-identified LGBTQIA2S+ students enrolled at UNCG. Self-selection sampling was used to decrease the influence of any biases or preconceived notions of real or assumed

LGBTQIA2S+ identities. No other requirements were placed upon participants, allowing for a diverse array of experiences from participants with varied demographics and backgrounds. Information about the study was disseminated through multiple channels at UNCG, including the SOP, the Office of Leadership and Civic Engagement (OLCE), the LGBTQ+ Education & Research Network (LEARN) listserv, master's and doctoral listservs, and more. Despite this, recruitment of participants was challenging, which may have resulted from internalized stigma such as homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, as well as the stigma associated with needing food assistance. Of the eight participants recruited, in terms of gender, most identified as cisgender (n=5) and/or as female (n=5). In terms of sexual orientation, participants identified as either bisexual (n=3), lesbian (n=3), or queer (n=2). All participants were full-time students and most were enrolled in graduate studies (n=5).

The research consisted of two iterative phases for data collection. In Phase 1, participants used PhotoVoice methods to identify local physical, socio-cultural, and political environmental factors that serve as opportunities and barriers to food access.[3] PhotoVoice (Wang & Burris, 1997) was chosen as a participatory method to prompt reflection on environmental factors and their perceived influence on food access (Kapilashrami & Marsden, 2018). Each participant was given an orientation on the PhotoVoice technique during their initial information meeting and utilized their own devices, such as cell phones, for the activity. Definitions of each environment and examples of various environmental factors were provided to help guide participants. Participants were asked to take notes on why they chose to photograph particular environmental factors. Participants collectively took 65 photos during Phase 1. In Phase 2, one-on-one semi-

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[3] Wang and Burris (1997) define PhotoVoice as an image-based technique by which individuals can "identify, represent, and enhance their community" through capturing their surroundings and experiences in photographs (p. 369).

structured interviews were conducted to discuss PhotoVoice materials. Prior to the semi-structured interview, each participant submitted their photos and notes for review. Each interview began with participants reflecting and elaborating on their photos and notes to help understand their perspectives on their environments, with an emphasis on how each photo represents an opportunity or barrier to food access. Interviews were also used to explore how participants' individual LGBTQIA2S+ identities affect their food access and to identify any overlap between environmental factors and LGBTQIA2S+ identities. Semi-structured interviews lasted 15 to 75 minutes, with an average duration of 35 minutes.

All interviews were conducted via Zoom Cloud Meetings, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim. The audio transcription feature of Zoom Cloud Meetings was enabled to create preliminary transcripts that were then reviewed and cleaned for accuracy. All data (PhotoVoice materials and interviews) were subjected to Stenner's thematic decomposition analysis to identify, code, and analyze data into themes reflective of individuals' social positions (as cited in Ussher & Mooney-Somers, 2000; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding was done by hand without the use of a software program. This research was approved by the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Office for research with human subjects.

2.4 Findings

In this section, I present and analyze the data gathered through Photovoice and semi-structured interviews with the eight self-identified LGBTQIA2S+ university students enrolled at UNCG who took part in this study. Three major themes emerged from the data: (1) LGBTQIA2S+ identities and food insecurity, (2) spatial opportunities and barriers to food access: on- and off-campus, and (3) intersectional factors affecting food security. Findings associated with these themes and related sub-themes are discussed in the following sections.

2.4.1 LGBTQIA2S+ Identities and Food Insecurity

The first major theme centers on participants' experiences with food insecurity as relates to their LGBTQIA2S+ identities. While some limitations to food access this community faces are shared with other populations, this section focuses on unique challenges identified by participants. These challenges result from a combination of environmental factors and systemic marginalization.

Passing as Cisgender and/or Heterosexual

Discrimination on the basis of gender identity and/or sexual orientation, or homophobia, biphobia, and/or transphobia, significantly affects LGBTQIA2S+ individuals. Three participants spoke about how they are able to pass as cisgender and/or heterosexual, meaning someone would not look at them or their relationship and assume they were transgender and/or non-heterosexual, thereby decreasing their risk of garnering negative attention. When asked if identifying as queer and Two-Spirit had affected his initial or sustained food access, one participant said: "I personally don't feel like it's had that much of an effect. But that's also mostly because most of the time I present as a cis man, which allows me privilege in different spaces" (Participant 7). In response to the same question, a cisgender, queer participant stated:

> Personally, I don't think so. I think for many people it absolutely could be harmful. Being a straight passing man in a straight relationship, I do have a lot of the privilege of not experiencing a lot of the exploitation that other queer folks go through. … I am very lucky to say and privileged to say that my food insecurity is not impacted by my queerness. (Participant 3)

Discrimination and Microaggressions On-Campus

Participants identified UNCG as either actively participating in discrimination or passively supporting discriminatory attitudes through microaggressions, such as comments or actions that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally express a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a systemically marginalized group like the LGBTQIA2S+ community (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Staff at UNCG are not required to go through trainings focused on the LGBTQIA2S+ community like SafeZone and TransZone. One participant, who was researching the transgender community on campus, found while students felt supported by their direct academic supervisors, support was diminished or absent during interactions with others in positions of authority. For example, participants commented they often felt mistreated (e.g., the wrong pronouns placed on IDs and business cards, despite requests otherwise) and their life experiences and challenges were generally not acknowledged by UNCG staff.

If it gets to that point for a student who is transgender and they're going through their transition and exploring their transgender identity, that's gonna hit a little harder than it will hit me. Like how are you working with students in this when you keep using this type of language and passive microaggressions? (Participant 5)

Another participant spoke about UNCG's passive support of discriminatory attitudes in terms of corporations UNCG supports and provides space and funding to house on campus (see Figure 2.4). She remembered "feeling deterred" by having her main dining options aside from the cafeteria include "several companies that are either publicly anti-queer marriage or have funded right-wing political campaigns in the past" such as Chick-fil-a, Taco Bell, and Pizza Hut (Participant 6).

Figure 2.4. A list of dining options at the UNCG and respective hours of service during Spring 2022 finals

Support Systems

Support systems made up of friends, family, and other figures are important for everyone

and can influence thoughts and feelings, and affect perceptions of safety and comfort. For

LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, having an affirming support system and connection to other

LGBTQIA2S+ people promotes feelings of belonging and comfort. Most participants

characterized their support systems as affirming their identities while also positively and/or

negatively influencing their food access. Two participants lived with their partners, which

prompted feelings of support and affirmation, as well as increasing their household income and

therefore their food security. Both participants also noted related barriers, such as conserving gas

for a partner with a longer commute, hence limiting grocery shopping options, or having to

purchase often more expensive foods that a partner with food allergies could eat (see Figure 2.5).

Three participants spoke to various levels of reliance on their families for food access. Two

participants said their families were unsupportive of or uneducated about LGBTQIA2S+

identities, one of which shared:

> I was homeless before, but my mom kicked me out, and it had to do with, you know, me
>
> being bisexual. … I kind of forgot about that one. I guess it did impact me. Yes, yeah. I
>
> try not to think about that one. (Participant 2)

Figure 2.5. Gluten-free pasta for $3.29, compared to non-gluten-free pasta below for $0.99
(USD)

Employment

Participants brought up employment in relation how they are treated as LGBTQIA2S+

individuals. One participant said she was treated so poorly that she quit her job, while another

stated: "[The university] put the wrong pronouns on my business cards and my ID because I said she/they, and they just put she/her/hers. And I was like 'okay, it's already starting'" (Participant 5). A third participant spoke about lost economic opportunities resulting from unemployment related to being part of the LGBTQIA2S+ community, saying:

> ...obviously I didn't bring up the fact that I'm a lesbian in job interviews, but I think the fact that, regardless of how good I did or did not quote unquote pass, looking at background checks and employment history and stuff like, it would be very, very easy for employers to figure out that I'm trans. And I do think that's a big contributing factor to why, after I initially lost my job back in 2017, I was continuously unemployed until I started going back to school because genuinely up until the point that I was openly living as a woman, I never had any issues getting a job. I never got an interview for a job and did not immediately get the position offered to me afterwards. So that was a very new experience for me, going through like several interviews, and like not getting offered positions. And considering that the only thing that inherently changed is like 'hi, I'm trans now,' you kind of have to figure… With the lost economic opportunity of being unemployed for an extended period of time, obviously, that has an impact on my ability to access food. (Participant 8)

2.4.2 Spatial Opportunities and Barriers to Food Access: On- and Off-Campus

The UNCG is located in a food apartheid with little to no reasonable food access, so students experience additional difficulties accessing food and food stores. While spatial accessibility of food, or lack thereof, affects all students at UNCG, the LGBTQIA2S+ community experiences described below are directly influenced by their identities.

Welcoming Attitudes at the SOP

While the SOP (see Figure 2.6) is off-campus and affiliated, though not run by, UNCG, participants mentioned the SOP specifically was "very welcoming of LGBTQ people and so it feels comfortable there." Compared to other off-campus options for groceries, one participant said: "The food pantry represents one of the most readily available sources of cheap, healthy food for me. It is within walking distance, and I can carry what I get back" (Participant 7). Participants mentioned having the SOP as an option was a significant opportunity for food access, but it also highlighted shortcomings of UNCG in addressing food insecurity. One participant described the relationship between UNCG and the SOP by saying:

> [UNCG is] not actively combating food insecurity… I think there are great, really fantastic resources like the Spartan Open Pantry. But they are not a recognized part of campus because they are off-campus. And it's Wesley-Luther; it's not UNCG Spartan Open Pantry. (Participant 3)

Figure 2.6. Shelves of available food and non-food items at the SOP

Welcoming Attitudes Off-Campus within Downtown Greensboro

Two participants described downtown Greensboro as being "inclusive," "politically active," and a "queer-friendly… bubble." One participant provided a photo of the Green Bean Coffee House (see Figure 2.7) on Elm Street in downtown Greensboro and noted:

The pride and trans pride flags can be seen displayed in the window. I captured this

because I have always felt that Elm St. is an inclusive area, adorning several pride flags at

restaurants, as well as Black Lives Matter street art. (Participant 6)

For these reasons, both participants shared they prefer to visit, eat, and socialize in the downtown area when they venture off-campus.

Figure 2.7. The Green Bean Coffee House on Elm Street in downtown Greensboro

Negative Attitudes Off-Campus

Participants spoke about their discomfort with and feeling unsafe when going off-campus and away from the downtown area. Two participants specifically noted they avoid cities, towns, and general areas that make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe, decreasing their access to food stores. Describing their feelings about leaving the downtown Greensboro "bubble," one participant said: "Once I start going outside of the bubble, I get a little bit more uncomfortable like hitting Summerfield, and Burlington, and Jamestown" (Participant 5). Another participant said some areas surrounding Greensboro have an environment she avoids because: "I don't

necessarily feel like I can just kind of go in holding my partner's hand. … And that just makes me not want to go in the stores that make me feel like that" (Participant 1).

Lack of Full-Selection Grocery Stores On- and Near Campus

Most participants identified differences between foods they could purchase on-campus or just off-campus in comparison to available options further off-campus. Participants expressed the further they traveled away from either the UNCG campus or the downtown Greensboro area, the less safe they felt due to negative attitudes towards the LGBTQIA2S+ community in surrounding areas. However, a lack of full-selection grocery stores on- and near campus forces many students to leave the area they feel most safe in order to access food (see Figure 2.8).
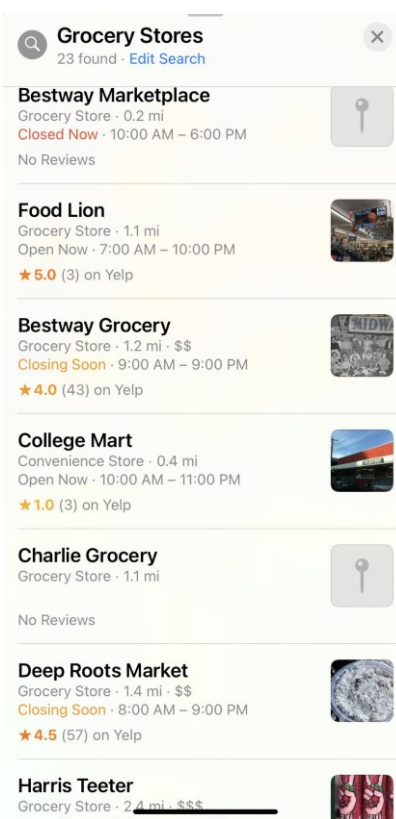

Figure 2.8. A screenshot from Google Maps of grocery and convenience stores near campus with distances

Aside from the convenience store in the student center, there is one grocery-type store on campus: Bestway Marketplace. While this store does offer food items to students and accepts Flex dollars, participants describe it as having limited and often expired stock of meat and fresh product, high prices, and most of its shelving dedicated to "snack foods, candy, convenience items, and sodas," giving the overall impression of being "less of a grocery store and more of a hybrid convenience store" (Participant 8). A secondary location, Bestway Grocery, is just over a mile from campus. Participants mentioned Bestway Grocery had a larger selection overall and better quality produce than Bestway Marketplace, but similarly has high prices and sells more prepackaged snacks and sodas. The two stores also differ in rather than devoting most of its shelving to convenience items, Bestway Grocery dedicates a great deal of its selling space to alcohol. Aside from the Bestway locations, just off campus is FireHouse Grocery, which also was described as being closer to a convenience store than a grocery store with higher prices on grocery staples. One participant noted the "closest full-size full-selection grocery store to campus is a 1.1mi walk" through a residential area without sidewalks for the entire distance that is perceived as being "more dangerous" than surrounding areas due to it being a low-income neighbourhood (Participant 8).

Religious Presence Off-Campus

Some participants expressed discomfort with religious presences in their local environments, which was noted as an aspect that was impossible to avoid in not only Greensboro but America altogether. One participant spoke of their discomfort with the close proximity of a voting poll location to a Baptist church (see Figure 2.9):

Despite state being separated from church in the U.S. centuries ago, it is still nearly impossible to avoid Christian-affiliated symbols. For example, almost every NC license

plate states "In God We Trust," as well as other federal signage. Voting is imperative for

marginalized groups to gain access to food, stability, and political representation. Thus,

the close proximity of policy to Baptist influence … can further distance LGBTQ+

people from their community and beyond. (Participant 6)

Figure 2.9. A Baptist church across the street from a voting poll location

2.4.3 Intersectional Factors Affecting Food Security

This study yielded findings that represented experiences that affect a larger population

but disproportionately position the LGBTQIA2S+ community to have diminished food access

due to systemic identity-specific minority stressors, as reflected in the findings above (Kepkiewicz et al., 2015). For example, most community-based emergency food assistance services in the United States are run by faith-based organizations, which may display pervasive anti-LGBTQIA2S+ bias (Patterson et al., 2020b; Russomanno & Jabson Tree, 2020; Wilson et al., 2020a). So while the stigma associated with needing food assistance does impact those outside of the LGBTQIA2S+ community as well as within it, for example, individuals within the LGBTQIA2S+ community have added stress of decreased access to services designed to provide emergency food assistance solely based on their gender and/or sexual orientation.

Stigma Associated with Needing Food Assistance

Two participants mentioned the stigma associated with needing food assistance influenced their likelihood of utilizing the SOP or seeking assistance from other charitable food services. Both participants identified their families and upbringings as the roots of this internalized stigma. One participant spoke of her mother's influence throughout her upbringing:

> It's just like growing up she'd always tell me to never ask for help, you know, and never tell our personal business. We were poor growing up so… and I have that mindset of like you shouldn't ask for help. And so like whatever I do, go to the Spartan Open Pantry or whatever, I always just feel extremely guilty and stuff for asking for help. (Participant 2)

Mental and Physical Health

Four participants spoke about their mental and physical health and related effects on their food access. One participant mentioned her upbringing playing a key role in developing an eating disorder, stating: "Ever since I was a child, [my grandma] would constantly call me fat… Her constant put downs really impacted me mentally and emotionally" (Participant 2). Three participants mentioned food allergies and sensitivities, and dietary restrictions as significant

barriers to their food access due to increased costs and decreased available selection of safe foods. One participant receives food from her parents at home because she has "many food sensitivities and, consequently, can't eat a lot of the food on campus" (Participant 4). However, cold storage constraints (see Figure 2.10) limit the amount of food she can accept.

> What she brings is limited by the amount that I can store in my refrigerator and freezer. I can't just simply buy a bigger appliance because each one is at the size limit for what is allowed on campus. I had to obtain accommodations and doctor's notes just to have a separate freezer. (Participant 4)

Figure 2.10. Mini fridge and freezer at the maximum size allowed by the UNCG

Finances

Six participants reported finances as significantly impacting their food access. Inflation has increased gas prices (see Figure 2.11), which makes it more difficult for students to seek off-

campus food options, in addition to food prices. Students with Flex dollars as part of their meal plans can only access a single limited-selection grocery store with high prices, one coffeeshop, and an array of eateries that are often either unhealthy, run by corporations that are "either publicly anti-queer marriage or have funded right-wing political campaigns in the past," or both (Participant 6).[4] Two participants mentioned how university is expensive, especially for students living and/or eating on-campus. One participant stated: "I can't help but feel there's something deeply broken about higher education if we're forcing people into tens of thousands of dollars of debt and they can't all even eat consistently" (Participant 8). To mitigate negative effects of financial hardship, three participants shared strategies they utilize to decrease food costs, including receiving food assistance through the Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), growing fruits and vegetables at home, and using coupons from friends to receive free meal kit boxes through subscription services. However, each of these participants noted these strategies had drawbacks, such as having to reapply for and be limited in where they could spend SNAP benefits, having to constantly remember to water and rotate plant pots, and often receiving poor quality food items in meal kit boxes.

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[4] The UNCG defines Flex as: "a non-refundable stored value account on your SpartanCard which allows you to eat at UNCG" (UNC Greensboro, n.d.).

Figure 2.11. Cost of gas per gallon (USD)

Time Limitations

Half of the participants identified the hours of UNCG's dining options as a significant barrier to their food access. While classes at UNCG can run until 8:30pm, most dining options on campus are not open past 7:00pm. This pushes students to seek off-campus options for dinner, which requires spending additional time and money. Even during the day, students who are seeking healthier options than what are available on campus or groceries from a full-selection grocery store are forced to go off campus and have to factor additional time for travel, which can be difficult for students with full-time course-loads, jobs, extracurricular activities, health conditions, or other time-consuming factors to consider. One participant often goes to coffee shops (see Figure 2.12) during the day for "filler" foods to get through the day:

Sometimes I am too busy to go to the grocery store to get food. If I'm driving 15 to 20 minutes there and back, and also that's not accounting for the amount of time it takes me

to get groceries… but I use these to get through the day. These make me not necessarily feel super hungry to eat so I can get by until I can find time or anything open in my schedule to go grocery shopping. (Participant 5)
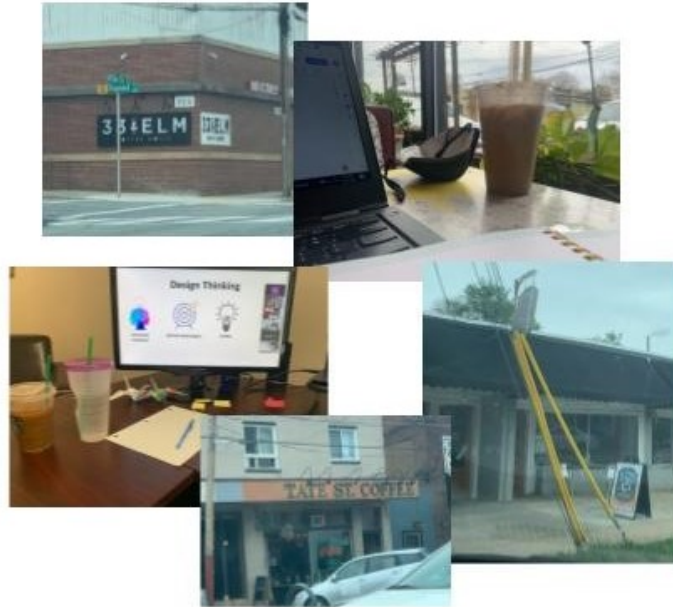
Figure 2.12. Coffee shops near campus. 33 & Elm (top left), Common Grounds (top right), Spring Garden Bakery (bottom right), Tate St. Coffee (bottom center)

Transportation

Three participants did not have cars, so they had to factor in walking time and distance whenever they left campus. This represents a safety concern as one participant noted the walk to the nearest full-selection grocery store is 1.1 miles through a residential area without sidewalks the entire way so students "end up faced with either walking in the street or through people's yards to get [there]" (Participant 8). While there is a Greensboro Transit Agency bus system (see Figure 2.13) UNCG provides passes for, two participants spoke of the unreliability of the bus

system: "You can't really depend on them to get there at a certain time or anything, even if it does have a time associated with the website or the app" (Participant 4).
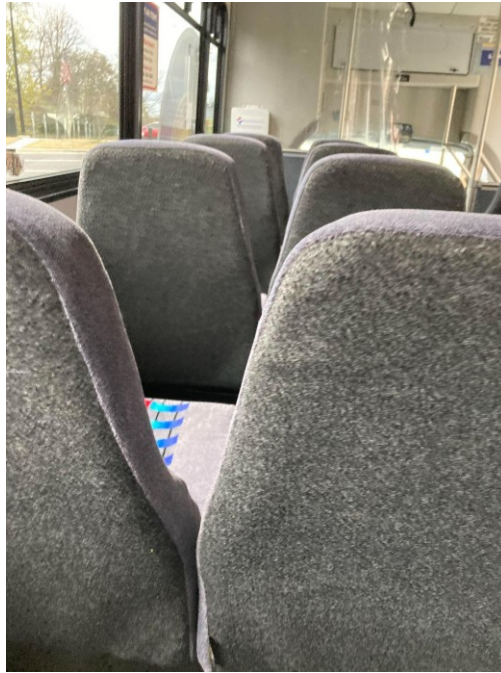
Figure 2.13. Seats on a Greensboro Transit Agency bus

2.5 Discussion

Consistent with existing literature, my findings indicate sexual and gender minority stressors have significant impacts on health and quality of life (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2013; Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2017; Frost et al., 2022; Haas & Lannutti, 2021; Hoy-Ellis, 2016; Rowan & Beyer, 2017; Vale & Bisconti, 2021). To buffer negative effects of these stressors, many LGBTQIA2S+ individuals manage the visibility of their sexual orientations and/or gender identities by deciding whether to out themselves through subtle or overt expressions of sexual orientation or gender identity (Frost et al., 2022; Haas & Lannutti, 2021; Vale & Bisconti, 2021).

Some participants in this research spoke about their ability to pass as cisgender and/or heterosexual. Passing was described as a privilege because it decreased their risk of garnering negative attention. This is corroborated by Frost et al. (2022) and Vale and Bisconti (2021), whose research shows that concealing one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity does act as a shield from overt forms of minority stress. Although participants did not explicitly speak to the stress and cognitive effort that comes with concealing one's identity, they did speak of avoiding areas and interactions that required them to conceal their identities, and described their responses when faced with unsupportive environments. Participants described feeling chronic devaluation of their identities through prejudicial events, such as microaggressions and overt acts of discrimination by faculty and staff at UNCG. One participant who identifies as non-binary shared they felt the "type of language and passive microaggressions" used by faculty and staff would have a more intense effect on a transgender student going through their transition than on a student who had already transitioned.

The beginning of the coming out process is a vulnerable time for many LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, especially for those in discriminatory, biased, or generally unsupportive environments, and many seek to create support systems to decrease negative effects of stressors (Frost et al., 2022; Haas & Lannutti, 2021; Human Rights Campaign Foundation [HRC Foundation], 2018). While participants shared positive impacts of their support systems, such as affirmation of their identities, increased household income and food security as a result of living with a partner, and receiving food from family members, they also described ways in which their support systems negatively impacted their food access to various degrees. This ranged from taking partners' needs into account (e.g., limiting vehicle use for food shopping to enable a partner's long work commute, or spending more money on groceries for a partner with food

allergies) to relying on food support from family members who were unsupportive of or uneducated about LGBTQIA2S+ identities. One participant described a period of homelessness due to unacceptance of their identify by family members, a phenomenon found to be common especially for LGBTQIA2S+ youth, who make up between 20% and 45% of homeless youth and experience housing insecurity at disproportionately high rates (Ambramovich, 2012; Applied Survey Research, 2017; Johnson, 2018; Romero et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2020b).

Mallory et al. (2020) found discrimination against LGBT people contributed to decreased employee productivity, retention, and recruitment, in addition to resulting in unfair treatment by employers in hiring, pay, and promotions. In this study, participants also linked their experiences with anti-LGBTQIA2S+ discrimination to their employment history by sharing ways in which their identities are linked to negative workplace experiences and employment status. Participants' reports of quitting jobs over poor treatment highlight the importance of inclusive and safe working environments. Microaggressions like misgendering negatively impact mental and emotional well-being, contributing to the prevalence of depression and can lead to eventual job loss or voluntarily leaving a workplace. Rates of under- and unemployment have been shown to be higher in the LGBTQIA2S+ community compared to the non-LGBTQIA2S+ population in the United States (Conron et al., 2022; Mallory et al., 2020), which creates a domino effect on housing, healthcare, and food access stability. Mallory et al. (2020) show that LGBTQIA2S+ community members have higher poverty rates when compared to cisgender individuals. One participant in this research explicitly stated she considers transgender identity to be a "big contributing factor" to why she was unemployed for several years and "the lost economic opportunity of being unemployed for an extended period of time, obviously, has had an impact on [her] ability to access food" (Participant 8). As North Carolina is an employment-at-will state,

meaning employers can treat their employees as they see fit and fire employees at will for any or no reason if there is no specific law to protect employees or there is no employment contract providing protection, and neither sexual orientation nor gender identity are protected classes in the United States at the time of this research, this is a reality many LGBTQIA2S+ individuals experience in North Carolina (North Carolina Department of Labor, n.d.; Gordon et al., 2016).

In addition to a lack of political protections in North Carolina, participants also spoke about their feelings of discomfort and lack of safety when leaving the UNCG campus and the downtown Greensboro area due to negative attitudes towards the LGBTQIA2S+ community. The socio-cultural environment of North Carolina is significantly influenced by power relations, such as social inequality and religious institutions and practices, especially due to the state's location within the conservative "Bible Belt" area (Barnett & Casper, 2001; Worthen, 2018). This was reflected in the research with participants expressing discomfort with religious and conservative presences in their local environments. However, while the effects of conservative socio-cultural environments on the LGBTQIA2S+ community have been studied, current research has not examined those effects in the context of food access. One participant specifically shared their discomfort with a voting poll location being established across the street from a Baptist church due to the negative relationship between organized religion and the LGBTQIA2S+ community, as this religious presence may deter LGBTQIA2S+ voters from visiting this polling location, endangering their access to political representation. Having supportive representation within the political environment is important, especially for systemically marginalized communities, because those representatives can influence and advocate for public policy expanding protections for stability, security, and equitable access to

resources such as food. When voters are deterred from the polls, their ability to vote in such representation is endangered.

A lack of full-selection grocery stores on and near the UNCG campus was also discussed as a significant barrier to food access. While the geography of food access has been well explored in the literature, there is little research analyzing food access through an intersectionality theory lens, much less a queer theory lens. Much of the research on spatial intersectionality and food access focuses on associations in place-based food environments between food availability and socio-demographic characteristics, specifically socio-economic status and race (Jang & Kim, 2018; Yang et al., 2020). This research shows neighbourhoods with higher proportions of communities of colour, historically marginalized communities, and/or low-income communities in the United States are more likely to have fewer retail sources of nutritionally-dense, affordable foods and more sources of foods that are either not nutritionally-dense, not affordable, or some combination thereof (Jang & Kim, 2018; Ver Ploeg et al., 2009; Yang et al., 2020). Although the lack of full-selection grocery stores on and near the UNCG campus may be due to aforementioned factors, when viewed through a queer theory lens, this research indicates additional factors not explored in current literature. Specific power relations affecting the LGBTQIA2S+ community in North Carolina such as social inequality and religious institutions and practices have created an additional, invisible spatial barrier to food access. The UNCG campus, the SOP, and the nearby downtown Greensboro area were identified by participants as forming a "bubble," which fostered feelings of safety and security. The campus itself was identified as such largely due to participants' familiarity with the area, while the SOP and the downtown Greensboro area were specifically noted as being inclusive and queer-friendly. As participants travel further away from these areas, they reported encountering

negative attitudes towards the LGBTQIA2S+ community, which decreased their feelings of safety and security. However, in order to access full-selection grocery stores, they are forced to be in environments where they often have to conceal their sexual orientation and/or gender identity for safety.

Intersectional factors that affect a larger population but disproportionately affect the LGBTQIA2S+ community were also explored in this study. Analysis of these factors was informed by both intersectionality and queer theories and focused on how institutional influences, contemporary biopolitics, and exclusionary tendencies of simplistic explanations and universal truths have coalesced to further disadvantage the LGBTQIA2S+ community (Carney, 2014; Barker & Scheele, 2016; Jagose, 1996; Kapilashrami & Marsden, 2018; Meyer et al., 2022). Participants spoke about their food access in relation to their mental and physical health, a relationship well-explored in the literature, but with the additional context of belonging to the LGBTQIA2S+ community. For example, one participant shared that she had many food sensitivities preventing her from eating most food on campus, so she relies on her parents to provide food for her. However, those relying on support from family members that are unsupportive of or uneducated about LGBTQIA2S+ identities may have to conceal their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, which pushes them to choose between negative mental and emotional health effects of concealment or negative comprehensive health effects of diminished food access (Frost et al., 2022; Vale & Bisconti, 2021).

Additional intersectional factors identified in the study included the stigma associated with needing food assistance, finances, time limitations, and transportation. Due to sexual and gender minority stressors, LGBTQIA2S+ individuals are more likely to experience significant impacts on their quality of life, including their ability to secure and maintain employment (Frost

et al., 2022; Hoy-Ellis, 2016). Periods of underemployment and unemployment create financial insecurity, which further exacerbates already unstable food security for LGBTQIA2S+ individuals. As shown in this research, individuals may need to travel outside of their local environment to access food, but financial insecurity can create additional barriers such as difficulties financing a personal vehicle and its related expenses. In this situation, participants either walked, asked for rides from friends, or utilized passes to the Greensboro Transit Agency bus system provided by UNCG. However, each of those options creates additional temporal barriers, as they either require additional time, rely on a schedule not set by the individual, or both. Financial insecurity also endangers budgets for food costs, so some participants with vehicles or having secured transportation opted to utilize the SOP rather than visit a grocery store to purchase food. Although the SOP was identified as a queer-friendly space, its location inside of a church may be a deterrent for some, as are previous negative experiences with charitable food services that maintained anti-LGBTQIA2S+ biases. Combined with the stigma associated with needing food assistance overall, this research showed these factors pose as significant barriers to food access for LGBTQIA2S+ individuals.

2.6 Conclusion

This research examines experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ university students with food insecurity and provides valuable information about the effects of identity and physical, socio-cultural, and political environments on food access. This is an under-researched topic, and this research contributes novel insights into the factors influencing food access for LGBTQIA2S+ university students at North Carolina University at Greensboro in the American South. There is a tendency for contemporary food studies research to focus on individual-level factors and individual failings as reasoning for poor health and food insecurity, rather than identifying

decreased food access as the result of institutional influences and contemporary biopolitics (Carney, 2014; Kapilashrami & Marsden, 2018). Thus, the enabling physical, socio-cultural, and political characteristics of place-based food environments, and the extent to which these create opportunities and barriers to food access, have not been widely researched, especially with a focus on systemically marginalized communities like the LGBTQIA2S+ community or the university and college student population. Additionally, few, if any, food studies have utilized either intersectionality or queer theories as frameworks with which to explore their findings.

The findings discussed here relate to the overlap between local physical, socio-cultural, and political environmental factors and LGBTQIA2S+ identities in the context of food access through the use of a qualitative, community-based approach. Eight self-identified LGBTQIA2S+ university students enrolled at UNCG took part in the study, which included using the PhotoVoice method followed by one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Three major themes emerged from the photographic and interview data: (1) LGBTQIA2S+ identities and food insecurity; (2) spatial opportunities and barriers to food access: on- and off-campus; and (3) intersectional factors affecting food security. The themes that emerged from this research indicate LGBTQIA2S+ identities impact food access for university students studying at UNCG. In addition to unique LGBTQIA2S+ experiences with food access, my findings also include intersectional factors, such as the stigma associated with needing food assistance and financial constraints that affect a larger population but disproportionately position the LGBTQIA2S+ community to have diminished food access.

The lack of existing research on food access for the LGBTQIA2S+ community limits the ability to comment on whether these findings reported here are generalizable, highlighting a need for additional research. For this study, a better representation of LGBTQIA2S+ university

students could have been achieved with a larger sample size. However, it was a challenge to recruit more participants, which may have resulted from internalized stigma such as homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, in addition to the stigma associated with needing food assistance. Additionally, as participants demonstrated significant time limitations, which also decreased available time to participate in the study and likely deterred some from participating altogether. Future studies should include more participants and be designed to generate longitudinal evidence to provide a deeper understanding of factors involved, and to show changes in food access over time, with respect to influences of LGBTQIA2S+ identities. Researchers should also explore experiences specific to sexual minorities and gender minorities, as well as further studies related to the overlap thereof. Researchers should also further examine intersectional factors disproportionately positioning the LGBTQIA2S+ community to have diminished food access to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how various factors impact food access. For all future research, it is important that studies respect the autonomy of the LGBTQIA2S+ community by fostering sustainable relationships through intentional engagement strategies that consider the interest, capacity, and resources that community members have to engage with the research (Durham et al., 2014).

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2.8 Abbreviations

CPS	Current Population Survey
LGBTQIA2S+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, agender, asexual, Two-Spirit
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SOP	Spartan Open Pantry
UNCG	University of North Carolina at Greensboro
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

2.9 Acknowledgements

2.10 Author information

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Chapter Three: Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this research is to examine food access at the intersection of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, and Two-Spirit (LGBTQIA2S+) community and the university and college student population, as told by the community itself. Little research to date has examined food insecurity in detail amongst the LGBTQIA2S+ community or the college and university student population. This research addresses that gap by collecting and analyzing stories about experiences with food insecurity from self-identified LGBTQIA2S+ students at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) in the United States.

The objectives of this research are: 1) to capture the stories of LGBTQIA2S+ university students in relation to the physical, socio-cultural, and political environmental factors that impact their experiences with food insecurity in Greensboro, North Carolina; 2) to explore the strategies, if any, that LGBTQIA2S+ individuals utilize to mitigate their risk of food insecurity; and, 3) to reflect on the ways that the identified strategies can be used to inform organizational policy at the Spartan Open Pantry (SOP), a food pantry that serves students, staff, and faculty of UNCG and students of Greensboro College (Wesley-Luther, n.d. b).

To achieve these objectives, I use a qualitative, community-based methodology, informed by intersectionality and queer theories. Data collection consisted of two iterative phases where self-identified LGBTQIA2S+ students currently enrolled at the UNCG first utilized the PhotoVoice method to identify and take photos of local physical, socio-cultural, and political environmental factors that facilitate or inhibit food access in their environments. Participants' photos were discussed during semi-structured interviews. Interviews were also used to explore how participants' individual LGBTQIA2S+ identities affected their food access and identify any

overlap between environmental factors and LGBTQIA2S+ identities. All data (PhotoVoice materials and interviews) were subjected to Stenner's thematic decomposition analysis to identify, code, and analyze data into themes reflective of individuals' social positions (as cited in Ussher & Mooney-Somers, 2000; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In this chapter, I summarize key research findings in relation to the research objectives and question, and discuss the significance and contribution thereof. I also review the guiding theoretical frameworks used and the strengths and limitations of the study. Finally, I provide recommendations for future research and concluding remarks.

3.1 Overview of Findings

This research, conducted with participants at UNCG, indicates that both LGBTQIA2S+ identities and university student status are correlated with increased risk of food insecurity. The research also identifies additional factors, such as income and employment, support systems, and the socio-cultural environment, influencing food security for LGBTQIA2S+ university students. Individuals' lived experiences of food insecurity highlight the importance of an in-depth understanding of intersectionality and the complexity of identities to develop strategies to improve food access and thus decrease food insecurity. Further details on the findings are presented below.

In Chapter Two: Gender, Sexuality, and Food Access: An Exploration of Food Security with LGBTQIA2S+ University Students, I investigated the overlap between local physical, socio-cultural, and political environmental factors and LGBTQIA2S+ identities in the context of food access through the use of a qualitative, community-based approach. Eight self-identified LGBTQIA2S+ university students enrolled at UNCG took part in the study, which included using the PhotoVoice method followed by one-on-one semi-structured interviews.

Three major themes emerged from the photographic and interview data. The first major theme focuses on unique challenges that participants' identified as experiencing in relation to their LGBTQIA2S+ identities, including the ability to pass as cisgender and/or heterosexual and how that decreases their risk of garnering negative attention; discrimination and microaggressions on-campus from faculty, staff, and other students; support systems of friends, family, and other figures; and employment, especially related to treatment from management and coworkers, and lost economic opportunities resulting from unemployment.

The second theme centers on the spatial opportunities and barriers to food access that participants experienced both on- and off-campus. In terms of opportunities, participants identified the SOP as well as the downtown Greensboro area off-campus both as being welcoming and comfortable. In contrast, negative attitudes towards the LGBTQIA2S+ community off-campus outside of the downtown Greensboro "bubble" were identified as a spatial barrier, in addition to the lack of full-selection grocery stores on- and near campus and the prevalence of religious presence off-campus.

The third theme explored in Chapter Two is related to intersectional factors affecting food insecurity, which may affect the larger university population but disproportionately impact food access for the LGBTQIA2S+ community due to the aforementioned experiences. These factors include the stigma associated with needing food assistance, which decreased participants' likelihood of utilizing the SOP or seeking assistance from other charitable food services, and mental and physical health, especially relating to internalized thoughts and feelings about food and food allergies and sensitivities, and dietary restrictions. Additional intersectional factors of financial constraints like balancing university and living expenses with food costs and the limited selection of on-campus food options that are both affordable and align with participants' values,

time limitations such as on-campus dining options closing early and having other time-consuming activities in addition to class (e.g., work, extracurricular activities, health-related appointments, etc.), and transportation-related factors like mode of transportation, travel time, and travel distance are also explored in Chapter Two.

This research yields additional findings that I intend to explore in future articles. One such article will examine a significant subset of data on the experiences of university students with food insecurity specifically related to attending UNCG, a university located in the American South and plagued by food apartheid. This data differs from what was explored in-depth in this thesis as the primary focus is not on LGBTQIA2S+ identities, but rather the environment of the UNCG campus and the Greensboro metropolitan area in the context of university students' food access. For example, the lack of full-selection grocery stores on- and near campus was explored briefly in Chapter Two. This study yielded significant data on this topic, especially with regard to the limited-selection grocery stores on- and near campus and the spatial inaccessibility of full-selection grocery stores in the Greensboro metropolitan area. If further analyzed, this data could inform both UNCG officials, the City of Greensboro, and other urban centres in planning future food store locations and initiatives to improve food access.

If I were to prioritize future research articles, though, I would focus on underscoring the importance of understanding the complexity of systemically marginalized identities using another set of additional findings, which are related to accessing and engaging with the LGBTQIA2S+ community for research purposes. In my research study, I experienced difficulties recruiting participants, despite disseminating information about the study through multiple channels at UNCG such as LGBTQ+ Education & Research Network (LEARN) listserv and explicitly positioning myself as a queer, genderfluid researcher to prompt willingness for

participants to share their experiences due to our shared identities. While in part this difficulty

may have resulted from students' time limitations and the stigma associated with needing food

assistance, other concerns about homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia were also inhibiting

factors. Multiple participants shared that they were uncomfortable outing their sexual orientation

and/or gender identity due to previous experiences with discrimination on the basis of gender

identity and/or sexual orientation and internalized discrimination. Additionally, although some

participants also expressed that they were only comfortable speaking with me due to our shared

LGBTQIA2S+ identities, LGBTQIA2S+ individuals may have chosen not to participate in my

research due to a lack of trust between those perceived as outsiders (myself as the researcher)

and the LGBTQIA2S+ community. To buffer the negative effects of sexual and gender minority

stressors, many LGBTQIA2S+ individuals manage the visibility of their sexual orientations

and/or gender identities by deciding whether to out oneself through subtle or overt expressions of

sexual orientation or gender identity (Frost et al., 2022; Haas & Lannutti, 2021; Vale & Bisconti,

2021). While participants did not explicitly speak to this, this data is a result of self-reflexivity

and autoethnography through queer theory. Queer theory allowed me to position myself as a

subject within social research, rather than as an objective outside observer, and to question my

own attitudes, biases, and thoughts as a queer, genderfluid person as a researcher (Harris, 2001;

Meyer et al., 2022). Through self-reflexivity and autoethnography, I was able to relate

participants' stories to my own, enabling me to better understand the complexities of

participants' identities and experiences. Additional examination of this data would be beneficial

for future researchers by providing recommendations to promote opportunities and mitigate

barriers to accessing and engaging with the LGBTQIA2S+ community through sustainable,

intentional engagement strategies (Durham et al., 2014).

3.2 Significance of Research

Little research to date has examined the experiences of food insecurity among systematically marginalized communities such as the LGBTQIA2S+ community or the college and/or university student population, much less at the intersection of both, and examining this with both queer and intersectionality theories. To my knowledge, this is also the first community-based food studies research on LGBTQIA2S+ university students in the southern United States. Food insecurity is an issue that is increasingly influencing the health and well-being of LGBTQIA2S+ university students. Notably, I found that LGBTQIA2S+ university students experience systemic identity-specific minority stressors that cannot be adequately addressed through blanketed food security initiatives due to their unique, intersectional nature. This is relevant to college and universities across the United States, especially in the South where LGBTQIA2S+ students may experience similar severities of stigma to that of UNCG students. These findings can serve as baseline data for future interventions to prevent food insecurity among LGBTQIA2S+ university students.

Research findings relating to LGBTQIA2S+ students' experiences are significant in that universities rely on students to generate revenue and universities' reputations are tied to positive student experiences. For example, students' tuition and fees supplement other funding sources such as governments, private donors, and investments to provide operating revenue that is used to pay for staff salaries and benefits, campus facilities, scholarships, research, instruction, etc. Maintaining a large student population and high retention rates is important to an educational institution's reputation, which is examined not only by incoming students but also academics and staff. Thus, creating an environment where students' feel safe and supported, and basic needs such as accessible, affordable food options can be met is vital to college and university

operations. Research from The Hope Center shows that basic needs insecurity, as relates to housing insecurity, homelessness, and food insecurity, compromises students' abilities to succeed at institutions in the United States (Baker-Smith et al., 2020; The Hope Center, 2021). Before students set foot on campus, the measures a college or university takes to ensure basic needs security influences their educational decisions. Participants in this research felt that UNCG is currently not adequately addressing food insecurity or supporting LGBTQIA2S+ students. Food apartheid within the place-based food environment on- and near campus, and the discrimination that LGBTQIA2S+ students experience from faculty, staff, and other students, may deter prospective students from attending the university. This research provides useful information about the experiences of food insecurity and discrimination among LGBTQIA2S+ university students at UNCG, but is also of relevance to other educational institutions, highlighting the need for additional research and informed, intersectional solutions. These findings will also be useful to the Spartan Open Pantry (SOP), and other such campus related entities in better understanding the experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ students and developing policies and programs to more effectively meet their needs.

The use of both intersectionality and queer theories in this community-based food studies research is novel and begins to fill a knowledge gap about the complexity of food insecurity experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ university students. While studies have explored some aspects of food access, food security, and/or the effects of local environments on food security, research to date has not analyzed those factors using both an intersectionality theory lens and a queer theory lens.

3.3 Guiding Theoretical Frameworks

Intersectionality and queer theories are germane to this exploration of food access with individuals who identify simultaneously with different social positions. While intersectionality theory has been used more prevalently than queer theory, few if any food studies research have utilized either theoretical framework. To my knowledge, the findings of this study represent the first evidence of community-based food studies research conducted with the guidance of both intersectionality and queer theories. The impacts of these theoretical frameworks are described as follows.

3.3.1 Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality theory examines ways individuals occupy multiple social positions simultaneously, creating complexities in how they interact with the world. Using this lens helped to challenge the established notion that individual-level factors and failings are the reason for poor health and food insecurity, as opposed to decreased food access being the result of institutional influences and contemporary biopolitics (Carney, 2014; Kapilashrami & Marsden, 2018; Manuel, 2007; Patterson et al., 2020a). Through hearing and collecting the stories about experiences with food insecurity from self-identified LGBTQIA2S+ students, I found that identifying the effects of place-based food environments on food access could not be separated from the social positions that each participant occupied. Each participant interacted with their local environments in unique ways, influenced by social positions related to LGBTQIA2S+ identities, university student status, socioeconomic status, racial and ethnic background, religious and spiritual beliefs, etc. An intersectionality theoretical framework highlights the importance of bringing those social positions to the forefront to inform organizational food policy for effective and inclusive change, rather than maintaining the status quo where food policy is centered around dominant groups, further widening the divide between systemically marginalized and

dominant groups. Utilizing an intersectionality lens would be incredibly useful for examining the implications of student engagement, university policies, and urban planning on the LGBTQIA2S+ community and the college and/or university student population. Furthermore, such a lens can be especially helpful in considering how policies influence place-based food environments and the ways in which future policies can benefit systemically marginalized communities.

3.3.2 Queer Theory

Queer theory challenges exclusionary tendencies of sex, sexuality, and gender identity categories and promotes intentional self-reflexivity by the researcher (Harris, 2001; Jagose, 1996; Meyer et al., 2022). As a member of the LGBTQIA2S+ community, queer theory allowed me to position myself as a subject within the research, providing the opportunity for me to challenge the perceived objective relationship between researcher, participants, and research and to mitigate power relations between myself and participants (Harris, 2001; Meyer et al., 2022). Participants expressed that this influenced their willingness to share their experiences due to our shared identities, which aligns with queer theory research (Harris, 2001; Meyer et al., 2022). Using a queer theoretical framework encouraged me to practice self-reflexivity and autoethnography as a researcher and as a queer, genderfluid person, which created space for me to explicitly question my own attitudes, biases, and thoughts and consider my relationship with my LGBTQIA2S+ identities, food access, and this research. In terms of study design and data collection, queer theory emphasized the importance of conducting this research with respect for the autonomy of the LGBTQIA2S+ community, underscoring my perspective of participants being subject matter experts of their own experiences rather than simply data sources to analyzed.

The use of queer theory encouraged me to keep unique LGBTQIA2S+ experiences in the forefront as I examined experiences that may not have objectively seemed related to the LGBTQIA2S+ community or may have otherwise been thought to be superficial. For example, the spatial inaccessibility of full-selection grocery stores for students at UNCG does not have any obvious relation to the LGBTQIA2S+ community; however, specific power relations affecting LGBTQIA2S+ university students in the local place-based food environment, such as social inequality and religious institutions and practices, have created an additional spatial barrier for LGBTQIA2S+ university students. This barrier is the dichotomy between the feelings of safety and security related to the "bubble" of the UNCG campus, the SOP, and the nearby downtown Greensboro area and the discriminatory environments encountered as students travel further from campus, which participants noted as feeling less safe and secure in. However, full-selection grocery stores are located further off-campus, so students are forced to be in environments where they often have to conceal their sexual orientation and/or gender identity for safety while accessing such stores. This research demonstrates the value of using queer theory when considering how LGBTQIA2S+ college and/or university students experience their environments and especially the unique opportunities and barriers to food access that they encounter. Educational institutions would better serve the diversity of their student body if they considered the perspectives through which they view their policies and local environments to determine how best to provide for diverse student bodies composed of dominant and systemically marginalized groups. Queer theory would be especially useful in creating equitable, inclusive policies and environments by prompting officials to examine the power relations that underly existing policies, reflect on the context guiding the decision-making process, and challenging

exclusionary tendencies by creating policies that target sources of inequity alongside systemically marginalized communities (Barker & Scheele, 2016).

3.4 Research Strengths and Limitations

There are notable strengths in this research. The use of a qualitative, community-based methodology created an opportunity to explore individual experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ university students with food access and the influences of their local physical, sociocultural, and political environments. The information shared through the PhotoVoice method and semi-structured interviews could not have been achieved through a quantitative study. Using queer theory to challenge the perceived objective relationship between researcher, participants, and research allowed me to mitigate power relations between myself as the researcher and my participants (Harris, 2001; Meyer et al., 2022). By positioning myself as a subject within the research, rather than as an objective outside observer, I was able to express my shared identities with participants and prompt willingness for participants to share their experiences with me in a way they may not have been comfortable doing with an outsider (Harris, 2001; Meyer et al., 2022). Queer theory also allowed me to engage in the analysis as I reflected on how my own lived experiences related to those of my participants. To my knowledge, this research is the first community-based food studies research informed by both intersectionality and queer theories, from the design of the study through to data sharing and analysis, in an examination food security among LGBTQIA2S+ university students in the American South.

There are also limitations to my research. The lack of existing research on food access for LGBTQIA2S+ university students limits an assessment of the generalizations of the findings, as does the relatively small sample size. Issues related to both the stigma associated with needing food assistance and internalized stigma such as homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, may

have limited participation in this research. LGBTQIA2S+ university students at UNCG might not have been comfortable participating in a study about food insecurity or sharing their experiences in general, which contributed to the small sample size. The use of self-selection sampling made it difficult to generalize my findings for all LGBTQIA2S+ university students studying at UNCG as students who did not participate may have had different experiences. The majority of participants identified as cisgender and/or female in terms of gender and were enrolled in graduate studies, and all participants were full-time students. In this research, I also did not explore dimensions specific to other systemically marginalized groups, such as race, ethnicity, first-generation college and/or university students, or socioeconomic status. This would be a valuable focus for future research, as belonging to one or more systemically marginalized groups that deviate from assumed norms place individuals at increased risk of experiencing food insecurity (Baker-Smith et al., 2020; Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021; Kepkiewicz et al., 2015; Lorde, 2016; Patterson et al., 2020a). Despite these limitations, this research highlights the need for future research and represents a significant step towards better understanding the experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ university students with food insecurity.

3.5 Recommendations for Future Research

This research highlights that the complexities of place-based food environments for LGBTQIA2S+ university students are inextricably linked to identity-specific minority stressors. A consideration of the specific opportunities and barriers to improved food access in relation to systemically marginalized communities could improve institutional and organizational food policies and programs to promote equitable food access. The research conducted in this thesis provides foundational information to begin filling the knowledge gap regarding this topic;

however, additional research is needed to provide further insight into food insecurity among LGBTQIA2S+ university students and the specific opportunities and barriers they face.

The limitations of this research, as outlined in the previous section, suggest a number of future research opportunities. Future studies could aim to increase the number of participants and be designed as longitudinal studies to generate a deeper understanding of food access over time, with respect to influences of both LGBTQIA2S+ identities and status as a college and/or university student. While self-selection sampling made it difficult to generalize my findings to all LGBTQIA2S+ UNCG students, I do recommend future research consider using this sampling method as it decreased the influence of any biases or preconceived notions of real or assumed LGBTQIA2S+ identities on my part as the researcher. A larger sample size would also increase the possibility of diversity in participant characteristics, such as gender, sexual orientation, part-time or full-time status, and enrollment in undergraduate or graduate studies, enhancing our understanding of intersectionality and the impacts of complex identities on food insecurity. Whereas my study explores the experiences of students who identified within the LGBTQIA2S+ community in general, researchers should also explore experiences specific to sexual minorities and gender minorities, as well as further studies related to the overlap thereof.

Finally, there is a need for further community-based qualitative work guided by both intersectionality and queer theoretical frameworks to better explore previously researched aspects of food access, food security, and/or the effects of local environments on individuals in the context of food insecurity among the LGBTQIA2S+ community or the college and/or university student population. Intersectionality theory would be particularly helpful in understanding how each participant's social positions influenced the opportunities and barriers to food access they faced, while queer theory built upon that by highlighting the impacts of the

underlying power relations to reveal the deeper sources of inequity influencing food insecurity. Researchers would also benefit from the self-reflexivity and autoethnography of queer theory to challenge the perceived objective relationship between researcher, participants, and research by positioning themselves as a subject within the research to deepen their connection to the research. Both theories allowed me to challenge the established notion that individual-level factors and failings are the reason for poor health and food insecurity by pointing to institutional influences and contemporary biopolitics as the larger determinants of diminished food access, something that future research should continue to explore (Carney, 2014; Kapilashrami & Marsden, 2018; Manuel, 2007; Patterson et al., 2020a).

3.6 Conclusion

This qualitative, community-based research examines food security among LGBTQIA2S+ university students at UNCG, as told by the community itself. This is an under-researched topic, and my research contributes new insights about the experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ university students in the American South.

Participants in this research commented that further action needs to be taken to adequately address food insecurity and provide overall increased support for LGBTQIA2S+ students on- and near UNCG. This research suggests that UNCG should focus on developing inclusive policies that respect the unique needs and experiences of LGBTQIA2S+ students. Inclusive and open two-way communication between students and the university, followed by mutually developed action steps, is needed for participants to feel supported by the university. Success in this engagement will promote confidence in the university's commitment to co-creating a comprehensively better environment for students, staff, and faculty.

This research identifies physical, sociocultural, and political environmental factors affecting food access for LGBTQIA2S+ university students. The use of both intersectionality and queer theoretical frameworks aided in revealing and analyzing the influence of institutional policies and contemporary biopolitics on decreased food security for LGBTQIA2S+ students. This thesis research indicates the need for considering systemically marginalized identities and related identity-specific minority stressors in future food policy and food studies to promote equitable access to food resources. The findings point to the failings of contemporary food policy as pertains to the LGBTQIA2S+ university student population, highlighting the need to explore the role of equity, diversity, and inclusion in ensuring that the needs and rights of systemically marginalized groups are being adequately addressed.

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Chapter Five: Appendices

5.1 Recruitment Email Listserv Verbiage

Participate in Graduate Research: LGBTQIA2S+ University Students' Experiences with Food Access

LGBTQIA2S+ University Students' Experiences with Food Access

I am conducting a study looking at LGBTQIA2S+ university students' experiences with food access. I am looking for participants that are enrolled as students at UNC Greensboro and self-identify as LGBTQIA2S+.

This study consists of a Photovoice activity and an interview conducted by the researcher. The Photovoice activity will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes, and the interview will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

Participants will receive a $20 gift card.

For more information, please contact Eli Lumens via email at lumens@ualberta.ca or via text or call at 704-999-1977. This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta (Pro00113537).

5.2 Recruitment Slideshow Images

5.2.1 Recruitment Slideshow Image A

5.2.2 Recruitment Slideshow Image B

5.3 Information Letter and Consent Form

Study Title: LGBTQIA2S+ University Students' Experiences with Food Access

Research Investigator:	**Supervisor:**
Eli Lumens	Dr. Mary Beckie
1210 Carlton Avenue	11405 87th Ave.
Raleigh, North Carolina, USA 27606	Edmonton, Alberta, CA T6G 1C9
lumens@ualberta.ca	mbeckie@ualberta.ca
704-999-1977	780-492-5153

Background:

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have self-identified as both: a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, agender, asexual, and Two-Spirit (LGBTQIA2S+) community; and a current student enrolled at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG).

The results of this study will be used in support of my thesis.

Before you make a decision, the researcher will go over this form with you. You are encouraged to ask questions if you feel anything needs to be made clearer. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to hear from and collect the stories of self-identified LGBTQIA2S+ students at the UNCG about their experiences with food insecurity and about the environmental factors that affect food access. The results of this study will be used in support of my thesis. Additionally, the data provided will be used to identify the physical, socio-cultural, and political environmental factors that impact food access in Greensboro, North Carolina; explore strategies that LGBTQIA2S+ individuals utilize to mitigate their risk of food insecurity; and to reflect on how the identified strategies can be used to inform organizational policy at the Spartan Open Pantry. More broadly, this data will be used as a foundation for filling the research gap that exists where the intersection of food insecurity and the LGBTQIA2S+ community is concerned.

Study Procedures:

You will be asked to participate in both a Photovoice activity and an interview conducted by the researcher. The Photovoice activity will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes, and the interview will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Interviews will be audiorecorded. Specific interview questions will address the topics and content areas identified in the paragraph above.

The study will consist of between 8 and 10 self-identified LGBTQIA2S+ UNCG students utilizing the Spartan Open Pantry, chosen through self-selection sampling. For the Photovoice activity, participants will be asked to use a camera to take photos of local physical, socio-cultural, and political environmental factors that they perceive as influencing their food access, either using their own technology or using provided technology. These photos, coupled with physical, digital, or audiorecorded notes about why they chose to photograph each factor, will be collected during the interview. The interview will be audiorecorded using Zoom Cloud Meetings

and designed to prompt reflection on their experiences with food insecurity; how particular physical, socio-cultural, and political environmental factors serve as opportunities and barriers to food access; and if and how their self-identification as LGBTQIA2S+ has impacted their initial and sustained food access. During the interview, I will also write notes on my observations of the participant's body language, tone, and term usage, as well as my own interpretations and reflections, to explore overall preliminary data trends emerging across participant interviews.

"With your consent, allow storage of study information in a secure data repository to facilitate future research."

Benefits:

Participants will each receive a gift card valued at $20.00 USD to support food access for their participation in this study.

The data provided will be used to identify the physical, socio-cultural, and political environmental factors that impact food access in Greensboro, North Carolina; explore strategies that LGBTQIA2S+ individuals utilize to mitigate their risk of food insecurity; and to reflect on how the identified strategies can be used to inform organizational policy at the Spartan Open Pantry. More broadly, this data will be used as a foundation for filling the research gap that exists where the intersection of food insecurity and the LGBTQIA2S+ community is concerned.

Risks:

We do not foresee any legal or physical risks to you as a research participant through your participation in this study.

It is possible that talking about current or previous experiences with food insecurity or experiences related to being LGBTQIA2S+ might be psychologically or emotionally stressful for some people. To minimize risks and discomforts, as well as mitigate harm, I will make allowances in the structure of the interviews, using a semi-structured approach rather than a completely structured approach. Additionally, participants may step away from the interview and return when they are ready, choose not to answer certain questions, and/or discontinue or withdraw from the interview at any time. I will also have a list of a variety of organizations in the area to suggest as resources, should they be needed.

Cost of Participation:

There is no cost of participation.

Voluntary Participation:

Your involvement in this interview is voluntary, you may refuse to participate before the study begins, discontinue at any time, or skip any questions/procedures that may make you feel uncomfortable, with no penalty, and no effect on your relationship with the Spartan Open Pantry, UNCG, or any other organization or service that may be involved with the research.

Participants have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study or from certain parts of the study, they may do so at any time without penalty or explanation by simply

informing the researcher of their choice to do so. If participants choose to withdraw from the photovoice activity, they will not be able to participate in the interview phase of the study, as the study is iterative and the photovoice materials will be necessary for the interview. If participants choose to withdraw, they may request that any of their data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:

During the study, participants will be asked to choose where they would like to have interviews conducted and allowed to choose whether or not they disclose their participation to others.

Audiorecorded data and participant created materials will be stored in a secure file on a University of Alberta protected system (Google Drive) and accessible only to the researcher. Physical photovoice materials will be digitized and kept as digital files, with any original paper copies being either returned to participants or shredded after data collection. Audiorecordings of interviews will be kept as audio files for a period of up to five years, at which point the files will be destroyed. Transcription files will be kept as digital files and may be kept indefinitely.

Any identifying information, such as the names or contact information, will not be stored with the audiorecorded data file(s) or participant created materials, and will be stored on a separate master list on a secure and password protected location such as Google Drive, which will be separate from the location of the audiorecorded data and participant created materials.

Findings from the interviews will be presented in an aggregated format for use in the project,

meaning that no individual participant will be named and/or no individual participant's identity

will be able to be determined from the reports generated from the findings.

The information that participants provide for the purposes of the interviews will only be

accessible by researchers in this study, and once the interviews have been conducted, all

identifying information will be deleted from the data file. The de-identified data will only be

accessible by the researchers. It may be kept indefinitely and may be used to inform future

research about LGBTQIA2S+ individuals. Absolute confidentiality of data provided through the

Internet cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of Internet access.

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

Contact Information:

If you have additional questions about this research project, please contact Eli Lumens

(lumens@ualberta.ca). This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Office at the

University of Alberta. If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated,

concerns or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study,

please contact the Research Ethics Office at the University of Alberta at 780-492-0459.

Consent Statement:

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the

opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional

questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described above and will receive a copy of this consent form. I will receive a copy of this consent form after I sign it.

_____   _____

Participant's Name (printed) and Signature   Date

_____   _____

Name (printed) and Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

5.4 Semi-Structured Interview Procedures and Questions

Study Title: LGBTQIA2S+ University Students' Experiences with Food Access

Research Investigator:

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Interview Procedures

The second and final phase of my study will involve one-on-one semi-structured interviews with each participant. Each interview will be between 45 and 60 minutes and digitally recorded at the time with consent to later be transcribed verbatim. The purpose of these interviews will be to review the participants' PhotoVoice materials and prompt reflection about each participant's personal experiences with food insecurity. Having allowed for time to pass between when the PhotoVoice activity was completed and this follow-up interview, my goal will be to spark deeper reflection within each participant to enrich their thoughts and connections with their documented surroundings and experiences.

I will first walk through the photos with each participant to see which local physical, social, and political environmental factors they identified, as well as to hear the reasoning behind each photo. After discussing the PhotoVoice materials, I will ask interview questions, designed to

prompt reflection on their experiences with food insecurity; how particular physical, socio-cultural, and political environmental factors serve as opportunities and barriers to food access; and if and how their self-identification as LGBTQIA2S+ has impacted their initial and sustained food access.

The same questions will be used for each semi-structured interview with allowances made for specific participant needs, such as how spontaneous descriptions and narratives may come up throughout the dialogue, mitigation strategies for any mental health concerns, or overlap between the questions or answers provided. During this meeting, I will digitally record their responses through the audio transcription feature of Zoom Cloud Meetings software at the time with consent. Additionally, during and after these meetings, I will write notes on my observations of the participant's body language, tone, and term usage, as well as my own interpretations and reflections. I will use these compiled notes to guide my data analysis by exploring overall preliminary data trends emerging across participant meetings.

Interview Questions

1. Do you consent to having this interview audiorecorded?
2. Could you please state your name and pronouns?
3. (At this point, I would read the consent form and have the participant verbally consent. I would also have them sign the form physically or digitally.)
4. Do you have any questions so far?

5. Which LGBTQIA2S+ identities do you hold, if you do not mind sharing? When answering, please consider: gender identity, sexual orientation, and/or any others you might want to include.

6. Do you experience food insecurity? My working definition of food insecurity is: the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate or safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways. When answering, please consider: geographic, financial, time, and/or any other barriers that you might want to include, and how you personally would define food insecurity.

7. (At this point, I would ask participants to share with me the materials they have from the PhotoVoice activity, including photos and/or videos, and voice memos and/or written or typed notes.)

8. Which physical, socio-cultural, or political environmental factor does this photo represent? (I would ask this for each photo.)

9. Can you please explain why you chose to photograph this particular subject as an opportunity or barrier to your food access? (I would ask this for each photo.)

10. Do you think that identifying as LGBTQIA2S+ has positively, negatively, or neutrally affected your initial and/or sustained food access? Why or why not?

11. Do you have anything else you would like to share?

12. Do you have any questions now that the interview is over?

5.5 PhotoVoice Activity Instructions

Study Title: LGBTQIA2S+ University Students' Experiences with Food Access

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What is PhotoVoice?

PhotoVoice is an image-based technique that allows individuals to identify, represent, and enhance their community through capturing their surroundings and experiences in photographs. This activity will be used as a participatory method to explore the local environmental spheres that participants interact with including physical, socio-cultural, and political environmental spheres.

Instructions:

During the period between the initial introduction to the study and the interview conducted by the researcher, you will be asked to take photos in areas around Greensboro such as your home, neighbourhood, school, etc. where you identify physical, socio-cultural, or political environmental factors that influence your food access. Your photos can include anything that you perceive as influencing your food access.

With each photo, you will also be asked to include a short description of why you took that photo and how you perceive it relating to your food access. The description can be physically or digitally written, or audiorecorded.

The photos and corresponding descriptions will be collected during the interview, either physically or digitally.

Definitions:

Physical environment: The physical environment refers to a geographic area and the opportunities and barriers that it allows for, such as place-based food environments in this case.

Socio-cultural environment: Socio-cultural environmental factors include those within immediate physical surroundings, social relationships, and social groups as created by distinguishing categories within society.

Political environment: The political environment refers to the state, the government, and the institutions, as well as legislation, and private and public stakeholders who happen to operate or interact with the system, being Greensboro.

Study Procedures:

You will be asked to participate in both a PhotoVoice activity and an interview conducted by the researcher. The PhotoVoice activity will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes, and the interview

will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Interviews will be audiorecorded. Specific interview questions will address the topics and content areas identified in the paragraph above.

The study will consist of between 8 and 10 self-identified LGBTQIA2S+ UNCG students, chosen through self-selection sampling. For the PhotoVoice activity, participants will be asked to use a camera to take photos of local physical, socio-cultural, and political environmental factors that they perceive as influencing their food access, either using their own technology or using provided technology. These photos, coupled with physical, digital, or audiorecorded notes about why they chose to photograph each factor, will be collected during the interview. The interview will be conducted either virtually via Zoom Cloud Meetings or in-person. Interviews will be audiorecorded using the recording function of Zoom Cloud Meetings and designed to prompt reflection on their experiences with food insecurity; how particular physical, socio-cultural, and political environmental factors serve as opportunities and barriers to food access; and if and how their self-identification as LGBTQIA2S+ has impacted their initial and sustained food access. During the interview, the researcher will also write notes on their observations of the participant's body language, tone, and term usage, as well as their own interpretations and reflections, to explore overall preliminary data trends emerging across participant interviews.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:

Audiorecorded data and participant created materials will be stored in a secure file on a University of Alberta protected system (Google Drive) and accessible only to the researcher. Physical PhotoVoice materials will be digitized and kept as digital files, with any original paper copies being either returned to participants or shredded after data collection. Video recordings of

interviews will not be retained. Audiorecordings of interviews will be kept as audio files for a period of up to five years, at which point the files will be destroyed. Transcription files will be kept as digital files and may be kept indefinitely.

Any identifying information, such as the names or contact information, will not be stored with the audiorecorded data file(s) or participant created materials, and will be stored on a separate master list on a secure and password protected location such as Google Drive, which will be separate from the location of the audiorecorded data and participant created materials.

Findings from the interviews will be presented in an aggregated format for use in the project, meaning that no individual participant will be named and/or no individual participant's identity will be able to be determined from the reports generated from the findings.

The information that participants provide for the purposes of the interviews will only be accessible by researchers in this study, and once the interviews have been conducted, all identifying information will be deleted from the data file. The de-identified data will only be accessible by the researchers. It may be kept indefinitely and may be used to inform future research about LGBTQIA2S+ individuals. Absolute confidentiality of data provided through the Internet cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of Internet access.

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

Contact Information:

If you have additional questions about this research project, please contact Eli Lumens (lumens@ualberta.ca). This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Office at the University of Alberta. If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated, concerns or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study, please contact the Research Ethics Office at the University of Alberta at 780-492-2615. Collect calls will be accepted.