Food Security Advocacy and Activism Among Post-Secondary Students:

A Case Study of Lakehead University

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Abstract

This research project is a case study that explores post-secondary student food insecurity advocacy and activism at one Northern Ontario university. Using a feminist intersectional case study approach, I examine how the identities of student activists influence their activism and advocacy on food insecurity on campus. A focus group with four self-identified student activists was conducted to gain an understanding about their advocacy efforts and activism at Lakehead University. Additionally, four in-depth interviews were conducted with administrators to help understand the context of the campus food environment and to understand the issues and responses from their perspective. Findings suggest that student involvement and experiences with food activism is connected with student identity. Gender, race, class, and student status (i.e., full time or part-time, and domestic or international student) influence student's ability to take up food activism and advocacy. Although not a large sample of participants, the student activists at Lakehead are passionate about food security, they understand that there is a problem with student poverty, high tuition rates, and settler-colonial legacies. While food activism and advocacy informed by food justice is the focus of many student-led initiatives, charity approaches continue to dominate the wider response to post-secondary student food insecurity on this campus. Although they are challenged by structural barriers to change, student activists develop belonging through relationships and a shared sense of purpose in advocating for change on campus which increases their confidence to pursue activism. This thesis offers insights into student food advocacy and activism on the issue of post-secondary student food insecurity at Lakehead University.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On university campuses there are many different approaches to addressing student food insecurity. One group seeking to improve food access and increase food security are students themselves. For decades, students across Canada have initiated and led campus foodbanks, the Good Food Box program[1], community gardens, campus farmers markets, alternative food services on campuses and worked to provide affordable hot meals through student collectives and unions (e.g., the People's Potato). Yet, there is an absence of research on the experiences of student activists involved in food advocacy work on university campuses.

This thesis intends to fill the gap in our understanding about the work of student activists and examine the relationship between student food activism and the experiences of food insecurity in the post-secondary context. Specifically, this feminist intersectional case study explores student activism on the issue of post-secondary student food insecurity on the Thunder Bay campus of Lakehead University. The research involves a focus group with participants who were active in on-campus activism over the period of 2019-2021. As well, to understand the context of the student activism, I interviewed administrators who work on food security on the Lakehead campus. The project began prior the start of Covid-19 and thus, was impacted greatly by the pandemic in terms of not only increasing food insecurity for students at Lakehead, but also in terms of the research itself and data collection, which I will say more about in Chapter three.

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[1] The Good Food Box is a monthly fruit and vegetable distribution program run through the Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre which "aims to increase access to fresh and affordable produce in neighbourhoods, housing buildings, organization and participating First Nations year-round" (GFB, 2022). It is a feminist grassroots community initiative that supports food access in the community broadly - one that student activists have partnered with to increase food access on campus.

This thesis will address the following research questions: What are students' experiences working on food advocacy and activism on their campus? Why do students become involved with this issue? How are student activists taking up food justice? How is an intersectional perspective helpful to understanding the experiences of the activists? What particular strategies do student activists pursue in their desire for food security on campus? Finally, what are the issues students face given the neoliberal climate of post-secondary institutions?

1.1 Student Food Insecurity

Student food insecurity is an ongoing problem among post-secondary students in Canada and the Covid-19 pandemic revealed deeper challenges with food access for post-secondary students (Laban et al., 2020). Student food insecurity is measured as either marginal, moderate or severe (Plunkett-Latimer, 2022; PROOF, 2018) and assesses a students' ability to access and afford nutritional, culturally and socially appropriate food (Statistics Canada, 2020a; Tarasuk, Mitchell, & Dachner, 2015). Marginal food insecurity is related to limited food selection related to finances and worry about running out of food (Tarasuk, Mitchell, & Dachner, 2015). Moderate food insecurity relates to the limitation and "compromise of the quality and/or quantity of food due to a lack of money" (Tarasuk, Mitchel & Dachner, 2015: 4). Meal Exchange (2021) defines moderate food insecurity as "significant food access issues, including income-related concerns and reduced quality and/or quantity" (p.7). Meal Exchange (2021) classifies severe food insecurity as "extreme food access issues, including income-related concerns and reduced quality and/or quantity" (p.7). Severe food insecurity includes missing meals to going more than one day without food (Tarasuk, Mitchel & Dachner, 2015: 4).

1.2.1 Prevalence

Some of the only national data on student food insecurity comes from Meal Exchange[2], a national charity, who has conducted two surveys of student food insecurity across Canadian universities (Silverthorn 2016, Meal Exchange 2021). While there are limitations to these studies, they do provide valuable information on student food insecurity experiences in Canada. The Meal Exchange data demonstrates that food insecurity continues to be a serious issue amongst post-secondary institutions.

Silverthorn (2016) collected cross-sectional survey data from five campuses across Canada: Lakehead University, Dalhousie University, Brock University, Ryerson University and the University of Calgary and found that 39% of student respondents at these schools experienced food insecurity. Of the 4013 students who responded, 8.3% were experiencing severe food insecurity while 30.7% were moderately food insecure at the time of the survey (Silverthorn, 2016). Significantly, Dalhousie University and Lakehead University had the highest rates of food insecurity with 46% respectively, while Lakehead University had the highest rate of severe food insecurity at 14.7% (Silverthorn, 2016:1).

More recently, Meal Exchange conducted a cross-sectional survey of post-secondary students in the Fall 2021 (N=6,167) and found that across 13 campuses[3] rates of food insecurity had increased during the pandemic to 56.8% (Meal Exchange 2021, p. 9). The survey used questions such as, "I worried my food would run out before I got money to buy more" (p.7) to

[2] Meal Exchange has recently announced that it is sunsetting the organization, acknowledging that the problem has not disappeared (Meal Exchange communication, August 2022).

[3] Campuses included: University of Victoria, University of Lethbridge, University of Calgary, Lakehead University, University of Waterloo, University of Guelph, McMaster University, University of Toronto-Mississauga, Queen's University, University of Ottawa, Carleton University, Dalhousie University, and Mount Saint Vincent University.

understand the level of food insecurity students faced (marginal, moderate, or severe)[4]. The findings revealed that student's identity and socioeconomic status can influence the ways food insecurity is experienced, and its prevalence. For example, students aged 24-30, two-spirted, Indigenous, queer students, international students, those in precarious living arrangements (couch surfing, or staying in shelter houses), and those who are unemployed faced higher levels of marginal and moderate food insecurity (Meal Exchange, 2021)[5].

Other studies have found that international students, single-parent students, students who live off-campus, and students who rely on government assistance also generally have higher rates of food insecurity (Maynard et al., 2018; Calder & Burns, 2016; Hanbazaza et al., 2016; Silverthorn, 2016; and Burley & Awad, 2015). Socioeconomics and the financial impacts of high tuition rates, which continue to rise, influence a student's ability to be food secure (Maynard et al., 2018; Statistics Canada, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2011). Low income and financial strain are some of the reasons students struggle to be food secure (Meal Exchange, 2021; Maynard, et al., 2018; Silverthorn, 2018; Harden, 2017; and Burley & Award, 2015). Other barriers that students reported include the high costs of food and housing (Silverthorn, 2016; and Burley & Awad, 2015). As I will explain, an intersectional approach to understanding how these social differences shape student experiences will broaden our understanding of student activism.

1.2.2 Negative Impacts of Student Food Insecurity

Food insecurity has many negative impacts on post-secondary students and their ability to be successful in their education. Daughtry, Birnbaum & Clark (2019) and Maynard, et al.,

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[4] Potential limitations include selection bias, lack of statistical significance due to small sample size, and small financial incentive which may have led to an over-reported amount of food insecurity.

[5] Meal Exchange (2021) explains, "Rates and status of student food security were calculated based on six questions adapted from the Household Food Security Status Module found in the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS)" (p.7). For demographic information, the students were asked to identify their age, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnic/racial identity. Food insecurity rates were then compared to these factors.

(2018a) explain that food insecure students experience negative impacts to mental and physical health, their social and personal life. Post-secondary students shared that they experienced negative impacts to their grades, class participation and extracurriculars (Maynard, et al., 2018a). Moreover, graduation rates are also negatively impacted due to one experiencing food insecurity (Laban, et al., 2020). Silverthorn (2016) noted that "nearly half all respondents (49.5%) reported that they had to sacrifice buying healthy food in order to pay for essential expenses such as rent, tuition, and textbooks" (p.18). Similarly, Maynard et al. (2018) explained that "students living in food-insecure households experience poor academic outcomes, including lower grade point averages and difficulties concentrating at school, in comparison to food-secure students" (p.131-132).

Attempts to cope with food insecurity included things such as "compromising the quality and quantity of food" including reducing their meat consumption (Maynard et al., 2018: 137). Similarly, Silverthorn (2016) found that students were buying "low-cost foods, not eating balanced meals… [and] skipping meals [or] not eating for a whole day" (p. 15). Students tried to increase their income by either "applying for scholarships and bursaries; working one or more part-time jobs, borrowing food or money for food from family or friends, and participating in research for the honoraria" (Maynard et al., 2018:137). Maynard et al (2018) also explained that students tried to coupon, price-match and shop at discount stores to cope, however, "attempts to adapt often fell short" (p.138).

Maharaj (2020) and Maynard et al. (2018) explain that student food insecurity has become normalized. Cheap, unhealthy foods are seen as normal things to eat as a post-secondary student (Maharaj, 2020; Maynard et al., 2018). Maharaj (2020) explains that "the 'starving student' has somehow become a charming archetype" (p.139). Quite problematically, this

stereotype alleviates serious consideration of the problem on the part of university administrators and governments, while the problem deepens.

1.2.3 How the COVID-19 Pandemic has Impacted Student Food Insecurity

In May 2020, at the start of Covid-19 pandemic, Statistics Canada (2020b) conducted a survey to ask Canadians about their experiences with household food insecurity. The findings concluded that “almost one in seven Canadians reported food insecurity” (Statistics Canada, 2020b). Similarly, across Canadian post-secondary institutions there has been increased challenges and increased rates of food insecurity as a result of Covid-19. Wall (2020) reported that 70% of post-secondary students surveyed across Canada “were very or extremely concerned about the pandemic’s financial impact on themselves” including things such as debt, being able to pay for tuition, and accommodation costs (p. 3). Meal Exchange (2021) reported that student's health was negatively impacted due to the Covid-19 pandemic including mental health (58.2%) and physical health (42.9%). Students also reported increased reliance on food delivery services (23.6%), less control over food choices (22.3%), and difficulties in accessing food because of fear and anxiety due to Covid-19 (20.5%) (Meal Exchange, 2021).

Early in the pandemic as the economy shut down and people were required to shelter in place, students were greatly affected when universities closed campuses. Laban, et al (2020) explained that Covid-19 impacted students through immediate job losses when businesses were forced to close, and students lost their incomes as a result. Moreover, for students living on campuses, there was limited access to on-campus foods as public health regulations forced many cafeterias and food services to cease operating or operate minimally to lessen contact among individuals. Many universities established emergency funds to support students, however these funds were extremely limited and not always easy to access. Additionally, some universities put

into place temporary services (food supports, housing options, etc.) to help in the initial crisis, but these were also limited (Laban et al., 2020). The Government of Canada provided emergency programs for lost wages through the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and the Canada Emergency Student Benefit CESB (Laban, et al., 2020), however international students had difficulty accessing these supports. As Laban et al. (2020) explain, although the crisis response was needed during the first year of the pandemic, the problems of student food insecurity existed prior to Covid-19 and as such, students need long term solutions such as improved access to a living wage, increases to students' income, and affordable food on campus.

Tuition rates in Canada continued to rise for all students - undergraduate, graduate, international, and domestic during the pandemic (Statistics Canada, 2005 & 2021). Socio-economic status including financial constraints and high rates of tuition also had impacts on student's ability to be food secure. In various studies, students expressed that low income, financial strain, and high tuition costs were some of the reasons that they struggled to be food secure (Meal Exchange, 2021; Maynard, et al., 2018; Silverthorn, 2018; Harden, 2017; Burley & Award, 2015). Other barriers that students reported include the high costs of food and housing (Silverthorn, 2016; Burley & Awad, 2015). These costs for post-secondary learning impact how students experience their education with many students working multiple jobs to pay for higher education.

1.3 Student Activism

There are different approaches to dealing with food insecurity, including emergency food supports, community-based, and structural and institutional changes (DeSouza, 2019; Maynard et al., 2018; Alkon 2016; Silverthorn 2016; Tarasuk & Dachner, 2016; Engler-Stringer, 2011; and Poppendieck, 1998). While the dominant approach in Canada is emergency food supports,

such as food banks or charitable approaches, this thesis will analyze the ways in which students take up food activism and how they work to address the issue of student food insecurity. While there is previous research on student activism and student movements (Ahmed, et al., 2021; Connor, Crawford and Galioto, 2021; Morgan, Zilvinskis, and Dugan, 2021; Roth, 2021; Wawrzynski and Naik, 2021; Earl, et al., 2017; Kwan, 2017; Rhoads, 2016; Giroux, 2013; Keller, 2012; Taft, 2010; Gordon, 2008; and McAdam, 1988) there is less knowledge about student food activism, despite the fact that students have been very active with many different approaches to try to address student food insecurity. For example, student-ran food banks (Bhat, 2020, DSU Foodbank, n.d.), community kitchens, student-ran food services (such as the Loaded Ladle at Dalhousie, and People's Potato, Midnight Kitchen at McGill), farmers market (see: dsumarket.ca) and community gardens illustrate the many ways students have tried to address the issue of post-secondary student food insecurity.

Moreover, almost all university campuses across Canada have a food bank or food pantry available to students, but not all students who are food insecure access food banks because of stigma (Maynard, et al., 2018; and Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2015). In terms of which students access the food bank, Hanbazaza, et al. (2016) found that those ages 17-25, female, full-time, undergraduate students, those with student loans or a line of credit, or relied on scholarships, bursaries, government supports, savings, family, and/or friends for support as their primary sources of income were most likely to use the campus-based food bank. Maynard et al. (2018) and Silverthorn (2016) found that there was a limited ability to access culturally acceptable and traditional foods; especially those from Aboriginal, African, and Caribbean backgrounds (p.16). During the Covid-19 pandemic, student activism focused on emergency-based responses, such as supporting food banks, and grocery gift card distributions. For example, students at Dalhousie

distributed gift cards and food packages (DeLory, 2020). The student union at Lethbridge, in collaboration with other organizations, formed a committee in the fall of 2020 because of "food scarcity" on their campus and no meal plans during the pandemic (Ferris, 2021). The Lethbridge Committee also organized emergency food baskets and virtual cooking classes (Ferris, 2021). As I will explain in chapter four, at Lakehead University, student activists took up the Good Food Box program, and distributed grocery gift cards to help alleviate increased levels of student food insecurity during the pandemic.

1.4 Institutional Framing of Student Food Insecurity

Neoliberalism and corporate logic inform how the university, as an institution, operates today (Nelsen, 2017). Harvey (2005) defines neoliberalism as a "theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong property rights, free markets, and free trade" (p. 2). For decades, government funding to universities has undergone enormous cuts with an assumption that shortfalls can be made up by increasing tuition and internationalization (Statistics Canada, 2021; Nelsen, 2017; Usher 2019; Canadian Federation of Students, 2022). According to the Canadian Federation of Students, from 2018 to 2022 there have been cuts of over $1 billion to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) and student financial assistance (Canadian Federation of Students, 2022). Universities now depend a great deal on student tuition to finance the institution with less and less government funding.

As mentioned, across Canada, tuition rates continue to rise. In 1990/1991, the average undergraduate tuition cost was $1,464 (Statistics Canada, 2005). In 2020/2021 the average Canadian Undergraduate tuition cost was $6,580 (Statistics Canada, 2021). In 30 years, tuition

has increased by around 450%. For international students, the increases are greater. From 2006/2007 to 2020/2021 undergraduate international tuition rates increased 139% from $13,378 to $32,019 (Statistics Canada, 2021). During the pandemic, there was a 1.7% increase in domestic undergraduate tuition, a 1.5% rise in domestic graduate tuition, a 4.9% increase in international undergraduate tuition and a 3.6% increase in international graduate tuition for the academic year 2020/2021 to 2021/2022 (Statistics Canada, 2021).

1.5 Intersectionality

In this research, I take an intersectional approach because food insecurity is an intersectional feminist issue. An intersectional approach recognizes the interplay between social positionalities and structural systems of oppression, such as capitalism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy (Collins and Bilge, 2016). Moreover, "an intersectional feminist perspective insists on the interrelations between gender, race, class, religion and sexuality in relation to food, food practices and food systems and how these are structured by relations of power" (Swan, 2020: 695; Parker et al., 2019). Sachs and Patel-Campillo (2014) explain that "solving issues of hunger and malnutrition require recognizing and addressing the overlapping and conflicting dynamics of race, gender, class, sexuality, and citizenship-related to food inequalities" (p.409).

There are significant differences in experiences of student food insecurity that are linked with one's social class, race, gender, and student status among other aspects of social difference (Power et al., 2021; Maynard, et al., 2018; Silverthorn, 2016; Hanbazaza et al., 2016; Calder & Burns, 2016). This means that although food insecurity is experienced at the individual level, there are shared experiences through post-secondary students' collective identities. Moreover, as De Souza (2019) reminds us, stigmatizing narratives around those who are hungry "uphold and

legitimize the unjust food system", particularly in the neoliberal context where it is assumed that some are deserving of poverty (p.17).

An intersectional approach must also consider the ways in which, "settler colonialism operates as a system of power and domination structuring experiences of Indigeneity, oppression, and violence as these occur through the settler state and its institutions" (Parker, 2023 forthcoming). Lakehead University has one of the highest enrolments of Indigenous people at a Canadian University (Lakehead, 2022). In 2020-2021, 12% of Lakehead student's self-identified as Indigenous (Lakehead, 2022) and the impacts of settler colonialism, especially in relation to land use and food security are present in the university. Parker (2023) proposes anti-colonial intersectional research which link Indigenous ways of knowing with feminist intersectional research to understand that "land is another axis of oppression that interlocks with gender, race, sexuality among other intersections of identity" (Parker, 2023, forthcoming). Parker (2023) points to "Levac et al. (2019) [who] provides principles for anti-colonial intersectional research which include relationality, reciprocity, reflexivity, respect, reverence, responsivity, and responsibility [which] can act as guideposts for our research practice" (p.13). Within my research, I aim to take up an anti-racist, anti-colonial, intersectional framework to understand the experiences and identities of student activists by allowing student's voices and experiences to lead the project and critically analyzing the ways in which food justice and food security work has been taken up at Lakehead University.

When it comes to student activism, there is also research to explain differences in the experiences of advocacy depending on one's social location and identity (Morgan, Zilvinskis, and Dugan, 2021; Conner, Crawford and Galioto, 2021). Morgan, Zilvinskis, and Dugan (2021) found that identity, student backgrounds, and area of study impacted how students were involved

in activism and in the ways they participated. Self-identified queer, Black or African American students were most likely to be involved in activism through discussions, blogs posts, protests in comparison to other racial groups and/or sexualities. Morgan, Zilvinskis, and Dugan (2021) state, “students who identified outside of the gender binary (selecting “another gender identity” on the survey) were two and a half times more likely to participate in sociopolitical action compared with the average student in the sample” (p.69). Those least likely to participate include students who identified as Asian, Native, Hawaiian, or other pacific Islander (Morgan, Zilvinskis & Dugan, 2021). Conner, Crawford and Galioto (2021) explain that “personal experiences and identities shaped their activism and how their activism in turn became a core part of their identity” (p.16). Moreover, these same authors found that activism and sense of self were linked, leading to an understating of why activists continue to engage in the work even with negative impacts of mental health and wellbeing. Morgan, Zilvinskis and Dugan (2021) suggest that “future research should examine the heterogeneity of student activism experiences related to identity and student background to highlight the complexity and richness of the experience for a range of students” (p.70).

Roth (2021) explains that although intersectionality has been taken up across disciplines and fields of study, in the social movement scholarship, it has not been widely adopted even though it is evident that different social movements appeal to a diverse range of people and the movements themselves are built around social issues that impact groups differently. Roth (2021) explains that within social movements, "the positionality of multiple disadvantaged groups shapes the construction of collective identities" and it is these collective identities that determine what issues are brought into focus, or excluded, and that "they affect the framing of agendas and choice of strategies" (p. 3). Moreover, Roth states that “an intersectional perspective

acknowledges that movements are always shaped by multiple axes of dominance" such as gender, race, and social class (p. 10).

Intersectionality is an important analytical framework to understand the dynamics of social movements. Within this thesis, I will explore how student's experiences intersect with their collective identity as post-secondary student activists, which shapes their 'voices' on issues such as food security and tuition in the larger structure of the institution. An intersectional approach in this case study is useful because it allows for a deeper understanding of the collective identities of the students who are involved with the student food activist movement.

1.6 Aim of the Thesis

The aim of this thesis is to explore the work and experiences of student activists at Lakehead University who are advocating on the issues of student food insecurity on the Thunder Bay campus. I take a feminist intersectional approach to understand the social differences of student activists' lived experiences, paying attention to gender, race and ethnicity, income, ability, age, and student status as these relate to power and social inequalities (Romano 2019). I also illustrate how student's individual experiences intersect with their collective identity as post-secondary student activists, which shapes their 'voices' on issues such as food security and tuition in the larger structure of the institution.

This thesis will describe the activism and organizing undertaken by student food activists on the Thunder Bay campus of Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Currently, there is limited research on the experiences of student activists working on the issue of food insecurity in Canada. To fill this gap, I will describe the food environment at Lakehead University in Northern Ontario to understand the context in which food activism has occurred. The analysis will offer

insights on post-secondary student activists and their successes and challenges with doing food advocacy and pursuing food justice at Lakehead University.

1.7 Plan of The Thesis

In Chapter two, I review the literature on post-secondary student food insecurity and student activism. I will then give an overview of both academic and grey literature surrounding student activism, and more specifically, student activism on post-secondary student food insecurity.

In Chapter three, I discuss the methods and methodology of the project. As mentioned, this thesis is a feminist case study which also incorporates elements of Participatory Action Research (PAR). I explain case study research and PAR and describe how I have used them in the project. This follows with an overview of my research questions, objectives, sampling procedures, data collection, data analysis, reflexivity, impacts of Covid -19 on the research and ethical considerations.

In Chapter four, I provide a description of food activism, activities, initiatives, and events on the Thunder Bay campus at Lakehead University. I begin with a geographic overview and brief contextual analysis of the campus and Thunder Bay. I then explain the history and development of food security work at Lakehead University from 2016 to 2022. I explore the issue of food insecurity from the perspective of administrators.

In Chapter five, using an intersectional lens, I focus on the experience and perspective of student activists. I discuss how class, gender, race and student status (international versus domestic) influence and affect the ways student's take up food activism and shape collective identities.

In Chapter six, I offer up a discussion of how intersectionality is a useful framework for understanding student food activism. I expand on my findings and discuss the tension of food charity vs food justice and how this plays out in the context of Lakehead University. Finally, I suggest that more research is needed on student activism within a post-secondary context.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I begin by providing a discussion of responses to food insecurity and discuss food justice in the context of post-secondary institutions. This is followed with an overview of the literature on youth activism and social movements and student-led initiatives that attempt to alleviate food insecurity among college and university students.

2.1 Responses to Food Insecurity

There are many ways in which governments, organizations, and individuals work to address food insecurity. The dominant approach in Canada is responding to food insecurity through emergency-based food support, which is a charity response (Poppendieck, 1998: 5). In addition to emergency-based food support, however, many organizations take up the issue of food insecurity through a community-based approach, which entails working at a more collective level, for example, establishing community gardens (Engler-Stringer, 2011). As well, there are those who advocate for policy or structural changes, and scholars and advocates who argue that what is needed is food justice[6] (DeSouza, 2019; Alkon 2016). For example, Indigenous activists, their allies and food scholars purport that Indigenous Food Sovereignty (IFS)[7] is a decolonial response to pervasive food insecurity in First Nations and Indigenous groups (Ray et al 2021). In the following section, I discuss each of these responses to food insecurity and make links to the post-secondary context.

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[6] Alkon (2016) explains that food justice is "an analysis that recognizes and problematizes the influence of race and class on the production, distribution, and consumption of food" (p.24). Food justice recognizes power and inequalities in the food system (Cadieux and Slocum, 2015a; and Gottieb & Joshi, 2010) and questions how these inequalities and injustices can be challenged and/or over come (Gottieb and Joshi, 2010).

[7] According to Morrison (2020) Indigenous food sovereignty (IFS) "provides a framework for health and community development and both reclaiming the superior health once enjoyed by our ancestors and Indigenous voice and vision in decision making on matters affecting our traditional land and food system" (p.25). It stresses four principles: food is sacred, participation, self-determination, and legislation and policy reforms (Morrison, 2020).

2.1.1 Emergency-Based Responses

Starting in the 1980s, Canada began the erosion of the social safety net, which was partially due to neoliberal ideologies and government policy changes (Engler-Stringer 2011). At this time, food banks were introduced in Canada in response to government cutbacks to social programs including social assistance, unemployment insurance, welfare, etc. (Engler-Stringer, 2011; Riches, 1986). Emergency food responses, including food banks and food charity are downstream approaches, meaning that they do not help prevent food insecurity, but rather support individuals once they become food insecure. These charitable operations rely on food and monetary donations (Tang, 2020), however governments also support emergency food responses, as seen during the pandemic (Government of Canada, 2022).

Charity approaches are a response to food insecurity in post-secondary institutions that is widespread through campus food banks and other initiatives (Silverthorn, 2016). Most university campuses have a food bank and often, these food banks have been initiated by students. There have been many critiques of food banks and other emergency-based responses because they are viewed as a band aid solution, only helping after people have become food insecure. De Souza (2019) argues that food pantries however could be used as a tool to move towards a rights-based approach "focus[ed] on equity" (p. 37), yet "most food pantries see their job as primarily to distribute food—not necessarily to be involved in anti-racist and gender work" (p.124). Although most campus food banks see their primary role as distributing food to students, more recently, some are re-envisioning the role of their food banks. For example, Simon Fraser University rebranded their food bank as the SFU Food Hub, which aims to make students feel more comfortable about accessing these services (Bhat 2020). Instead of a food bank, the SFU Food Hub is modelled like a grocery store, where students can choose the items they need, instead of getting a pre-packaged bag (Bhat, 2020).

Although many campus food banks across Canada are in the process of re-envisioning the food bank model, a charity response has become normalized as the solution to food insecurity as the problem of food insecurity continues to be individualized. As Laban et al (2020) and others have argued, emergency-based responses are not long-term or viable options to food insecurity and there is much research to demonstrate that food banks on campuses are not the solution to food insecurity as they do not solve the underlying issue of food insecurity: poverty and other structural inequalities (Maynard et al., 2018; Tarasuk & Dachner, 2016; and Engler-Stringer, 2011).

2.1.2 Community-Based Responses

Another approach to addressing food insecurity is through community-based initiatives. Community food security can be defined as "a situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice" (Hamm and Belows, 2003:37). Community-based responses and initiatives include things such as food hubs, community and collective kitchens, farmers markets, urban agriculture, and community gardens (Engler-Stringer, 2011).

There has been an increase of community-based responses on post-secondary campuses through administrative and student led- initiatives. For example, The Dalhousie Farmer's Market is a "student-run farmers market that is committed to providing fresh, local, and whenever possible, spray-free produce to students…at an affordable cost" (http://www.dsumarket.ca/ par 1). The market supplies weekly food boxes of seasonal produce, which cost between $12-$20 for students to purchase. Another example, The Peoples Potato, is a student-led food assistant program run out of Concordia University. In addition to providing students with hot meals, the

People's Potato also has a community garden (People's Potato, n.d) and gives out food parcels biweekly to students. The community garden runs through the summer by volunteers, in collaboration with multiple other organizations to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to the community members, thus reducing overall food insecurity (People's Potato, n.d).

While community gardens and community-based initiatives can be helpful, many believe that they do not fully address the issues that food-insecure communities face (Robidoux, 2017; Leblanc and Burnett, 2017; and Hansen, 2011). Similarly, Tarasuk, Mitchell, & Dachner (2016) and Engler-Stringer (2011) explain that community efforts (food banks, charities, meal programs, community kitchens, and community gardens) can not eliminate food insecurity because they do not address structural inequalities and poverty.

Moreover, as Kwan (2017) explains, alternative and local food movements tend to "re-enforce cultures of individualism, consumerism, [and] market-based values, [which] over idealize the notion of 'local,' and thus fail to address underlying structural issues, and racial and economic inequalities" (p.25). Kwan (2017) continues to explain that "food insecurity has traditionally been framed as issues of access and education, invoking notions of personal responsibility, which ignore and mask systemic forces that drive inequalities (Kwan, 2017: 25). As previously mentioned, our society views food insecurity through a neoliberal lens, with charity as the dominant response (Poppendieck, 1998). For post-secondary students, neoliberal views around food insecurity have led to a normalization of the experience (Maharaj, 2020; and Maynard et al., 2018) and the development of donation-based food banks on post-secondary campuses.

De Souza (2019) stresses the importance of deconstructing the neoliberal stigma encompassing poverty and food insecurity. De Souza (2019) describes neoliberal stigma as "a

particular kind of Western and American narrative that focuses on individualism, hard work, and personal responsibility as defining attributes of human dignity and citizenship. When people do not live up to these parameters, for reasons out of their control, they are marked as irresponsible, unworthy, and 'bad citizens, creating an "us" versus "them" phenomenon" (p.3). As it will be explained, students, international students, Indigenous students, low-income students, women and gender diverse identifying students face additional barriers and neoliberal stigma when faced with food insecurity.

2.1.3 Policies, Structural and Institutional Responses

Maynard et al. (2018) explain, there has been a lack of policy and program solutions across universities. Structural solutions will require a discussion about minimum wage, policy reform on tuition rates (for domestic and international students), student loan programs, affordable housing, and more (Maynard et al., 2018; McIntyre et al., 2017; Silverthorn, 2016; Tarasuk et al., 2012; Tiessen, 2015; Wakefield, et al., 2012). Similarly, De Souza (2019) explains that we need policy changes leading to restructuring the food system, increasing control over one's own food and increasing minimum wage.

On university campuses, one way in which administrations have entered into the conversation about food insecurity is through the development of food security committees, which hold the potential to bring forth structural changes. These committees function as opportunities for communication between students, faculty, and administration. For example, the student union and administrators at Lethbridge formed a committee in the Fall of 2020, in collaboration with other organizations, to address the ways in which "food scarcity" occurs on campus as meal plans were not offered to students during the pandemic (Ferris, 2021). Lakehead University also has a Food Security Committee, formed in 2017, which will be further discussed

in Chapter four. While there is an opportunity in these committees to advocate for larger systemic change, the response is often charitable, or emergency-based. For example, the Lethbridge Committee organized emergency food baskets and virtual cooking classes in response to the pandemic and student feedback (Ferris, 2021).

2.2 Food Justice Instead of Charity

Tolbert (2020) explains that we must move away from food charity, and instead advocate for governments to make changes towards a new food system. Tolbert (2020) states, "food activists and academics call for the government to address food poverty properly and support a socially just and sustainable food system that moves beyond food charity" (p. 699). De Souza (2019) explains that a rights- and justice- based perspective will "focus on equity and therefore provide a counterfoil to charitable approaches to hunger" (p.51). Food activists explain that an alternative to emergency-based responses, which gives individuals autonomy and choice, is food justice.

Food justice has been defined in different ways. Kwan (2017) explains, "there is currently a debate among researchers and academics regarding the operationalization of 'food justice', and what it means 'to do food justice'" (p.25). De Souza (2019) quotes Gottieb and Joshi (2010) who define food justice in two ways, first, as "ensuring that the benefits and risks of where, what, and how food is grown and produced, transported and distributed, and accessed and eaten are shared fairly (p.6)" (p.17), and second, as "a language and a set of meanings, told through stories as well as analysis, that illuminate how food injustices are experienced and how they can be challenged and overcome" (p.20). Building on this, Alkon (2016) explains that food justice is "an analysis that recognizes and problematizes the influence of race and class on the production, distribution, and consumption of food" (p.24). Moreover, Cadieux and Slocum

(2015a) suggest that food justice requires "a transformation of the current food system, including but not limited to eliminating disparities and inequities" (Cadieux and Slocum, 2015a:3). According to Cadieux and Slocum (2015a) "food justice means transformative change at four key points of intervention: trauma/inequality, exchange, land, and labour" (p.2). Specifically, trauma and inequality relate to "acknowledging and confronting historical, collective social trauma and persistent race, gender, and class inequalities" within food movements (Slocum and Cadieux 2015:13). Exchange meaning, "designing exchange mechanisms that build communal reliance and control" (Slocum and Cadieux 2015:13). Land as "creating innovative ways to control, use, share, own, manage and conceive of land, and ecologies in general, that place them outside the speculative market and the rationale of extraction" (Slocum and Cadieux 2015:13). Lastly, labour relating to "pursuing labor relations that guarantee a minimum income and are neither alienating nor dependent on (unpaid) social reproduction by women" (Slocum and Cadieux 2015:13). While there may be limitations to the work that student activists themselves can accomplish, this thesis will describe the ways students take up food activism and food justice, which may involve advocacy and spreading awareness on what food justice means, student-ran community gardens, or other initiatives.

Within community-based responses, food movements and food justice initiatives, activists must be cautious of the ways in which systemic racism and colonialism are enacted and embedded within the work itself (Slocum and Cadieux, 2015b; and Guthman, 2008). For example, Slocum and Cadieux (2015b) explain that "most organization leaders knew that systemic racism was a part of the food system but had difficulty seeing how their work might be furthering white privilege" (p.31). Similarly, Guthman (2008) discusses how the activism within current food movements and alternative food systems "reflects white desires more than those of

the communities they putatively serve" (p.431). Guthman's (2008) criticism of food movements and alternative food systems echo De Souza's (2019) concept of "white liberalism" (p. 15). De Souza (2019) gives a stark example of white liberalism related to food access. She says,

> One of the four white female panelists was discussing how she procured meat for her food pantry clients- even venison, she noted excitedly. After she finished a hand went up in the audience from a woman who identified herself as Native. She went on to explain the irony of how she, an Indigenous woman, could get a pound of venison from the local food shelf, but not through her own traditional hunting practices. She pointed out that her family was forced to go through numerous hunting and fishing regulatory procedures, including paying for a butcher to carve up the animal. She scoffed, 'you know, my community, we were doing that long before anyone else, as if we need to go to a butcher!' (p.15).

It is important to be aware of systemic racism within food movements and how this might occur within post-secondary institutes and student food movements as well.

Alternative food movements (e.g. farmer's markets, local or organic food), which emerged in response to the increasingly globalized, industrial food system, have catered to white, middle- and upper-class people and are not accessible to all people (Slocum and Cadieux, 2015b; and Guthman, 2008). Slocum and Cadieux (2015b) have argued that this "food movement was in danger of creating an alternative food system for the white middle class" (Slocum and Cadieux, 2015b:28). Yet the alternative food movement has become a symbol of resisting globalization through its creation of local food networks, which appeals to many people including municipal governments as it promotes economic development and community food security (Engler-Stringer, 2011; Guthman, 2008; DeSouza, 2019; and Poppendieck, 1998). Moreover, the ideology of localism has become embedded in how we think about 'good' food, which has been taken up by institutional food services. Thus, we see campus food services incorporating local food options in the cafeterias of universities. For example, at Lakehead University, expensive pints of locally made gelato and local pizzas are available for purchase through food services. Although local food has a role to play in improving community food security (Engler-Stringer,

2011), it is necessary to think about how this plays out on the university campus. Specifically, how do students see these initiatives, particularly when faced with food insecurity? Moreover, when we apply an intersectional lens to food insecurity on campus, which groups of students are able to access these local foods and who are unable to participate in this form of market 'buying' activism. As Guthman (2008) states, local food movement projects need to be "explicitly anti-racist" (p.443).

Some student activists across Canadian post-secondary institutions have developed student-led food services which incorporate food justice and anti-capitalist values. As Alkon (2016) explains that through "food justice activism, low-income communities and communities of colour seek to create local food systems that meet their own food needs" (p.24). For example, The Loaded Ladle and Midnight Kitchen which provide affordable foods for students on campus. The Loaded Ladle is a student-run initiative at Dalhousie University, which "provides accessible, sustainable, locally-sourced, free food on the Dalhousie University campus" (The Loaded Ladle, n.d.). In addition to food support, the Loaded Ladle website also explains that they run events and activities which discuss topics such as food sovereignty, food security and food justice. Their vision is to reimagine a new food system that opposes injustice and instead is based on care and solidarity. The Loaded Ladle (n.d.) also explains that their values are anti-capitalist, anti-oppressive, and anti-racist. Additionally, Midnight Kitchen is a non-profit organization formed by students at McGill University (Midnight Kitchen, 2019). Midnight Kitchen (2019) explains that it formed through the idea of serving foods in an alternative system, as opposed to "Chartwell corporation's attempt to monopolize the distribution of food on the McGill University Campus" (par 1). Those involved in forming Midnight Kitchen wanted to make healthy food accessible to students, outside of a capitalist food system (Midnight Kitchen, 2019).

They also oppose individualistic approaches to food insecurity which do not recognize "the systemic causes of poverty, environmental destruction and lack of access to food" (par. 3).

2.3 Indigenous Food Sovereignty

Settler-colonialism leads to high rates of food insecurity for First Nations communities and Indigenous Peoples living in urban settings (Ray et al 2019). Robidoux (2017) explains that "Indigenous food systems were systematically eroded beginning with the formation of British and French colonial governments and later continued under the Canadian nation-state" (p.3). Prior to contact, Wiebe and Wipf (2012) explain that "Indigenous food systems were complex, ranging from intensive agriculture in some regions, to mixed farming, hunting and gathering, and extensive fishing in others" (p.6). Colonization by European settlers led to the destruction of these systems (Wiebe & Wipf, 2011:6; Daschuk, 2013).

According to Morrison (2020) Indigenous food sovereignty (IFS) "provides a framework for health and community development and both reclaiming the superior health once enjoyed by our ancestors and Indigenous voice and vision in decision making on matters affecting our traditional land and food system" (p.25). In addition, it stresses four principles: food is sacred, participation, self-determination, and legislation and policy reforms (Morrison, 2020). Martin & Amos (2016) explain that Indigenous food sovereignty differs from food sovereignty as it is a decolonizing approach to food systems that begins with valuing the protection of traditional food practices and includes co-management strategies. Indigenous Food Sovereignty is important to students at Lakehead, several of whom came together to create the Indigenous Food Sovereignty committee as I will discuss in Chapter four.

2.4 Youth, Student Activism and Social Movements

There is limited research in Canada on student activists who engage in food activism and advocacy, however, there is a rich literature on youth and student activist movements. Rhoads (2016) gives a "historical overview of various student movements and forms of student activism from the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement to the present" (p. 189). Rhoads (2016) lists five points to consider in student activism. First, student activists take on many risks when fighting for social change, such as death threats, emotional and psychological strain, and/or neglecting school (Rhoads, 2016). Second, there are also positive outcomes of student activism, including the development of organizational and social skills (Rhoads, 2016). Third, there is a need for a more general definition of student activism and what is considered activism (Rhoads, 2016). Fourth, we must consider the impact of social media on activism, which requires "high-tech skills" and media literacy (Rhoads, 2016). Lastly, many youth are critical of justice idealism and the social inequalities entrenched in society such as racism, classism, heterosexism, sexism (Rhoads, 2016).

Bérubé-Lupien (2022) writes about the Maple Spring, an example of Quebec students protesting increasing tuition fees. This protest took place in the 2011-2012 school year with approximately 500,000 students and supporters taking part (Bérubé-Lupien, 2022). Students protested over the proposed increase of tuition rates of $325 per year over a five-year period (Giroux, 2013). Giroux (2013) describes the protest as an "act against the increasing influence of neoliberalism on North American and global society" (p. 515). Giroux (2013) explains that for students, tuition increases could mean they would need to take up another job, or potentially drop out of school. As well, it would disproportionately affect low-income students.

As Earl, et al. (2017) explains, youth and student movements lead to political socialization. Political socialization sees youth as active and interested members of society who are interested in politics because of their own experiences (Earl, et al., 2017). Youth engage in political activism by "discussing political issues, engaging in political activities, or participating in programs and institutions" (Earl, et al., 2017:3). Earl et al. (2017) describes concepts such as biographical availability to understand youth activism. Biographical availability refers to the concept that youth, "unmarried, unemployed and childless are more likely to participate in activism, particularly high-risk activism (McAdam, 1989) … [because of their] greater free time and limited obligations" (Earl, et al., 2017:3). Related to this, Earl, et al. (2017) states that "social movement participation can have lasting biographical consequences for participants, including long term impacts on marriage and divorce rates, and occupational decisions" (p.3). Earl et al. (2017) explains that post-secondary students have been involved in many types of social movements and protests, many of which focus on race and gender. For example, in the past students have been active participants and organizers for the Civil Rights movement (Biggs, 2006; Morris, 1981), the Free Speech Movement at the University of California, Berkeley (Draper, 1965), the anti-Vietnam war movement (Gamson, 1991; Klatch, 1999), and the women's rights movement (Buechler, 1990). More recently, "Occupy Wall Street, the DREAMer movement, the movement to end sexual assault, and #BlackLivesMatter continues to recruit and mobilize young people on high school and college campus" (Earl, et al., 2017:2).

Earl, et al. (2017) stresses the importance of understanding youth agency in social movements. Specifically, they state that, "young people, [are] active learners and decision-makers, who may have distinct interests, and have intersectional identities that include being

young" (p.8). Moreover, Earl, et al. (2017) explains that both gender and race impact and affect the ways in which youth take up activism.

In relation to gender, women faced increased barriers in participating in activism (Earl, et al., 2017; Keller, 2012; Taft, 2010; Gordon, 2008; and McAdam, 1988). For example, according to Taft (2010) and Earl et al. (2017) society often associates activists as older women, making it more difficult for young women to identify as activists. Gordon (2008) and Earl et al (2017) also explains that girls, young women, and adult women experience sexism within activist organizations which leads to less women involved and in leadership roles. Finally, young women are also less likely to continue their activism because “girls also face stronger opposition to their activism from parents (Gordon, 2008; McAdam, 1988), leading them to drop out of activist youth organizations more often than boys” (Earl et al., 2017).

Earl et al (2017) explains that racialized youth are increasingly more involved in, “social justice activism drawing on intersectional approaches” (Clay, 2012; Ginwright & James, 2002; Ginwright, 2007; Ginwright, 2010; Kwon, 2013) (p.5). However, in the same ways that racism experienced by youth has increased youth participation, it also is a barrier to participation (Earl, et al (2017). Fears of deportation and incarceration are barriers for youth of colour to participate in activism (Earl, et al., 2017; Negrón-Gonzales, 2014; and Kwon, 2013).

Connor, Crawford and Galioto (2021) explain that “As student activism continues to roil campuses, concerns have arisen about the mental health costs associated with activist-oriented civic engagement” (p.1) Though research has shown the positive outcomes in student activism, it is crucial to investigate possible negative effects. Connor, Crawford and Galioto (2021) conducted 42 in-depth interviews with self-identifying student activists across the United States to examine the relationship between activism and mental health. They found “while just under

one-third of the respondents perceived a positive effect, 60% of the respondents noted adverse consequences to their psychological well-being" (p. 1). Negative emotions associated with activism included stress, exhaustion, and guilt (Connor, Crawford and Galioto, 2021) which was seen similarly amongst the population.

Lower-income participants had the most positive mental health outcomes from their activism (Conner, Crawford and Galioto, 2021). Reported positive emotions and outcomes include "social capital or connection to others, a sense of purpose, effecting change, and self-care and collective care…[which helped] them to sustain the emotionally and physically difficult work of activism" (Connor, Crawford and Galioto, 2021:15). Conner, Crawford and Galioto (2021) also explain that "personal experiences and identities shaped their activism and how their activism in turn became a core part of their identity" (p.16).

Wawrzynski and Naik (2021) state that "scholars have argued community engagement plays a critical role in developing responsible citizens, while other forms of student activism, such as student protests, are disruptive to the educational process (e.g., MacGregor, 2016)" (p.327). However, Wawrzynski and Naik (2021) also explain that student activism can result in positive outcomes, such as personal growth, development, social change, leadership development, academic achievements, multicultural awareness, and civic responsibility (Cress et al., 2001; Schrieber & Yu, 2016; Wawrzynski et al., 2012; Case, 2008; Ivala & Gachago, 2012). In addition to the benefits of student led activism, it is important to note that often student activism is the focus of one's identity. Wawrzynski and Naik (2021) explain that "research has shown involvement in various student organizations influences a range of academic and noncognitive outcomes that differ for students of different races and genders" (p.330). For example, Wawrzynski and Naik (2021) found that "involvement in political organizations had a

positive relationship with collegiate academic performance for Black males and Latino males and females…Participation in community service was positively related to sense of belonging among Latino students, students who are often marginalized in US institutions" (Nuñez, 2009 in Wawrzynski and Naik, 2021, p.330). In this case, activism tied to race and culture may have positive impacts for students as it leads to a sense of belonging within their communities.

2.4.1 Youth Food Activism

Currently, there is limited research on student activism relating to food and food security, including why young people chose to be involved in food activism (Kwan, 2017). One study by Kwan (2017), looked at youth, ages 18-33, and their engagement with food justice in New York City (NYC). Kwan (2017) aimed to "understand how and why young people become food activists and to learn from and elevate the voices of young food activists" (p. 155). Kwan (2017) found that it was their food values (memories, family support/values) and wanting to connect with their culture that led youth to become more involved with activism relating to food. Further, they explained that youth demonstrated an understanding and a shift from the way they saw food (as merely nutritional) to it being a "platform for addressing deeper, systemic issues" (p.157). Youth wanted to do something meaningful and hands-on, while also having an "awareness and critical understanding of injustice, power and privilege" in relation to inequalities in the food system (Kwan, 2017:157). Youth are also increasingly getting involved in organizing on community and policy levels, and making the links between food justice and other forms of social justice like gender equality, labor rights, immigrant rights, etc. Yet as Kwan acknowledges, there are not a lot of youth voices and stories within the food justice movement" (p.31). Young activists noted that the food movement needs "more active community involvement, representation, and participation" to address issues of gender and racial inequalities

(Kwan, 2017:107). As Kwan (2017) explains, why and how young people are involved in food activism is not well-researched, even though general youth activism has a large body of research. Both youth (and student) food activism require more research as it is currently scarce (Kwan, 2017).

2.4.2 Student Food Activism

Ahmed et al (2021) worked with student-leaders at Kingsborough Community College in the US to develop a one-day intervention to discuss stigmatized food-related topics. The team included the food security team of their local college, which was made up of five students and three staff members. Researchers initiated the project and recruited student leaders to lead initiatives to raise awareness on food insecurity and stigmatized food-related topics. The project was developed because researchers were unsure if students knew what was available to them and questioned if the stigma relating to food insecurity stopped students from reaching out. It was reported that students felt like they "learned new information about campus food problems, [and]…they were more likely to use campus food programs and ask for changes at their campus due to the intervention" (Ahmed, et al., 2021:4). This research project shows, firstly, that students can initiate interventions that will help educate and create social changes, secondly, that students are willing to be more involved in food activism once such topics are more openly discussed (breaking down stigma). Ahmed et al (2021) suggest that others use their strategies to increase student food insecurity awareness and food justice work on post-secondary campuses.

2.5 Conclusion:

Throughout this chapter, I have outlined the literature on the responses to food insecurity, including emergency-based responses; community-based responses; and policies, structural and institutional change, giving examples from both academic and grey literature. I have also

discussed food justice versus charity, noting that students engage with both food charity and food justice approaches. I have also discussed Indigenous Food Sovereignty, describing the importance of understanding the history of settler-colonialism which has led to high rates of food insecurity for First Nations communities and Indigenous Peoples living in urban settings (Ray et al 2019; Robidoux, 2017; and Leblanc and Burnett, 2017), which is mirrored on university campuses (Maynard et al., 2018; Power et al., 2021).

While there is not much literature on student food activism, research on social movements, youth movements and activisms all help to develop an understanding of the way student activists take up food activism and how it relates to and shapes their identity. Studies have shown that gender and race impact and affect the ways in which youth take up activism (Earl, et al., 2017; Keller, 2012; Taft, 2010; Gordon, 2008; and McAdam, 1988). Engagement in activism can have both positive effects such as social change (Wawrzynski and Naik, 2021) and also negative outcomes such as stress (Connor, Crawford and Galioto, 2021). This chapter demonstrates that there is a need to understand more fully the context of student food activism on the university campus including how activism intersects with the student experience and identity.

Chapter 3: Methods

In this chapter I discuss my methodology, the research design and methods employed in my project. The methodology will begin with a discussion of qualitative feminist research and intersectionality as a research approach, followed by an overview of feminist case study research and Participatory Action Research (PAR), both of which framed the research design. This is followed by a discussion of the sampling strategy and inclusion criteria, recruitment, and a brief description of my participants. Then, I discuss the two data collection methods, a focus group with student activist participants, and in-depth interviews with key administrators and campus leadership. This will follow with a discussion of how I undertook data analysis. Finally, I will discuss reflexivity and address the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the research. I will end this chapter with a discussion of ethics and the ethical considerations of my project on student activism.

3.1 Methodology

This feminist case study takes an intersectional approach and seeks to explore and develop our understanding of student activism on the issues surrounding food insecurity. The research is qualitative and as such addresses "the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social setting or human problems" (Creswell, 2013:44). This case study research aims to understand student activists' experiences advocating for student food security at one mid-sized post-secondary institution in Northern Ontario.

3.1.1 Intersectional Research

Hesse-Biber (2014) outlines the main goal of intersectional feminist research as "supporting social justice and social transformations" (p.3). In this feminist project, one of the goals was to hear and give voice to the student activists who advocate for food justice and a food

secure campus. In feminist food studies, an intersectional approach to research examines how interlocking social differences such as gender, class, race, and ethnicity among other axes of oppression are structured through systems of power such as heteropatriarchy, neoliberal capitalism and white supremacy (Parker et al., 2019). In this project, I use intersectionality as a theoretical framework to describe and analyze the student activists' lived experiences of gender, ethnicity, Indigeneity, income, ability, age, and student status as these relate to power and social inequalities (Romano, 2019; Collins & Bilge, 2016). Student's experience their education through their social identities, which affects the resources (financial, social support, etc.) they have when they are students (e.g. Maynard, et al., 2018; and Silverthorn, 2016). As well, student's individual experiences intersect with their collective identity as student activists, which shapes their 'voices' on issues such as food security and tuition in the larger structure of the institution.

3.1.2 Case Study Research

This research is presented as a feminist case study because my focus is on one post-secondary institution, Lakehead University, and the student activists who advocated on the issue of food insecurity over a period of two years (2020-2022). As Creswell and Poth (2018) explain,

> Case study research is defined as a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth, data collection involving multiple sources of information, and report a case description and case themes (p.96-97).

This research has been analyzed and written up as a case study because it is bound to a specific place, the Thunder Bay campus of Lakehead University, and the student food security activists at this university. As Creswell and Poth (2018) explain, the goal of case study research is "to understand a specific issue, problem, or concern" (pp. 98). In addition to providing a

description of the context of the need for food security activism at Lakehead University, this thesis explores the experiences of student activists on this issue in this place.

Specifically, this case study engages intersectional feminist theory as the methodological approach, which values the interactions amongst participants (Hesse-Bieber, 2014). In particular, the student activists were known to one another and knew me as a student activist myself. Collectively, we shared experiences and understandings of the context and challenges of doing food activism on campus. In addition to the participants having a relationship with me, they also had relationships with one another. Hesse-Biber (2014) explains that "feminist research praxis centralizes the relationship between the researcher and the researched to balance differing levels of power and authority" (p.3). This framed my thinking about my own positionality in relation to the participants, which I say more about later in this chapter, and it was also important to understand how participants interacted with each other in terms of power and privilege (Hesse-Bieber, 2014). Within the focus group itself, the conversation unfolded through the structure of my research questions; however, students also made plans to further collaborate and work together on upcoming events and activities. The social dynamics of the focus group were respectful with participants working to ensure that everyone had a chance to share their experiences.

It is important to note that when I began the study, I conceptualized the project as Participatory Action Research (PAR) because I was a student activist at Lakehead University advocating and engaging with other students on the issues surrounding student food security. Participatory Action Research is a problem-centred and collaborative approach (Leavy, 2017; Lykes & Crosby, 2014; and McTaggart, 1991). Leavy (2017) explains that PAR is often exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, and focused on community action or change and

evaluation (p.9). There is particular emphasis on social justice, social action, trust and rapport, and cultural sensitivity (Leavy, 2017). PAR emphasizes the importance of collaboration by working with participants (who are co-researchers) from the start to the end of the research and within all aspects of the research process, the importance of reflexivity, and a transformative paradigm (Leavy, 2017' Lykes & Crosby, 2015; and Mctaggart, 1991). The study design had to change because of the pandemic and the impacts of Covid-19 on university students. Specifically, it was difficult to continue to engage student activists as participants after my initial focus group in early 2021 for several reasons including continued campus closure, some student activists had to move home, and priorities for students began to shift because of financial obligations. The pandemic had many effects on this research, which I will talk about further along in the chapter but in terms of research design, it was difficult to continue with PAR as my participants were not as readily available as Covid-19 continued through 2021-2022.

Although the study design shifted from PAR to case study, there are many aspects of the case study that continued to align with PAR research. For example, as a student activist myself, I was in the position of "insider" (Hesse-Biber, 2014) as I was running the student-led club, LU Food for Thought and advocating on food insecurity issues on the Thunder Bay campus over the course of the research. Moreover, I was a member of the university food security committee and attended food security meetings over the duration of this research. As well, I am now working in the role of Food Resource Centre Coordinator for the student union, LUSU.

Findings in case study research include "a description of the case and themes or issues that the researchers have uncovered in studying the case" (Creswell and Poth, 2018:98). In other words, the findings should include "general lessons learned by studying the case(s)" (Creswell

and Poth, 2018:98). In line with feminist intersectional case study and PAR, the overarching goal of this research is social justice and social change.

3.2 Research Questions and Objectives

As discussed in the introduction, the research questions guiding this project are: (1) What are the experiences of student activists who focus on food insecurity at Lakehead University? (2) How does race, gender and student status intersect with issues of food security to shape the experiences of student activists? and (3) What is the context in which food insecurity occurs on this campus and how do students take up activism to address the issues?

The research project emerged out of my own involvement and passion for the issue of student food insecurity. I first became interested in this topic in 2019, after taking a food studies course. I then became involved in the Lakehead University Meal exchange chapter (LUMXC) from 2019-2021 and Lakehead University Food For Thought (LUFFT) from 2021-2022. As a student activist myself, I wanted to further understand the experiences of other student activists who take up food activism and how they work to alleviate student food insecurity. From this interest, emerged my research objectives, which are as follows: describe the context of food security activism (events and initiatives) that have taken place on the Lakehead campus to alleviate student food insecurity, describe student activists' perspectives, experiences and activism, and analyze thematically the ways in which student activists work to alleviate food insecurity at Lakehead University.

3.3 Participant Recruitment and Sampling

As case study research is bound to a specific context, I used purposeful, nonprobability sampling (Creswell and Poth 2018; Leavy, 2017) to recruit student participants as well as the administrators and leaders as key informants. As Creswell & Poth (2018) explain, purposeful

sampling will not allow statistical inferences about a population (or generalizability), but, instead, a purposeful sample is an intentional choosing of participants for their ability to "inform the researcher about the research problem under examination" (p.148).

Participants were recruited because they were either student food activists or because they were involved with working in programming on food insecurity issues on campus as part of their work portfolio through the university administration, or the student union. Participant recruitment was done through an email (See Appendices A, F). Because I used purposive sampling, I sent out emails to several students, administrators, and leaders at Lakehead University who I knew to be involved with the issue of post-secondary student food insecurity, providing them with information on my project to see if they would be interested in participating through my information letter (See Appendices B, G). These participants were identified through their public on-campus work on student food insecurity. After participants showed interest in participating, I followed up with sending them a consent form (See Appendices C, H). Through an email exchange, participants returned their signed consent forms to me, and a zoom meeting was set up via a virtual invitation. The focus group was held virtually because of the REB covid-19 research restrictions put on in-person research during the pandemic.

The sample population in this study includes post-secondary students who identify as student activists (n=4), and key administrators who work on the issue of post-secondary student food insecurity at Lakehead University (n=4). In total, there were 8 participants who agreed to participate, four student activists and four administrators and leaders. Although this is a small sample, the data collected was rich because of the close relationships between the student activist participants who had been collectively working together for a couple of years prior to my

beginning the project. As well, the in-depth interviews with staff were also important for filling out the context of the campus food environment.

The student activist focus group participants included women (n=3) and one man (n=1), two of whom were international students while the other two were domestic, one Indigenous student, and one student from South Asia. Moreover, there were two undergraduate and two graduate students. Collectively, these participants belonged to student groups, or student-led committees working on campus food insecurity either through their academic pursuits or activism including: the Lakehead University Meal Exchange Chapter (LUMXC), LU Food for Thought (LUFFT), the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Committee, and/or the University Food Security Committee (See Appendix I).

The four administrator participants included women (n=3) and one man (n=1) who also held leadership positions in the university and worked on the issues surrounding student food security on campus through their work portfolios (See Appendix I).

Given that the post-secondary institution is also a community, it was important to draw on the voices and ideas of these two different groups for this case study research because each group brings different experiences and perspectives on the issue. Lakehead University was chosen as the site of this case study research because of my own proximity to the campus as a student, but also for its unique geographic location and because student food insecurity is high with many student activists organizing around this issue.

3.4 Data Collection

Data for this project was collected between April 2020 and September 2021. Prior to any data being collected, the project was approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board (REB), protocol #1464891. To answer my research question, I used two data collection

methods: one focus group and four in-depth interviews. The same four questions used in the focus group were asked of the administrator participants. This enabled me to understand the differences and similarities in the ways the issue of student food insecurity is portrayed, what kinds of action participants think needs to be done, and the differences and similarities in the way the issue is perceived.

3.5 Method

For this research project, two methods were used including one focus group with four student activists and four one-on-one interviews with Lakehead University Administrators.

3.5.1 Focus Group

I began data collection by conducting one focus group in April of 2020, a few weeks following the declaration of the pandemic. Four post-secondary students who were active in food security work took part in the focus group, alongside myself and my Supervisor, Dr. Parker. The focus group was conducted through Zoom. I chose to use a focus group to collect data with the student activists because I wanted to ensure an engaging conversation amongst this group of participants. As mentioned, these student activists were all known to one another and worked collectively to address issues of student food insecurity on campus. Focus groups are particularly beneficial when the participants have similarities and can converse, which creates dialogue between participants, it is also beneficial when there is limited time (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Krueger & Casey, 2014; Morgan, 1997 in Creswell & Poth, 2018:164).

Munday (2014) outlines a feminist approach to focus groups, suggesting that feminist researchers can use focus groups "to investigate how the participants understand and actively construct social categories and phenomena" (p.238). Munday (2014) explains that "the collective and interactive nature of focus groups is particularly appealing to feminist researchers because it

links to ideas of empowerment and feminist praxis" (p.242). Wherein participants can learn to realize that their personal experiences are shared and collective, "thus, promoting a new and greater understanding of their social position as women constrained within patriarchal social structures" (Munday, 2014:242). Given this, focus groups can allow for discussions on the phenomena, and development of a shared understanding of experiences, in terms of gender, but, through an intersectional approach, also in terms of race, social class, and other aspects of one's identity (Romano 2019). Starting with a focus group was important because I was able to hear from the student activists about their unique individual and collective experiences with advocating for food security on campus. I was also able to ask this group of students what their goals or ambitions were for their food activism. The focus group questions included: (1) an icebreaker which allowed students to introduce themselves, name, pronoun usage, and talk about what first made them interested in this work. I then asked participants the following questions: (2) What are your experiences working on food security on campus? (3) How are these experiences gendered? Racialized? (4) Is the work you do gendered? Racialized? (5) What work are you aware of that is being done in relation to food (in)security on campus? (5a) How have these initiatives / projects been successful? (5b) What have been the challenges? (6) What kinds of changes on campus do you think would be beneficial for students in achieving a food secure campus? (See Appendix D). My aim was to hear more about what the student activists were doing on campus in relation to issues of food insecurity, discover in greater depth who is working on this issue, what did the student activists see as successful, and to engage with students on changes they would like to see with regards to food insecurity on campus. The focus group took about an hour and a half and the rapport between the students was positive.

In addition to the rich data set produced in the focus group, I was also able to observe and analyse the interpersonal dynamics among participants over the course of the focus group, albeit in a limiting way given that the focus group was on Zoom. I was able to pay close attention to how participants identified themselves in relation to one another, which as mentioned earlier, can be useful in focus groups to understand collective identities (Munday, 2014). Related to this is power, an important consideration in feminist research as mentioned earlier in the chapter (Hesse-Biber 2014). Munday (2014) explains that through a focus group, researchers can pay attention to the ways participants interact with each other and understand each other, as well as, how power dynamics are presented. In situations where participants know each other it is important for the researcher to be aware of "established hierarchies and patterns of interaction, which may impact the data produced" (Munday, 2014: 240). For example, during the focus group, I was able to pay attention to silences "noting who is speaking and who feels less empowered or entitled to state concerns"(Lykes and Crosby, 2014, p.163). I also observed that the participants were quite mindful of the space they took up. Participant 3: Dawn, often ended by saying "sorry", or "sorry that took so long" in that they were quite cautious of the space they took up. Other participants were also mindful and stated things such as "But yeah that's kind of all from me, I don't want to take up too much space, so that's it" Participant 4: Sarah. While participants shared their experiences and opinions, it is interesting to note that the women were sometimes insecure with taking up space, even when assured that their perspectives and points were valid, important, and interesting.

As the facilitator-researcher, but also a peer to the participants and an "insider" (Hesse-Biber, 2014) given my own involvement with student activism on student food insecurity, it was my role in the focus group to ensure that everyone was equally able to speak and feel safe to

share their opinions. Participants were able to raise their hand (a function with Zoom) or respectfully jump in and speak in response to the questions posed, or to comments made by another participant. If I noticed one of the participants was cut-off or interrupted (which is sometimes an unintended outcome of online discussions) I made sure to go back to them and ask them to make their point. Additionally, before moving from question to question, I made sure to ask if anyone had anything else they would like to add. Furthermore, when I began the focus group and introduced myself and the project (before recording) I made sure that I had participant consent forms and reminded students that the focus group would remain confidential. Specifically, I requested that students respect each other's confidentiality in the Information Letter (See Appendix B) and Focus Group Preamble (See Appendix D). Munday (2014) explains that "some researchers argue that it is inappropriate to use focus groups when participants already know one another" (p.24). While some researchers are hesitant to use focus groups as a method when participants know each other, I argue, in my project, it was beneficial to the study. Munday (2014) explains that the benefits of participants knowing each other include "...the fact that participants already feel relaxed with one another and need little time to warm up, and the way discussion can be promoted by reference to shared stories and experiences" (p. 240). Particularly in this case study, with student activism as the focus, it was highly meaningful for participants to interact and collectively narrate an account of their activism.

3.5.2 Interviews

I also undertook four in-depth interviews between August-September 2021 with university administrators who work on issues relating to student food insecurity as part of their portfolio. These interviews were conducted 16 months after the initial focus group. The interview questions were the same questions that I used in the focus group (See Appendix D).

Because student participants had expressed concerns relating to action taken by the university relating to food insecurity, it was important for me to follow up with this set of interviews to hear the perspectives of these administrators and get a better understanding of what was being done on campus to alleviate food insecurity on behalf of the university. In a similar process to the focus group, before I began the interviews, I obtained informed consent (See Appendix H). All participants agreed to recording their interview on Zoom. Unlike with the focus group, transcripts were not sent out to each interview participants for review, as the information was to add to the description of what was already said by students and the focus of my thesis is on the perspective of students.

Zoom was used for both the focus group and the interviews for a few reasons. Zoom allowed for password protected meetings, participants had to be invited and needed a password to enter the space. Zoom also recorded the focus group and interviews to the Cloud and created automatic transcripts. Using a password to log back into Zoom after the data collection took place, I was able to review the video, audio and download the transcript to my computer. Automatic transcripts were reviewed for accuracy of transcription. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), web-based data collection is time efficient and can aid in cost savings as there is no need for travel. Using Zoom for the focus group and interviews also allowed for more flexibility in regards to time and space for both the participants and myself (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Web-based data collection can also “help to create a non-threatening and comfortable environment, providing greater ease for participants discussing sensitive issues” (Nicholas et al., 2010 in Creswell and Poth, 2018: 160). Although I would have preferred to do data collection in-person, the Covid-19 pandemic and ensuing university Research Ethics Board policies on research with human participants required that all data collection be done online. Additionally,

post-secondary campuses were closed, and all work was being done virtually to reduce the spread of Covid-19. For these reasons, all data collection was completed virtually.

3.6 Data Analysis

Both the focus group and interview transcripts were de-identified by temporarily assigning numbers to each participant until participants had a chance to choose pseudonyms for themselves. The focus group and interviews were then saved as word documents. As with qualitative research, I then began the process of open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Transcripts were reviewed line by line, looking for common themes that were open coded (Strauss & Corbin 1990; and Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using NVivo, I developed a list of emerging themes or open codes from the discussions in the focus group by iteratively reading the transcripts (Strauss & Corbin 1990; and Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I sent an email (Appendix E) with the verbatim transcript to each of the focus group participants to do member-checking (Carl & Ravitch, 2018) and to give each person a second opportunity to review what was said and clarify or add to the discussion as they felt was needed. At this point, they also had the opportunity to choose their pseudonym. Member-checking ensured that the transcripts were correct and helped to verify the internal validity of the research (Carl & Ravitch, 2018). Two of the four focus group participants responded with feedback, both participants verified that they felt all the transcript, description and emerging themes were accurately representative of their experiences and identities. Only one participant chose a pseudonym for themself.

In order to develop the thematic analysis, once the transcripts were returned to me, I undertook more focused coding using NVivo 12 (Hesse-Biber, 2014). Focused coding involves building relationships between open codes in order to make sense of how themes connect with

one another to explain the data (Hesse-Biber, 2014). I use Creswell and Poth's (2018) template for developing a codebook for qualitative analysis (See Figure 8.4 in Creswell and Poth, p. 192) to develop a focused Coding Strategy.

When coding for themes, I looked at both the content of the data, as well as the interactions the students had with each other. Themes that have been developed are focused on the ways in which food activism shapes a shared identity between students and how shared experiences were a way in which students were able to relate with one. For example, one theme: food security work is tied to emotion, includes any evidence which demonstrates the connection between student's emotions and food security work. Mention of mental health, burnout, stress, balance (between activism, school and work), anger and frustration with administrators and the university, passion: to create social change, and gratefulness: to be a part of these groups and initiatives led to the development of this theme.

As Munday (2014) explains, analysis of feminist focus groups should pay attention to both the content and interactions between participants. With Zoom, there are limited non-verbal social cues which can affect how participants respond and relate to one another. For example, one participant had internet issues and could not have the video on for some of the focus group discussion.

The four interviews were conducted after the emerging themes were developed from the focus group. Similar to the focus group, the interviews were also de-identified with participants being given pseudonyms before being saved as word documents. This was followed by line-by-line open coding, using the "comment" function on Word- however, I also looked for common themes between the focus group and interviews. I chose not to use NVivo as there was not a lot of data to review at this time and felt that Word had the functions needed for my analysis.

The four interviews added to the development of chapter four which outlines the context of food insecurity and the challenges faced by students and student activists at Lakehead University.

3.7 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is important in qualitative feminist (Hesse-Biber 2014) and anti-colonial intersectional research (Parker, 2023 forthcoming). Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that it is important for qualitative researchers to position themselves in their research. A researcher's background and experiences shape the ways in which we interpret the information (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Similarly, Hesse-Biber (2014) explains that "reflexivity is a way for researchers to account for their personal biases and examine the effects that these biases may have on the data produced" (p.3). Feminist researchers often aim to "recognize, examine, and understand how their social background, location, and assumptions can influence the research" (Hesse-Biber, 2014:3). Moreover, it is common that qualitative research studies emerge from the researchers' interests and experiences (Regassa, 2021; & Merriam, 2009) therefore, it is important to consider why one chooses to study a particular area. I have aimed to be reflexive in all aspects of my research project. Below, I examine my positionality and describe reflexively, how it may have impacted my research.

As a student researcher researching other students – I am an "insider" (Hesse-Biber, 2014) as I have already pointed out. My passion and involvement for this work started in 2019. I first became interested and involved through courses which focused on food, gender, culture, food security, the food system and inequalities. I was intrigued by the ways you can use food as a lens to study so many aspects of social life, including systems of power and inequalities. Alt hough, I have never been severely food insecure myself, I have experienced difficulties in

balancing the expenses of my post-secondary education. I have also been involved in student clubs, the university food security committee, and other work related to student food security and student activism and advocacy relating to food security for students.

From 2019-2021 I was a member of LUMXC (Lakehead University Meal Exchange Chapter) where I worked with other student's on bringing awareness to student food insecurity and running events and initiatives to support students facing food insecurity. I was also the leader of LUFFT (Lakehead University Food For Thought) from 2021-2022. LUFFT began with LUMXC's end on the campus. Both clubs had similar goals and objectives for the campus; to raise awareness and run events and initiatives for students. I also sit on the decision-making Planning Team of the university Food Security Committee, which aims to ensure understanding of the issues and advocate for measures to alleviate student food insecurity at the university.

Although, this involvement to some, may be viewed as a conflict of interest, I consider my involvement beneficial. Through my positions and academic background, I use reflective practices to be critical of my involvement, the initiatives that we take up, and my positionality as a student, a white person, a settler, a woman, and in my leadership positions, as a person with power and privilege in these roles. Because of my position as a researcher, I hold power, which I constantly reflect on. Being a white settler and researcher, I am aware of how I have been socialized through Eurocentric and colonial institutions, which shape how research is often done (Smith 1999). I also take into consideration different approaches to dealing with food insecurity, such as an Indigenous Food Sovereignty approach. I do not want to speak on behalf of other groups but aim to present diverse voices to be heard and experiences to be shared.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

As mentioned earlier, this research project received ethical approval from the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. Students' experiences, voices and needs are at the centre of my project, which was my intention from the beginning and setting up the project as PAR. I wanted to ensure that students could share their stories with me, and work on a research project that we collectively support. It was and continues to be important to ensure that throughout the project, students' interests and needs were the focus, hence, my analysis focuses considerably on the perspectives and themes that emerged from the student focus group. Overall, this project has provided me with an opportunity to build new critical knowledge about Lakehead university's student experiences with post-secondary student food insecurity and the food environment on campus.

3.9 Limitations

The Covid-19 pandemic created limitations to my project. First, through restrictions and regulations, it was necessary that data collection be conducted online rather than in-person. All communication with participants was done via email up. The lockdowns and campus closure meant that students were not active on campus like they were prior the onset of the pandemic. This situation limited my ability to connect to a larger population of students involved in this work and ultimately, a smaller sample size. It must be noted then, that the findings are not generalizable to a larger population because of its small sample size. However, the research is qualitative and given its research design, was never meant to lead to generalizability and instead, provides in-depth analysis of the meanings that participants give to their work on food insecurity.

Second, conducting research online is limiting in its face-to face interactions and subsequent ability to see participants interactions in the focus groups (with each other through

body language, facial expressions). Moreover, one participant also needed to keep their camera off due to internet issues. These technical challenges presented some limitations to the overall research.

3.10 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have outlined the research design, methodology and methods including how data was collected and analyzed. I have reflected on my positionality as a researcher using reflexivity. I described the ways in which Covid-19 has had impacts on my research and discussed ethical considerations for my project. In the next chapter, I will describe the context of the campus food environment at Lakehead University, and I will provide a descriptive overview of the initiatives and activities focused on food security at Lakehead University by students and administrators.

Chapter 4: The Case Study

In this chapter I describe the campus food environment, which sets the context for food insecurity at Lakehead University. I begin with a description of Thunder Bay to situate the university campus in Northern Ontario. This description of place helps to illustrate how students living on this campus and in Thunder Bay have unique post-secondary student experiences because of the isolation and winter weather conditions in this hinterland region compared to university campuses in southern parts of the province. Next, using the interview data with administrators and focus group data, I provide an overview of some of the activities and initiatives focused on food security that have taken place at Lakehead University since 2016 including the creation of a university Food Security Committee that followed the release of the first Meal Exchange survey discussed earlier in Chapter two. I also discuss how the Covid-19 pandemic shaped initiatives and responses to student food insecurity at Lakehead University.

4.1 Lakehead University

Lakehead University is unique because of its geographical location. Lakehead University is located in Thunder Bay Ontario in Northern Ontario. Thunder Bay is the most northern major city in Northwestern Ontario. As Stewart (2018) explains, Thunder Bay is a somewhat isolated, "northern service centre" (p.24). Nearest major cities are 7–10-hour drive away (Winnipeg and Sault Saint Marie) (Stewart, 2018). Stewart (2018) explains, "As a service center Thunder Bay provides a wide variety of services that other locations in northwestern Ontario do not offer" (p.240) such as airport, healthcare, and educational institutions.

Lakehead University is located in Thunder Bay, with a satellite campus located in Orillia, however, this project focuses solely on the Thunder Bay Campus. In 2020-2021 at Lakehead University (2021), there were a total of 8,365 students at Lakehead University across both

campuses with 4,220 full time undergraduate students in Thunder Bay, 1,022 part time undergraduate students in Thunder Bay, and 1,311 graduate students between both campuses (Lakehead 2021). Across both campuses in 2020-2021, "42% of students were first generation students (neither parent had a degree)" (Lakehead, 2021).

The student population at Lakehead university is diverse. In 2020-2021, Lakehead University had 1,810 international students from 73 countries (Lakehead, 2021). In 2020-2021, "54% domestic undergraduate students were from rural/Northern communities" (Lakehead University, 2021). In 2020-2021, 12% of Lakehead student's self-identified as Indigenous; one of the highest enrollments at any Canadian University (Lakehead, 2022). Thunder Bay and Lakehead University are located on the Robinson-Superior Treaty Territory; the traditional lands of the Fort William First Nation, Ojibwe, Anishinaabeg, and Metis Peoples. While there is a large Indigenous population at Lakehead University, it is also important to understand the diversity amongst Indigenous communities, which as the student participant Dawn reminds us: "a lot of the Indigenous population at Lakehead are Anishinaabe, but there are a lot of people that are Oji-Cree, Cree as well, that come from all different nations". Participants in the focus group reminded us that it is important to understand that "Indigenous" is not a homogeneous term and instead includes many different people and many different cultural practices (Dawn, and Sarah). As Stewart (2018) explains, "[The] diversity among the student population at Lakehead University is a factor that should be considered when discussing the availability, affordability, and quality of food that is available to students living both on and off campus" (p.26).

According to Lakehead University (2022b), there are 1,200 students that can live in Lakehead University Residence. There are residence halls, apartments, and townhouses.

Residence halls have mandatory full meal plans, which usually apply to first year Lakehead Students living on campus.

Many Lakehead students also rely on government support such as Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). Lakehead (2021) notes that "49% of domestic undergraduate students receive OSAP based on student need". Prior to the pandemic in 2019, the Provincial Conservative government cut funding to OSAP (Tishcoff, 2019). In the Maclean's 2022 University rankings, Lakehead University was rated second in Scholarships and Bursaries yet in the 2021-2022 year, however, the MyAwards portal was closed and unavailable to students (the way students apply and receive scholarships and bursaries) until the end of second semester (by the time school was either over or almost over). Lakehead offered an emergency bursary to students who were negatively impacted by the closure of this bursary / scholarship portal, however, students needed to fill out a budget form in order to be approved. Many graduate students also did not receive their graduate assistant income until well into the term because of problems with the new graduate studies administrative system, and thus, they were also offered the same emergency bursary once students showed proof they had not been paid.

4.1.2 The Campus Food Environment

Stewart (2018) explains the university campus food environment which includes: "cafeterias, grocery stores, convenience stores, coffee shops, and restaurants located directly on or in very close proximity to the campus" (p.28). The food retail environment are places where food is available, either through purchase or through food banks (Cameron, 2021). The food retail environment on campus includes the main cafeteria and Residence Dining Hall, both run by Aramark[8], and overseen by Conference and Food Services. As well, the Lakehead University

[8] Aramark is the Food Service Provider at Lakehead University, Thunder Bay campus.

Student Union (LUSU) operates a coffee shop, called The Study, and a campus pub, the Outpost. There is also a Starbucks and Milktease, which is a bubble tea shop. The hours vary per location however collectively, they are limited. Moreover, the availability of food for purchase on campus has been dramatically affected by the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic (2020-2022) Lakehead University campuses and food retailers were often shut down due to pandemic regulations. Some locations, however, remained closed throughout 2020-2022; such as Booster Juice and The Outpost. Booster Juice remains closed as of December 2022.

While the hours of operation changed throughout the pandemic, in the fall of 2021, the latest time to get food on campus was 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. On Monday, everything closed by 4:30 p.m. and Fridays by 4 p.m. These hours prove difficult for students who have classes in the late afternoon or evening, particularly for students living on campus. Though the hours were impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, prior to the pandemic, food options were still very limited during the evenings. On breaks or between classes, students may not have any access to food (other than a vending machine), unless they are able to pack and bring food with them. For these students buying food from vending machines, or on-campus food vendors with ready-to-go meals, there are limited "healthy" and affordable options available (Stewart, 2018). Additionally, Rinne (2020) explains that in October 2020 the residence cafeteria changed its opening time from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Lunch was available only between 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and dinner from 4 p.m. - 6 p.m. This contributes to making the campus a food desert. In many ways, Lakehead University is a food desert (Stewart, 2018). Guthman (2008) explains that food deserts are "urban environments where few, if any, venues provide an array of healthful fruits, vegetables, meats, and grain products, but instead sell snack foods and highly processed ready-to-eat meals" (p.432). Focus group participants also referred to Lakehead

as a food dessert. For example, one participant John, who is also a student, explained that "although student food insecurity is an issue across Canada, Thunder Bay may be in a slightly different position as Lakehead University's campus is a food desert".

There are few restaurants that are in close proximity to Lakehead University (Stewart, 2018). Nearby there is one Tim Hortons, a Subway, and one sit down restaurant, with each being about 600 meters away. The two closest grocery stores are Walmart and Superstore. Walmart is about 2.1 kms from Lakehead University. The Superstore is about 2 kms away from Lakehead University. The biggest issue with accessing these grocery stores is the distance and transportation. In research conducted by Stewart (2018) on the Lakehead University campus, they explain that students found it difficult to access grocery stores:

> Two students mentioned that to walk to the nearest grocery store was at least a 45 minute walk each way. Two students expressed that they have walked to the closest grocery store before (i.e. Superstore) in the summer months. However, they also noted that it is nearly impossible to do so in the fall and winter months with inconsistent weather and temperatures reaching -26 or lower (p.48).

Most students do not have access to a car. LUSU provides students with a subsidized bus pass, however, the bus routes are not straightforward and do not necessarily go right to the grocery store, leaving students to have to walk part of the way (Stewart, 2018). Thunder Bay is a Northern city, and the winters are cold with temperatures ranging from minus 20 to minus 35 Celsius. In extreme cold, walking is almost impossible, as frostbite can occur within minutes of being outdoors. These conditions make it difficult to carry home groceries or food for those students who live on campus.

While it is important to note that the location of Lakehead University within the city presents problems for students in accessing food, it is also critical to understand that increasing the accessibility of foods alone is not the solution to post-secondary student food insecurity. For

example, The Centre for Studies in Food Security (CSFS) at Ryerson University outlines the Five A's of food security: Availability (of foods for everyone constantly), Accessibility (physical and economic access to food), Adequacy (of safe, nutritious, sustainable, and environmentally friendly foods), Acceptability (food which is culturally acceptable, and does not compromise human rights, and Agency (having appropriate policies and procedures for food security) (Centre for Studies in Food Security: n.d).

Stewart (2018) found that affordability, food quality and accessibility were all major themes and issues brought up by Lakehead students surrounding the food environment on and around campus. In 2018, students were concerned about the affordability of food at Lakehead university, more specifically, replacing Tim Hortons in the Agora with a Starbucks was viewed as problematic as Starbuck prices are more expensive than Tim Hortons (Stewart, 2018). Lack of quality and diversity of food were two other issues students brought up (Stewart, 2018). Lastly, accessibility of food was a theme brought up by students in Stewart's (2018) findings. Inconsistent hours of operation, lack of diverse foods, and geographic isolation are ways student's felt food was not accessible to them (Stewart, 2018). Many of these issues continue today on campus.

Understanding the campus food environment is important when discussing both the issues of student food insecurity and food activism. Stewart (2018) notes that, "…issues of affordability, accessibility and quality can contribute to social justice issues such as student poverty and food insecurity among the student population at Lakehead University" (p. 57).

4.1.3 Student Health and Wellness & The Wellness Strategy

Student Health and Wellness, a student service at Lakehead University, has been involved in various initiatives and events relating to student food security. Their work focuses on

health promotion and nutrition with education and awareness as their goals. They provide fresh fruits, vegetables, and snacks for students around exam time and in December 2021, with members of the Wellness Strategy, provided soup jars to students (funded by Alumni & Friends).

The 2020-2025 University Wellness Strategy aligns with the Okanagan Charter (2015)[9] with the goal of supporting the diverse and shared wellness needs of students, faculty, and staff (Lakehead University Wellness Strategy, 2020). Within the framework, one goal is to improve food security. The Wellness Strategy states that its objectives include increasing the availability of healthy and diverse foods, local and fresh foods, and health promotion and education on healthy eating (Lakehead University Wellness Strategy, 2020). The objectives relate to health promotion, education, nutrition, and increasing local foods. Food security, however, was only used three times throughout the document and Indigenous Food Sovereignty is not mentioned.

The Wellness Strategy for 2020-2025 explains that: "the strategy considers nine (9) main dimensions of wellness as contributing factors to our overall health and well-being: cultural, emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, occupational, physical, social and spiritual" (p.4). Although this guiding document purports to put students' health as a priority, quite problematically, there is no mention of income, tuition, scholarships or bursaries in the document overlooking the complex financial and economic dimensions of being a post-secondary student. As food insecurity is a symptom of poverty (PROOF, 2018; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2018), student poverty must be understood as central to health and wellness. This guiding document is instrumental in shaping the campus food environment.

[9] The Okanagan Charter (2015) is a framework for post-secondary institutions to create healthier campuses through health promotion strategies.

4.2 Student Activism on Food Security

Focus group participants were involved in food security activism through their involvement on committees, and in student clubs on the Thunder Bay campus. As well, all the student participants noted that at some point in their activism they had worked with Meal Exchange, the national student food security charity organization, which had offered them some paid employment to advocate and raise awareness of student food insecurity on the Thunder Bay campus.

4.2.1 Indigenous Food Sovereignty (IFS) Committee

The Indigenous Food Sovereignty (IFS) Committee formed in 2018. The IFS committee is an independent student-led committee not associated with LUSU but works with faculty support. Participant Dawn explained that following the first social innovation lab held in May 2018, organized by Meal Exchange, several students came together to form the IFS Committee. The committee works to "create awareness, promote food practices, and create shared food spaces at Lakehead that hour both culture, diversity and relationship" (Dawn). In addition to organizing numerous campus Indigenous food events, the IFS committee organized and held a feast in December 2018 to honour the Lakehead University Elders Council. The students prepared a moose stew, manoomin (wild rice) salad, and Labrador tea ice cream. In addition to thanking the Elders, the goal of this event was to "build relationships, seek guidance, and listen to their stories and lived experiences and wisdom" of Elders (Dawn).

One of the goals of the IFS committee has been to build a Migwam on campus. A Migwam is a "all season modern type of teepee structure, which can be used as an experiential learning environment. At the centre of the Migwam is an open fire pit where people are able to cook Indigenous foods. It would also be a space on campus for land-based learning (faculty can

teach their courses there) and enable students to be closer to the land" (Dawn). The Migwam holds significance for the Indigenous students on the IFS committee as it would address the lack of a culturally safe learning space oriented around land-based food practices on campus.

4.2.2 Lakehead University Meal Exchange (LUMXC)

The Lakehead University Meal Exchange Chapter (LUMXC) started in 2019 as a campus Chapter. It began with a group of students who had participated in the social innovation labs run by Meal Exchange, following the 2016 survey. The mission of LUMXC was to run events and raise awareness about student food insecurity. Another initiative of LUMXC was the grocery bus pilot set up to address the challenges of food access for students who lived on campus (Hadley, 2019). This initiative was funded by Meal Exchange and organized by LUMXC in partnership with the International Student Office. Students could take a chartered bus each Saturday from the Agora Centre on campus at Lakehead University to Walmart, Superstore, the Country Market, and Westfort Foods, a local grocery store.

LUMXC student activists organized bringing the Good Food Box to campus in 2019, which involved picking up boxes of food off campus and driving them to campus to distribute among students. Although successful (the student demand for the fresh food was high) the initiative fell apart because the student driver could not afford the gas or time to do the pick-up and no other student stepped forward to take over for various reasons including the cost of gas and the time commitment for this unpaid work. The students approached the Food Security Committee asking for a stipend to cover gas and the funding proposal was turned down because the fund could only be used to purchase food (the boxes were purchased by the fund) so the imitative was halted.

In the summer of 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, Meal Exchange gave LUMXC $7000 in gift cards to Superior Seasons, an online local farm store. This was followed with another successful grant written by student activists, who received $13,500 through Food Banks Canada's Rural and Northern Capacity Fund with funding provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Emergency Food Security Fund in the Fall 2020. Again, the money was used to purchase gift cards to various grocers in Thunder Bay, which were then given out to students as a form of direct action. There was no qualifying process for students, anyone could sign up to receive a gift card if they were experiencing food insecurity, while quantities of the gift cards lasted.

The club was supported by Meal Exchange until 2021 when Meal Exchange decided to restructure their organization and no longer have individual chapters on university campuses. However, the students who were active members of the club (myself included) decided to continue the advocacy and action with the formation of a new student club.

4.2.3 LU Food For Thought (LUFFT)

In September 2021, LUMXC became LUFFT and registered as a student club under LUSU, the student union. LUFFT brought together student activists and advocated for food security at Lakehead by raising awareness to the issues on campus. The mission of LUFFT is "address the current structural problems in the university food system and empower students to reshape the school food environments" (LUFFT, 2020 Terms of Reference).

LUFFT organized a variety of events such as virtual town hall events with students where organizers were able to get a better understanding of student's experiences and perspectives in regards to accessing food on campus. Importantly, members of LUFFT represented student

voices on the university Food Security Committee, which gave students a voice to raise their concerns with administrators.

LUFFT held talks and did events with students with the aim to inspire students to get involved while also encouraging students to be critical of charity approaches. For example, LUFFT often held open discussions in town hall events and asked students what kinds of initiatives they would like to see to help alleviate student food insecurity. Food drives were often proposed as a popular response, however as per their mandate, LUFFT leaders would explain that charity responses are only short-term support and do not address the issue in the long term. LUFFT encouraged students to advocate for affordable and accessible foods, culturally appropriate foods, affordable tuition and more. As a club working through the pandemic, LUFFT also had to support students through emergency responses given the impacts of COVID-19 on students and the limited access to foods on the Thunder Bay campus (Rinne, 2020).

Starting in January 2022, LUFFT received funding from the Food Security Committee to continue the Good Food Box monthly distributions on campus for January, February, and March. Specifically, the Food Security Committee approved the purchase of 25 boxes per month (committee funds are raised through Lakehead Alumni and Friends). In February 2022, LUFFT hosted another virtual meeting and interestingly, the majority of those in attendance were Orillia students who wanted to discuss food availability on campus, lack of a food bank and a petition started by the Orillia Lakehead Farming Club to advocate on the greenbelt and the importance of farmland in Ontario.

At the end of the school year 2022, in April, LUFFT conducted an online Instagram question poll asking students how they should spend their remaining funds. Students

overwhelmingly expressed that gift cards would be most beneficial. Thus, LUFFT used the remaining funds to purchase twelve $25 grocery gift cards.

4.2.4 The Lakehead University Student Union (LUSU) Food Bank

In 2021, LUSU announced that they were rebranding the food bank to become the campus Food Resource Centre. A LUSU executive member explained that the new Food Resource Centre will offer many resources to students including a pantry, which will operate as an emergency food bank. LUSU has operated a food bank for two decades and up until recently, was coordinated by a part-time student. The food pantry tries to provide quality food (fresh and non-perishables) and runs a weekly hot People's Potato lunch. Previously, students were only allowed to access the food bank once a month however, throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, LUSU provided weekly food distribution in a grocery-style system once per week. As the student union represents the voices of students, the Food Resource Centre is a hub of student activity with weekly and monthly talks, activities and support services for students experiencing food insecurity.

4.3 Administrators' Perspectives on Student Food Insecurity

Through interviews with various administrators involved with food insecurity on campus. it was apparent that there were different perceptions on the issue of student food insecurity and the ways in which it could be resolved. For example, one administrator admitted to not knowing much about food insecurity generally, or student food insecurity, until recently when appointed to their role on the university food security committee. As Kathy shared, “This term, food insecurity, which honestly, I wasn't familiar with up until 2019 because I didn't have a lot of involvement on the student side of things”. Kathy saw the problem of food insecurity as a student problem and did not recognize the issue outside of her workplace. Although she

recognized the limits of her knowledge, she did express an interest in wanting to become more involved with the work on campus on the university food security committee.

Others acknowledged that larger structural changes are needed to ensure students are food secure. One participant explained,

> Rent costs, transportation options, a cost of living…Social supports, I guess you would say… potentially all those kinds of things. And those are less in our control, but obviously still something that greatly impacts food security (Vivian).

This administrator understood the larger context to food insecurity but felt that the larger solutions are not in their control. Vivian also mentioned the social determinants of health, which impact post-secondary student's education, experiences, and levels of food insecurity. Other administrators also noted things such as the high costs of living, rent, tuition and book costs. While these things are difficult to change, administrators seemed unmotivated or constrained to advocate for structural changes unlike the students who strongly desire structural changes, as I will describe in Chapter five.

In addition, some administrators recognize the need to increase cultural diversity of food on campus with the increase in enrollment of international students (over 1,500 students according to Lakehead University, n.d.) and increase local food availability. However, an increase of local foods must also include subsidized or affordable prices for the students because locally grown or made foods are expensive and not affordable to many students (Guthman, 2008; & DeSouza, 2019). Action on increasing culturally diverse and local foods has been slow, which was mentioned by one administrator who explained that Covid-19 became a barrier to change for this. Moreover, some administrators also recognize the issues with food access on campus, such as limited hours of the cafeterias, and other food services however, nothing has been done to resolve this issue or increase hours.

Finally, administrator participants tended to normalize the experience of food insecurity as being a part of the post-secondary student experience as they themselves had experienced difficulty accessing food as a student. Adele explained:

> As a student I lived on my bicycle with food in my backpack because I used to have to ride my bike to the grocery store and I'd get a week's worth of food shoved in the back, and then I ride my bike home. So I'm assuming students still ride bikes but I know that's how I found myself going through school and it was probably about the same distance [to the grocery store], so it wasn't that far… I lived on $25, which meant a lot of Mr. Noodles in my world. I really didn't eat meat, because it was too expensive to buy. (Adele)

Although understandable that this administrator is looking for connections between their own experience and the experiences of students today, it lacks perspective in that the social context is different now, particularly following the Covid-19 pandemic where many students are increasingly experiencing poverty. Moreover, normalizing the experience of student food insecurity is not an appropriate response and can cause further stigmatization of food insecurity (Maynard, et al., 2018).

While some administrators understood the larger changes needed to create a food secure campus, the responses and actions of administrators remained firmly rooted in charity. The Food Security Committee receives funds through Lakehead University Giving's "Food Security for Students at Lakehead University" fund, administered by the Alumni and Annual Giving Office of External Relations. This fund solicits money from donors for food pantry donations and emergency gift cards. Administrators play a role in determining how funds should be spent via the university Food Security Committee.

Largely, the major objective of the university Food Security Committee is to convene people (administrators, faculty, students) on the issue. In many ways, the committee is a bureaucratic response of the institution. The committee proceeds with the idea that the university

community is unaware of the issue, and operates on an assumption that students are unaware of the emergency supports that are available to them. For example, one participant shared,

> I don't think students are getting any information on food services, you know, they don't know what opportunities and supports there are, they don't know hours of operation, they don't know what systems are in place on LUSU's side (Kathy).

While this may be true, the majority of the resources and food supports available are still only emergency responses.

4.4 Food Security Committee

The Food Security Committee is a university committee made up of students, staff, administrators, and faculty. It has been in place in various forms since 2017. The Food Security Committee formed following the release of the first Meal Exchange survey in 2016 that found so many Lakehead students were experiencing food insecurity. At this time, the vision of the Food Security Committee was to "eliminate" student food insecurity at Lakehead University. Now, following a restructuring of the committee, the vision is to "promote" food security at Lakehead University (TOR, Food Security Committee, Lakehead University). The committee's objectives are to “(1) bring awareness to levels of food security on Lakehead University campuses, (2) identify new, and supporting existing strategies to support student food security, (3) advocate for and supporting new solutions to address student food insecurity, and (4) build partnerships with local, regional and national communities and organizations to address post-secondary student food security” (TOR, Food Security Committee, Lakehead University).

The committee has faced challenges with one administrator noting:

> I think some of the challenges is more that everybody has great ideas, but actually getting some traction on them can sometimes be a little bit difficult. The other challenges that I think I would mention is my observation has been that sometimes, I think people want kind of immediate action and don't realize how long it can sometimes take to actually get a good process in place, and I think sometimes there can be some frustrations that way and just understanding,

> especially when it comes to the food security committee that it is a committee of the university that has some oversight, but we can't just do whatever we want… we have to run it by people and make sure that we're being appropriate and representing the university appropriately, so I think sometimes those can be challenges, because people just want to act and maybe not put in the time to give ourselves a good foundation on which to be successful. (Vivian)

Because the Food Security Committee is a product of the institution, the administrators are constrained in what they can do. Moreover, their positionality is different from that of students and faculty who want to push for more structural changes. This becomes evident in the types of activities and initiatives that the committee pursues.

Prior to the pandemic, Lakehead Alumni was running a campaign once a year asking alumni to support student food security by donating money to buy food supports for students. The funds raised were allocated to the committee to use for special projects and initiatives that fit the criteria by which the funds were raised. Alumni set the parameters in their funding call, asking for donations that could be used for emergency food supports or the campus garden. Although helpful, the funding parameters also created tensions among committee members. For example, in 2019 as discussed earlier, the Good Food Box initiative ended when there was no money to support students bringing the boxes to campus. In this case, it also reaffirmed the tension between Aramark and students, as administrators pushed students to use the services of Aramark (who could provide fresh foods for purchase) instead of supporting the Good Food Box program, an anti-poverty and community-led organization. This example highlights the different priorities of Food Security Committee members and students.

Pre-pandemic, the Food Security Committee met 4-6 times during the academic year (September-April), however when the pandemic was declared in March 2020, the committee stopped meeting. As with most things in March 2020, everything shut down or ceased operating in the routine ways it had up until the pandemic struck. However, with many students struggling,

the failure of the committee to meet at such a critical time for students needing food support should not be explained away so easily. Although difficult to say with certainty, growing tensions between various members of the committee, especially between students/faculty and staff or administrators may have also led to a stalling of the committee meeting. Specifically, a letter and petition circulated in November 2020 following a news article "Students disappointed by changes in Lakehead U residence meal service" talked about the problems students were facing with residence and campus food availability in the pandemic (Rinne, 2020) with students and faculty calling on the university to address the issues of the campus food environment and growing student food insecurity. Although there was well over 200 signatures on the petition, and the issue was raised in Senate by Dr. Lori Chambers, the university claimed that all students who had experienced problems with recurring food insecurity as a result of campus food service closures had been contacted and were satisfied with individual resolutions.

Over 2020-2021, the committee was restructured. One reason for the restructure was that the committee had swelled to over 30 people representing various departments within the university and decision-making was difficult. Although the committee meetings were an opportunity to talk about student food insecurity and hear about different initiatives happening, students' voices were not being heard. This was complicated because funding that was earmarked for food security initiatives needed to be approved by the committee and there was no consensus on direction or mandate of the committee. As well, there were tensions on the committee because Aramark had a seat at the table, and LUSU, students, and faculty did not want to work with the corporate food provider under contract with the University (through Food & Conference Services). Although not the focus of this thesis, it is important to note as this tension was not unique to Lakehead University and many university campuses across Canada were and continue

to struggle with how campus food is corporatized through multinational food service providers, which leads to more expensive food for students.

The underlying tension between students, faculty and administrators however is because the institution favours food charity which results in neoliberal stigma (DeSouza, 2019) for students. For example, student activists wanted to provide gift cards to students in December 2020, during the winter break when campus and food services were completely shut down. Students brought their proposal to the committee; however, some staff administrators did not think Superstore gift cards was appropriate because this store sells alcohol and there was a concern that students would buy alcohol instead of food. This paternalistic connects with neoliberal stigma and the idea that food insecure students do not know what is best for themselves.

4.5 Charity Responses to Student Food Insecurity and Neoliberal Stigma

At Lakehead, the dominant approach to food insecurity, managed by the Food Security Committee and various departments is charity. This is not surprising given that our wider society chooses to see food insecurity through a neoliberal lens, with charity as the dominant response (Poppendieck 1998:5). In this framing, as mentioned in Chapter one, individuals become responsible for their own poverty and food insecurity because they are viewed as not managing the expenses of their post-secondary education efficiently or effectively. DeSouza (2019) describes this as neoliberal stigma, which some students experience more than others. For example. International students are particularly vulnerable to neoliberal stigma because they experience very high costs for their education, with many really struggling to pay for yearly increases to their tuition rates. As well, domestic students also experience financial challenges given cuts to student loan programs. Yet instead of focusing on the exorbitant costs that

international students face and the struggles some domestic students have in paying for their education, university services offer budgeting and cooking classes, which again, are paternalistic and in line with a neoliberal approach that views some students as just not ready for higher education.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the campus food environment and how university administrators, LUSU, and student activists approach the problem of food insecurity. As I described, the issue of student food insecurity and responses to the problem emerged in 2016 assisted by Meal Exchange's work. Since this time, many students continue to advocate for solutions (eg. lower tuition) through student clubs (LUFFT), LUSU or the student union, and student activists pursue initiatives to help alleviate student food insecurity. However, tensions between students and administrators often arise due to differences in how the issue of post-secondary student food insecurity is understood, and how subsequent approaches to alleviate the problem are taken up. In the next chapter, I describe the perspectives of student activists and provide an intersectional analysis that shows how student identities (class, gender, race among other aspects of social positionality) impacts their activism and advocacy work.

Chapter 5: Experiences and Perspectives of Student Activists

In this chapter, I demonstrate how students are engaged and active members of their university community and are interested in food security because of their own experiences. While the interviews with administrators discussed in Chapter four aided in providing context for the work being done on campus and how the institution views student food insecurity, the focus here is on the experiences and identities of student activists and how their work and perceptions may differ from the institutional responses to the issue. In this chapter, I outline how and why participants became involved in food activism on campus. Through an intersectional analysis, I explain how student's experiences with food activism are shaped by power and the multiple axes of privilege and discrimination embedded within their individual and collective identities. Specifically, I consider how intersecting social locations (class, gender, race) and their shared collective identities shaped their involvement, experiences, and how they see the issue. This chapter also focuses on the meanings this work had for students, and why they chose to get involved in food activism.

5.1 Intersecting Identities as Student-Activists

As described by the participants, student's intersecting positionalities, such as class, gender, race, and their shared collective social identity as post-secondary students shaped their lived experiences, including how and why they took up food activism. Students' personal experiences with food insecurity, whether they had experienced food poverty directly or had friends who were struggling to access enough, or appropriate foods, influenced how and why they chose to be active in campus food security activism.

5.1.2 Food Insecurity and Food Advocacy

Some participants began their journey as student activists because they also had personal experiences with food insecurity. Prisha, an international student, describes:

> My drive to work on and to address food insecurity was because I was experiencing food insecurity myself and I had come to Thunder Bay and it was really hard being able to eat well… cooking for myself, managing paying rent, as well as my bills… and there was a lot of stress (Prisha).

Prisha developed her passion for food activism after getting involved with organizations and student clubs and finding a community of international and domestic students on campus who shared similar experiences. She explains:

> I discovered this whole community through it and I have since been very passionate about food security and food sovereignty and food justice and I'm constantly learning and being a part of groups such as these, it is really helping my knowledge base, since I don't get anything along that in my courses (Prisha).

Being food insecure themselves directly impacted why students chose to get involved with campus food activism. Another participant, Sarah, a domestic student, also had personal experiences with food insecurity and spoke of her own experience:

> I can sit in an ally position because I'm from Ontario like I was born and raised in southern Ontario I come into this position to do this work because I've dealt with food insecurity in my own life (Sarah).

Sarah was, at the time, employed part time through Meal Exchange, the national student food security organization, as a student ambassador for Canada's Food Guide, as well as working with Meal Exchange on a survey to better understand student food insecurity. Thus, her local activism was informed by her national involvement on the issues as well. Although some student activists are able to get paid through organizations such as Meal Exchange, many students do not have that opportunity.

Many students who become involved in food activism on campus also experience food insecurity, however not all have the time or ability to commit to activism. As Prisha

explained, food justice, advocacy and activism are mostly unpaid work, and it can be challenging for students to stay involved when they are not getting paid. She continues,

> Most of the international students are from different racial backgrounds and… And it's hard to get BIPOC or international students involved in the work we do, and that could be a consequence of intergenerational trauma or… or just because of how they're trying to get by, or because of their family background, or because of their income or their skill levels, or their education, or where they come from, or their accent (Prisha).

As Prisha suggests, there are multiple overlapping factors including race, class, student status and being an international student, and the inequality / trauma that affect a student's ability to take on food activism, which stem from each student's unique positionality and their experiences. Specifically, international and BIPOC students face microaggressions related to "their accent", a form of racism discussed in the next section.

Being a post-secondary student is challenging because of the demands that students face in juggling their academic programs and paid work, alongside the costs of a university education. The participants understood first-hand the barriers that students face when trying to get involved in food justice and other justice movements. Sarah shares,

> Students should be paid for their work and it's… it's very hard to get international student representation, it's hard to get Indigenous student representation, because a lot of students have so much on their plate already (Sarah).

Another example of the financial barriers to this work was outlined in chapter four when student activists who organized the Good Food Box program in 2019 were unable to continue delivering the food boxes because of financial and time constraints they were experiencing in relation to the demands of this work. Students could not afford the gas and unpaid time commitments of this initiative, and when they approached the Food Security Committee asking for a stipend to cover gas, the funding proposal was turned down because the fund could only be used to purchase food —not stipends for the students who do the work. In addition to the work being done by unpaid

student activists, the lack of financial support for their time and gas were barriers which led to a temporary stop to the program.

These findings correspond to Kwan's (2017) study of youth engaged with food activism who found that being poor "make it difficult for young people to initiate or sustain civic involvement” (Kwan, 2017:9). This means that in addition to being food insecure, for some students, student poverty further marginalizes their ability to advocate and participate in social justice activities. Student poverty and food activism is further compounded by gender and race.

5.1.3 Gendered and Racialized Experiences with Food Activism

Food work and activism is gendered and racialized (Pictou et al., 2021; Swan 2020; Parker et al., 2019; and Earl, et al., 2017) and this was evident through the focus group discussion with participants. As found in previous studies, women face increased barriers when participating in activism and activist organization (Earl, et al., 2017). Women in the focus group noted that their experiences in both food work, and food activism was gendered. Many student food activists on campus are women and the participants shared that organizing, planning, and running events with the clubs and committees they sat on showed this gendered phenomenon. As Sarah describes

> I feel like a lot of the time it's very gendered work. Like it's very much so unpaid [and] women's food work, labor, that is like not credited or respected as much as it needs to be (Sarah).

Sarah’s quote describes the gendered nature of food activism work, which aligns with previous research on the gendered phenomenon of food work more generally (Swan, 2020; Taft, 2010; Earl et al., 2017).

Gender and race intersect to impact how food insecurity is experienced and how one is able to respond through advocacy to their difficult circumstances. As one Indigenous student

activist explained, her passion for food sovereignty and food security developed through her Cree identity, and specifically, her mother and grandmother. As found by previous studies, activism, which is tied to race and culture may have positive impacts for students as it leads to a sense of belonging within their communities (Nuñez, 2009; Wawrzynski and Naik, 2021). She shares:

> Indigenous Food Sovereignty. It’s a newer concept but it's something that's always been part of my identity… as a Cree person. All of that information and knowledge has been passed down from my mother and my kokum. I became more passionate about wanting to cook…But, like further than just food itself, I wanted look at more, you know, food justice. I wanted to learn more about food justice, Indigenous Food Sovereignty and food insecurity, so I pursued post-secondary education with a focus on Indigenous food sovereignty, food insecurity in remote communities, rural and urban centers but also at the at the university (Dawn).

For this participant, the desire to learn more about food insecurity, Indigenous Food Sovereignty, and food justice was tied directly to the experiences of her community and identity as a Cree woman.

Gender intersects with race to produce unique experiences for racialized women-identifying participants. For example, Prisha, pointed out that micro aggressions and racism were also barriers to her activism:

> … it's hard to explain, but if you don't have a good accent ... something that's acceptable here…in the white culture… people don't take you seriously. They think you're just a throwaway person who doesn't have something very interesting to contribute and… And, most people focus on removing their accents when they first come here…. that's… that's a big thing here… in at least the South Asian community, including myself, I really had to, uhm, fix my accent in some form to be accepted here, and even then, you will meet someone, and you will hear a white man say ‘Oh, you speak really good English for an international student’ I’m like yeah… it was my second language… I just had a different accent and, and this is something not just in food security, but also in employment.” (Prisha).

Through this excerpt we hear the complexity and ongoing trauma of living as a racialized and gendered international student or as she describes, a "throwaway person". Prisha experiences

racism and microaggressions of not being taken seriously and having her accent judged because she is South Asian. Prisha went on to share:

> I'm usually scared of stepping out of my house, or… or speaking too much or taking too much space, because I know I'm not as accepted here as I'm back home. I always have to be mindful of what I say…there's a lot of racism, and I'm pretty sure I don't get taken seriously, a lot of times, just because I am a woman of color" (Prisha).

Although she did not talk at length about her fear of violence, she was quite aware that she is a target of violence because of her identity as a racialized woman. Moreover, she was vigilant about not "speaking too much or taking up too much space". In talking about her experiences on the university food security committee, which she sat on as a student representative, Prisha describes:

> I was always afraid that I… that if I misspeak even once they will kind of throw me off the committee or just talk stop taking me seriously at all… and yeah. So I am always walking around on eggshells (Prisha).

These continuous experiences of microaggressions and racism makes it more difficult for international students to get involved. Significantly, on campus, and in her role as a student food activist on the Food Security Committee, Prisha did not feel safe. Earl et al. (2017) describes racism within social movements as a recurring theme, which often creates a barrier to youth participation.

5.1.4 International Student Advocacy on High Tuition

Student participants expressed how they experienced inequalities and financial hardships because of their status as international students. Specifically, they had to pay higher tuition rates than domestic students, which they connected to their experiences with food insecurity. The activist-participants believed that the high food insecurity rates amongst international students could be lessened if tuition was reduced. John, an international student, was very passionate

about international student tuition rates and also knowledgeable about the research relating to it. He explained:

> The research shows across Canada international students are more likely to be food insecure and then you look at the factors… I mean, international students pay a lot of money to come here, especially in provinces like Ontario or BC. Here at Lakehead, right now an undergrad student in a regular arts degree pays $25,000 per year. When I started six years ago, it was $19,000 so that's an increase of $6000 in the last six years. So, I've had an increase of $1,000 every single year" (John).

John saw a direct correlation between food insecurity and tuition, especially for international students.

All of the student activist participants talked about how they organized and participated in clubs, committees, panels, and discussions that made connections between student food insecurity and international student tuition fees. However, participants believed that the student union, and the University itself were not responding in any meaningful or impactful way because tuition rates for international students continued to rise. For example, LUSU, the student union had brought this issue forward through a petition, however many students felt as though it did not go far enough. Another international participant shared:

> It [the International Fee Campaign] has been moving forward so slowly, and even though LUSU tried creating some noise they didn't do enough… And the university definitely did not even respond to that much noise or that campaigning. So many students asked the same question about international fees, and how it's been increased recently and what LUSU is doing about it, and pretty much their answer was 'yeah we're doing something about it, we're getting there, we're going to, we're going to continue campaigning'. But what's the solution? When are you actually making that change?" (Prisha)

International students involved in student activism felt frustrated and angry about the high tuition rates, high levels of food insecurity in the international student population, and lack of response from the university and student union. The situation facing international students at Lakehead is

mirrored across Canada in the experiences of international students (Aziz, 2022; Wildes, 2022; & Turner, 2020).

5.1.5 The Indigenous Food Sovereignty Committee and Advocating for a Campus Migwam

The Indigenous Food Sovereignty (IFS) Committee ran several events prior to the pandemic that focused on educating and bringing awareness to students and the Lakehead community about Indigenous foods and Indigenous Food Sovereignty. Yet as Dawn explained, she often felt as though she was not taken seriously when advocating for the university to build a Migwam on campus:

> I'm not sure that [a Migwam] is possible because of the different policies and regulations that and red tape, you know and it's sometimes… it's frustrating when you see non-Indigenous organizations cut through that red tape, meanwhile, as an Indigenous person or Indigenous organization or Committee, you know…you're not taken seriously. Like you guys were saying, especially as an Indigenous person… basically, do you know what you're doing? You're, you know, gonna catch the university on fire (Dawn).

Dawn explained that other places in the city have had similar structures built, which leaves her to believe that the university does not want to embrace Indigenous cultures. She shares further, "But, I see, like at St Joseph's Care Group, they have a teepee, and they have a fire that goes inside. So, I don't know what the issue is. I don't know if it's an eyesore. You know what I mean. If it's done, they'll probably want to hide us away so that you can't see, the structure". As Dawn sees it, the institution which talks about the need for decolonizing the space, does not support or want to move forward on a Migwam, even after many presentations and conversations with senior administrators where she and other student activists have talked about its importance for Indigenous students:

> Uhm, I don't know what the issue is, whether it's money, because it's not expensive to make, and when it comes down to make, constructing it, preferably, you know, we're not just hiring contractors, because we need to ensure that it's done as a community. You know, sure we'll have someone there that has expertise

> making sure it's stable and all that kind of stuff. But, also have students, the community to help build it together ...and if there's an issue of having an open fire…there's also the concept of having like a wood stove type a deal, or you can have both (Dawn).

Dawn draws on Indigenous knowledge and community in her understanding of how the Migwam could be built and also be a place on campus for Indigenous food sovereignty as well as other land-based activities and ceremonies. She shares,

> Indigenous people have been doing this for a long time, they don't need to regulate it… we know. People know what they're doing when you're familiar with that type of cultural practice…it's always important to always have a knowledge keeper present as well, Elders. Involve the Community, Thunder Bay and nations, you know, to be a fire keeper. It's the same as a Sweat Lodge, you don't just go in there by yourself, you can have people there, that have the knowledge to ensure it's done safely (Dawn).

Dawn believes that the university would benefit from being more open to Indigenous initiatives. She states,

> They're [Lakehead and Administrator] always talking about Reconciliation, you know and but, yet they don't… They don't want to support these type of initiatives, and Indigenous ways of learning and knowing. I think the university could benefit from decolonizing the way we learn through experiential learning, through sharing of food, stories, knowledge, and again… it's, not just for Indigenous people, or not Indigenous people, it's not just for the university, but for people in the community too, people would be welcome to use it (Dawn).

As Dawn describes, through her activism on the Migwam, the barriers put in place by the institution (such as many regulations and concerns relating to the building, maintenance, and safety) has prevented the initiative from moving forward. Moreover, systemic racism and barriers to serving Indigenous foods are built into public health regulations (Phillipps et al., 2021). As Dawn explained,

> We [The Indigenous Food Sovereignty Committee] even hosted a feast honoring our Elders Council, to create and build that relationship, seek their guidance, listen to their stories their lived experiences. We cooked moose stew, we cooked Monoman2, Salad, we cooked with blueberries, and it was just a nice way just to come together. But that was another experience that had with the Thunder Bay public health Unit, in terms of sharing, preparing, and eating moose meat. We

> were governed, dictated, and inspected…They were under suspicion, on whether we're doing it properly, and that was our one of our first encounters with that and understanding the restrictions and regulations and policies that go within that type of food [moose meat] (Dawn).

While the student activists on the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Committee desired to work towards initiatives that are inclusive and centred around community, Indigenous food, and culture, they often face many barriers from institutions that contradict the institutions stated goals of decolonization.

5.2 Student Frustration

In their food activism, student participants were often met with barriers in their work with administrators. As discussed in chapter four, the institution frames food insecurity through a neoliberal framework that sees solutions through individualized solutions, such as charity. As John, an international student, explained:

> This is an issue of post-secondary education, of the corporatization of post-secondary education, of neoliberal policies, where we see that Governments give less and less funding to university, which then trickles down into the practices that the university applied to make up for that lost funding. So, we really have to tackle that on the larger level, and we can do that with just focusing on our campus, we need to make these connections (John).

International students are particularly vulnerable because there are no regulations on international student tuition rates (Crawley, 2017). In this framing, as discussed in Chapter four, individuals become responsible for their own food insecurity and face what De Souza (2019) calls, neoliberal stigma.

Students, like Sarah, often felt at odds with administrators:

> I would say, like I've never sat in a meeting with just students, where we were like you can't do this…You know… I've never sat in a room with students, where we're not completely supportive of each other, ready to move on to the next initiative are open to new ideas. While I find when we sit in rooms of admin… after doing hours to prepare, and present something they are not always that excited or ready for change (Sarah).

While student activists find other students to be supportive, they often feel as though administrators are not willing to work on student-initiatives and move ideas beyond charity. For students, it often feels that administrators put up barriers to structural changes and instead want to focus on emergency or charity responses.

Student activists shared that they felt very frustrated and angry by the lack of support and perceived willingness to tackle the structural issues at an institutional level. As John tells,

> The university and administration, they're not always gonna shut you directly down or they're against your ideas, what I find even more difficult, or, for me, at least for me personally, what I find more disappointing is that when I bring in issues, I mean my background is food security, I've taken every single class around food security, that you can take into sociology department and I have done my homework to understand where food insecurity or how it is caused. And when you bring up these things like, for example, for me, and for Prisha, as well, as International students… the research shows across Canada international students are more likely to be food insecure and then you look at the factors… I mean, International students pay a lot of money to come here… I've had an increase of $1,000 every single year. And when you point that out to- to- to admin or in the food security committee, specifically, well they say yeah, yeah, that's true, it seems like in the moment they kind of accept that, but nobody is willing to then really push further… (John).

While students bring up these larger systemic and structural issues, they are often frustrated with the response of the administrators or the institution's inability to move on lowering tuition rates - especially the international tuition rates. John's quote also speaks to neoliberal, structural violence (Giroux, 2013). Furthermore, De Souza (2019) explains how charity is a popular solution as it "doesn't rock the boat" and instead, maintains neoliberal attitudes which sees individuals as responsible for their food insecurity (p.49). Charity props up the status of the givers as "good" or "ideal citizens" (p.11-12).

For students, charitable solutions are important, but they are a band-aid solution. As John suggests,

> It always goes back to… okay, let's try to find some sort of emergency food program basically. How can we do another charity? or how can we do charity

> better? how can we make the food bank better? But we're never having anything that could move us beyond that. We will always stick in this food bank, food charity track, because we are not going on the institutional level, we're doing nothing that would move us towards the structural changes that are needed and one of the reasons is accountability. I mean our food security committee, who is it accountable to? It stays within the group of people who are part of that committee. And we- students, try to push and we try to raise awareness, but it doesn't get into the kind of bodies, important bodies in the university that can make a difference. I was hoping that if you have a food security committee where the university buys in and wants to really show that they are interested in fixing food security. Our mandate, basically, is to eliminate food insecurity, so that means we have to look at the real issues, but if, then we are not actually doing anything to move towards that, as a university and admin…especially admin, well, it becomes very frustrating. I'll stop, before I get angry (John).

Other student activists in the group agreed with John and were also often frustrated by seeing emergency responses over systemic change.

Tensions between students and administrators often arose because students did not feel heard and did not feel as though they were taken seriously, even when they did the research and prepared information and ideas for administrators. Sarah offered another example,

> A lot of the time when we're dealing with on campus initiatives, the admin aren't changing…. it's the students that are…but the thing is, it's the same thing being said over and over again, regardless of the face that's at the table. And I think the most important thing is like realizing that a lot of people on campus aren't ready to have the changes put in place and they'll continue to say that food security is our main goal, but they are not ready to listen to students. They're ready to say that student food security is what we're moving towards, but they're not ready whatsoever to make for sure that these plans happen (Sarah).

Students explained that they feel as though administrators do not take them seriously, which causes tensions and frustration. For example,

> When we come into these meetings with big admin or like, and it's never faculty that push us down it's faculty who are always there to support you and be right behind your back and be like yep we're doing the research, we support you everything you're saying is right. It's always admin that isn't ready to make the institutional change and I don't know if it's necessarily if they're scared to or if there's so many hoops that they're just like' I'm not going to bother jumping through this for you guys… or I'm not going to bother making these changes, for you guys because it's not worth it'... So, I feel like that's where it comes down to we don't get taken serious enough because it's like oh you're just a group of

> activists, women who are…this is your phase right now, you know you're getting into your early 20s this is whatever ... and it's like No, this is long standing changes that need to be made and I'm not ready to be a voice that's not heard (Sarah).

Similarly, Prisha shares Sarah's views and says, "Admin hasn't been helpful ... ... they don't take us seriously". Students feel frustrated with the barriers and lack of response by administrators at Lakehead, who consistently focus only on charitable approaches. A similar frustration was expressed about the student union. Although the union has started petitions and claims to be working on the issue, students feel there is a lack of action and implementation of the changes needed, as I will explain in this next section.

5.2.1 Frustrations with the Student Union

In addition to being frustrated with the administrators of the university, student activists also demonstrated frustration towards the student union. Student activists were frustrated about the perceived lack of response to the international tuition rates. For example,

> The International Fee Campaign, that students have been crying about since last summer, it has been moving forward so slowly, and even though the student union tried creating some noise they didn't do enough… And the university definitely did not respond to that noise or the campaigning and…and in the elections campaign there were so many questions. So many students asked the same question about international fees, and how it's been increased recently and what is the union doing about it, and pretty much their answer was 'yeah we're doing something about it, we're getting there, we're going to we're going to continue campaigning'. But what's the solution? (Prisha).

John shared a similar view on the issue of international student tuition rates in relation to the lack of action by the student union. He states,

> I mean none of the international students is happy that we have to pay more tuition. If the student executives just come in and then negotiate or advocate, on behalf of us, they don't change anything. Because they don't think they have leverage, but they do have leverage, or they could have a lot of leverage, because when you look at an institution like…Lakehead, any educational post-secondary institution, it is the students who have all the power if they grab their power, we are in the corporate university, we are the consumers. No consumers, no school.

> it's a very simple equation, so the students have to use their power, but we have all have to kind of leverage that power, it's not enough to for people go to those meetings…We really need the group, we need the community to stand together and stand in solidarity. Also, the people that can afford the tuition, we have to stand in solidarity with these things, because otherwise it's very, very difficult to achieve something and that's what I would hope that the union will move towards to include the people, not just for the election and then the people vote for them, and then forget about it. And I know it's very difficult, we are all so incredibly busy, but I feel like that's the way forward (John).

Student activists also shared that they felt the recent rebranding of the student union run foodbank, the LUSU Food Resource Centre, did not actually help with the structural problems. Prisha explains,

> They [the student union] recently renamed and renovated the food bank to the Food Resource Center. Which is great, but it happened so quickly…like great you're renovating the food bank to make it look more aesthetic and make it a nicer space for students to sit in, but, hey, let's talk about real change and that's not just the student union's fault, but, also how the university is totally dismissing them and our [student's] voices I guess. (Prisha).

The student union's main reason for rebranding the space was to make it more inclusive and a less stigmatizing space. At the broader level however, this student activist felt as though student concerns were dismissed from university administrators, which is something that all participants mentioned throughout the focus group.

5.3 Activists Working Across Social and Structural Differences

Participants understood that there are social differences amongst students in regard to their gender, race, student status, and income, which impact their experiences. Student activists demonstrated reflexivity of their positions and identity in relation to this work. For example, John and Prisha, who are both international students discussed their shared experiences doing food advocacy as well as sharp differences in their experiences because of their gender and race, when advocating for student food security and international tuition rates. As noted earlier, Prisha described feeling that she is often not taken seriously and that she is "walking around on

eggshells", which she connects directly with her identity as an international student and a woman of colour. John on the other hand explained:

> I’m an international student myself, but, unlike most other international students, I’m from Europe, I’m white, I’m a man. So, when I came to Canada and throughout my years, I've never experienced any racism or discrimination based on my status as an international student. If I walk in somewhere, everybody assumes I'm Canadian and why do they assume that? They assume that before I start speaking, it's because of my skin color, because, I look European, so, I look like the typical Canadian… And it actually makes me mad because I’ve always heard stories from other international students from other countries, and I know how they are facing so many difficulties in blatant racism sometimes. And then I’m there, why do they treat me differently? Because I’m coming from another country… I mean one of the arguments of these people are that these people come and “steal our jobs’ (Air quotes used). Well, I’m also coming from another country and am “stealing your jobs” (Air quotes used) but I’m never facing any of that. So why is it that I am an acceptable immigrant? But everybody else is not? and that makes me mad because I’m an immigrant like any other international students, but I get a privilege treatment because of my skin color (John).

In the focus group, Prisha responded back to John to say:

> I want to quickly add there, that because of that John, you may also have maybe felt oppressed and not have been able to share your international student experiences, right, because there's just that presumption (Prisha).

John continues:

> Well, I mean I do share it, because I don't care what people think. But… I am almost, like, the ‘acceptable international student’ (air quotes used)… if I raise my voice, it's fine, they're not critiquing me. I mean, of course, the university doesn't listen to any of my suggestions either, but I don't think that has to do with my... where I’m coming from, that's just, they don't want to change, but I never faced racism, because I’m European” (John)

This interaction in the focus group between the participants displays the ways in which identity shapes the work based on gender and race. These student activists were reflective of their positionalities and identity and understood how differences in gender, race, and student status (international or domestic) affected their experiences with food security activism, particularly in relation to the racism that non-white students experience. Specifically, for John, the white, male international student, there was no fear in speaking out and advocating on the issues of high

tuition and subsequent food insecurity experienced by all students. In relation to biographical availability (Earl, et al., 2017), students who are more privileged face less barriers to their participation, making it easier for them to speak up without fear of repercussions, while, it is explained earlier in this chapter, that students who experience poverty, food insecurity, and/or are non-white face increased barriers to their participation.

5.4 Building Relationships Amongst Student Activists

The student participants talked about the importance of community and building relationships in their food activism activities as a reason to continue to be involved in their activist work. Students in the focus group talked about the ways they built relationships within their communities (with other students, organizations, clubs, etc.) which led to a sense of belonging, and for some, increased confidence. For example, Prisha explains:

> [Meal Exchange] introduced me to this wonderful community where I got to learn so much about why food matters, why these conversations matter and…And I started developing a lot of connections on campus and off campus as well and I gained a lot of confidence and found what I really wanted to do early on, so I was really grateful for that (Prisha).

Students build relationships with other students, community members and organizations through their involvement with campus student clubs, committees and the national organization, Meal Exchange. Moreover, as Prisha suggests, she developed confidence through her involvement with Meal Exchange, which led to her leadership on campus, as one of the founders and leaders of different student groups on campus, this is similar to the research findings of Wawrzynski and Naik (2021).

For Dawn, an Indigenous student activist, the importance of building relationships and community through food which brings people together is central to her activism. One example of this was the *Gathering of Fall Flavours*, which took place in early September 2018. This event,

coordinated and organized by students on the Indigenous Food Sovereignty (IFS) Committee, provided Indigenous foods to two hundred and fifty students, faculty and university staff. According to Dawn, the goal of the event was to raise awareness and understanding about Indigenous Food Sovereignty and bring people together. She shared,

> We had an elder, a fire going, we had bannock on a stick as well, blueberry compote…the blueberries themselves were from Aroland First Nations and from the youth that picked the blueberries… It was about building relationships around the campus with students and with international students. We were able to make that connection, you know, bring people together, Indigenous students, international students- all students. As we were all facing food insecurity. Yeah, so it was about building relationships (Dawn).

Dawn was not alone in seeing the benefits of bringing people together as all of the student participants talked about the importance of coming together to advocate for changes to the campus food environment and reducing food insecurity through which important relationship and community building happened. As Prisha explains:

> We have established a much more connected community of students like Sierra, and Sarah, and John who care so much about this and they're just more connected now and… And yeah, it feels like I'm not alone and that we're actually getting somewhere now" (Prisha).

Sarah echoed this point and explained the importance of having a large community of student activists so that the work is manageable for students who are often so busy:

> A lot of students have so much on their plate already. And I think that's when the point of like making for sure that we have a big enough connected community becomes the most important thing, because at the end of the day, we can get it done as a group of five or four but, we-- but it doesn't work as well as it should be and it's not going to carry on to the [next] generations that we needed to be (Sarah).

Participants understood that the activism and advocacy were collective endeavours that required many student voices with Dawn noting that the wider community of Thunder Bay could also be engaged. She explained,

> I believe that we need to come together more. We've [Indigenous Food Sovereignty Committee] been such a small group. We need to expand, and get more involved in community, not just at the University, but within Thunder Bay and within other communities as well. We need to listen to what they're doing and share what we're doing at the university. We [food activists at Lakehead and the wider community] are all concerned with, food sovereignty and indigenous foods and food insecurity, so it's important to learn what they're doing and to establish that bigger circle. When somebody is interested, we would welcome them. If anyone wants to participate, share ideas, get involved in terms of any kind of initiatives going forward. At our next meeting [with the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Committee] we would totally welcome Prisha, Sarah, Sierra and anyone to come- if you want to come and you know and join us as well, just to see what we're talking about and to continue to build that Community" (Dawn).

Dawn expresses the need to further develop the community of food activists working to address food security and Indigenous food sovereignty and build momentum on the issues.

5.5 Making Change for The Future

Social change is the goal of social movements and through activism, students can be involved in making the changes necessary to promote food justice. The student participant activists talked about the importance of making changes for future generations of students. Dawn shared,

> You know, we may not be here, but our children will be here…hopefully it won't take that long, but at least it'll hopefully be established, and they won't have to fight these battles, so we can lay down that groundwork and see it to fruition, you know, we will see it through our kids, when they go to school (Dawn).

Moreover, Prisha explained that even when she was feeling exhausted and burnt out from her activism, she continued to invest her time in advocating and pursuing social change. She shared, "one of the only things that keeps me going to do this work is that I don't want the future students to face the problems that we all are facing right now".

5.5.1 Real Change is Difficult

Student activists understood that change is difficult. As John describes,

> I think one of the points that I find is really the red tape and bureaucracy of the university, that make any change incredibly difficult. Of course, for students that's

> even harder because we, I mean, for us, it's not our job to bring change… we are not working full time, and I think Sarah and Prisha mentioned that, before I mean, most of us are doing this as volunteer work. And so, getting through… navigating the university, this corporate university and just figuring out who you have to go to actually make something happen is difficult. So then, you find the person who might be responsible, but that person will tell you oh there's another department…that we have to talk to them…and then there is another thing that we have to do… and then it has to go through this and that and…And it's so tiring, it's so exhausting, and that's for every little thing, so that's for a small project and it's even harder for the big project. So, it's so hard to navigate this bureaucracy of the university (John).

Understanding the bureaucracy of the institution and the fact that change occurs slowly was not lost on administrators as described in Chapter four. Yet the student activists continue to advocate for reducing tuition rates and pushing for a Migwam to be built. The lack of response by the university to move beyond charity can be connected to the institution and structural barriers of capitalism, systemic racism, and settler-colonialism, which underly the neoliberal corporate university. Moreover, neoliberal stigma (DeSouza 2019), an effect of neoliberalism on food insecurity, is shown in the stories and experiences of students described throughout this chapter.

5.6 Conclusion

The ability to get involved in activism is dependant on multiple factors that are connected with identity and gender, race, age, employment, family, and more (Earl, et al., 2017). For example, returning students and students with dependents, may be less likely to participate in activism. At the same time, young low-income students may also be less likely to participate as they must also have part-time jobs. Therefore, while (un)employment and income status may encourage students to participate in activism, it may also be a barrier in which students are unable to participate (Earl, et al., 2017). For example, some participants began their journey as student activists because they had personal experiences with food insecurity, and although this created a desire to be involved, at times created a barrier to involvement (as activism is often

unpaid work). International students face increased barriers because of high tuition rates and often, the need to work multiple jobs to earn enough money to be able to pay for their education. Students were aware that barriers to the work disproportionately affect certain groups of students, which can create limited representation of some groups of students (for example, as Sarah explains, International and Indigenous student representation).

Participants also expressed that activism often felt gendered, that many student activists were women, similar to other research findings (Earl, et al., 2017; Keller, 2012; Taft, 2010; Gordon, 2008; McAdam, 1988). Gender and race intersect to impact how food insecurity is experienced (Martin, et al., 2019) and how one is able to respond to their difficult circumstances (Earl, et al., 2017). These continuous experiences of microaggressions and racism makes it more difficult for international students to get involved as Prisha explained. Significantly, on campus and in her role as a student food activist on the Food Security Committee, she did not feel safe.

Racism within social movements is a recurring theme which often creates a barrier to youth participation (Earl, et al., 2017). As Prisha explained, there are multiple overlapping inequalities including race, class, student status, being an international student, and trauma can affect a student's ability to take on food activism, which stem from each student's unique positionality and their experiences. Student activists also demonstrated the importance of building community and having community with students. This is most seen in the way initiatives were organized through the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Committee as shared by Dawn.

Student activists at Lakehead are engaged and interested in addressing the issue of student food insecurity. Students feel dedicated to the work because of their need for social change and improving their own and their peers’ access to food and food justice. They did not

want future generations of students to face the same battles and were hopeful that through activism, change would be made. Even when negative emotions occurred (such as stress or burnout), students felt a need to continue their work. Student activists at Lakehead are passionate about food security, they understand that there is a problem with student poverty, high tuition rates, settler-colonial legacies and they want social change on these issues, all of which contribute to student food insecurity.

The findings presented in this chapter demonstrate that student participants are frustrated with charity approaches and emergency-based responses to food insecurity. As students advocate for changes which move beyond charity, and take up food justice as an approach, they are often faced with structural barriers from the institution. While some administrators understand the larger issues that tie into food insecurity, they seemed unsure as to how to move forward.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Throughout this feminist intersectional case study with student activists, I have outlined the events which have occurred from 2016 to 2021 relating to student food insecurity at Lakehead University on the Thunder Bay campus. Through interviews and a focus group, I have sought to shed light on the perspective of some administrators, and the work and experiences of student activists at Lakehead University, all of whom who are working to help alleviate food insecurity on the Thunder Bay campus.

Lakehead University is a Northern Ontario post-secondary campus which is somewhat isolated from restaurants and grocery stores in the city. During the Covid-19 pandemic in particular, restrictions and regulations drastically decreased the ability to access food around campus. From 2020-2022, food retailers on campus were either shut down, or had limited hours, even when in-person classes were permitted. For many students, limited access to foods on campus became a serious issue and contributed to food insecurity at Lakehead. While it is important to recognize these issues, isolation and limited access to food is only one part of the problem. Often, it is student activists who bring light to the problems that students face on campus. While students at Lakehead raise awareness about the limited access to foods on campus, they also bring awareness to other issues which contribute to food insecurity, such as high tuition rates.

This thesis has provided insight on the successes and challenges that students face doing food advocacy and pursuing food justice at Lakehead University from the perspective of post-secondary students who identify as activists. Throughout this project, I have taken an anti-racist, anti-colonial, intersectional framework to understand the experiences and identities of student activists by allowing the student activist participant voices to lead the project. I have critically

analyzed the ways in which food justice and food security work has been taken up at Lakehead University to understand the ways in which structures of capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and settler colonialism continues to affect student food insecurity, how food insecurity has been addressed by institutions and student activist experiences navigating these institutions and structures.

6.1 Intersectional Differences in Student Experiences with Activism

Student activists became involved in food activism for a variety of reasons. Through an intersectional analysis, we learn the ways that their involvement with food activism is shaped by their identity. Specifically, an intersectional analysis makes visible the barriers that student participant food activists face because of their experiences and their identity, through their gender, social class, race or ethnicity, age or student status. Furthermore, students' experiences intersect with their collective identity (e.g., as post-secondary student activists, and as women activists) which shape their 'voices' on issues such as food security and tuition in the larger structure of the institution. As Roth (2021) explains, the multiple axes of privilege and discrimination that activists bring to their organizing efforts affect the direction and goals of social movements. For example, in this study, participants Prisha and Sarah experienced food insecurity and/or economic precarity directly which led them to their activism. Moreover, some participants such as John and Prisha became involved because of the unique experiences they face as international students, and the high tuition fees and student poverty they experience as a result of their student status. Dawn identified that her food activism with the Indigenous Food Sovereignty committee is because of her experiences as a Cree woman. This aligns with earlier work by Kwan (2017), who found that youth activism was impacted by memories, family values,

wanting to connect to their culture and understanding that food can be used as a tool to advocate for systemic issues.

As mentioned in Chapter two and Chapter five, gender, and race matter when it comes to food activism (Swan, 2020; Taft, 2010; Earl et al., 2017), particularly because intersecting positionalities inform individual experiences, which then shape the experience of being an activist, Thus, understanding that individual experiences and collective social positionalities, which are also structural (i.e., gender, race, social class, among others) influence how student activists see the issues, and why students get involved in food activism and then also influence the types of social activism the participants prioritize.

This thesis also demonstrates how systemic and structural racism within the institution operate to oppress the voices and activism of Indigenous students, and international students of colour. For example, as Dawn described with the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Committee's effort to build a Migwam, although they advocated on multiple levels within the institution, they could not gain traction to make it a reality, which she felt went against the institution's commitment to decolonization. Prisha, a racialized female student activists' experience provides another example, whereby she explained that she was never taken seriously on the university food security committee because of her status as a racialized international student and her accent. As she explained, Prisha's experiences of racism and microaggressions, and arguably gender, intersect to shape the way in which she speaks and takes up space in conversation, thus impacting her activism.

All of the student participants understood and made it clear that food activism is often gendered and racialized. Sarah explained that it is mainly women who take up food activism on campus, with John acknowledging that he does not worry about stating his position on the

problems that create food insecurity or in undertaking activism because of his white male identity. Moreover, John and Sarah reflected on their white privilege to explain how their experiences were clearly different than Prisha and Dawn's, the racialized student participants.

Finally, recognizing these social differences is also part of my own privileged experience as a student researcher and activist myself, in thinking about the ways I have collected, analyzed, and written up these findings. Specifically, because of this project, I now have a deeper understanding of the variety of experiences student activists bring to their work at Lakehead University, which informs future work and activism in my current role working for the student union as the Food Resource Coordinator. Particularly, in understanding the trauma, racism and gender oppressions that occurs in the student food movement on the campus, I am aware of how power operates through student identities.

6.2 Charity versus Food Justice

While food activism informed by food justice is the focus of many student-led initiatives, charity approaches continue to dominate the wider response to post-secondary student food insecurity at Lakehead University. At the university level, health and wellness strategies focus on health and nutrition in relation to food, but they do not address student poverty or food insecurity or the complex financial realities of many post-secondary students. Universities have developed food security committees before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there are serious questions about the solutions posed by the university as the problems are structural and require systemic changes to how universities operate and subsequently affect students (Laban, et al., 2020) not food charity.

Charity is an institutionalized response to food insecurity, leading to the question of what this means for students? For student activists who are seeking to eliminate food insecurity, how

does the dominant response from the institution itself inform the work that student activists can do? Student-led approaches vary, with some taking up charity and others seeking rights-based or a justice approach to address student food insecurity. The student activist participants understood the larger issues which connect to food insecurity which must be addressed, such as high tuition rates especially for international students, however, they noted that larger structural changes are quite difficult. Moreover, there are tensions between administrators and students as to what needs to be done to alleviate food insecurity and make the university experience one free from poverty and health precarity.

Food justice approaches stress the importance of understanding that there are racialized, gendered, and class inequalities in the food system related to production, transportation, distribution and consumption, and thus, there is a need to transform the food system to address the inequalities (Alkon, 2016; Cadieux and Slocum, 2015; Gottieb and Joshi, 2010). The Lakehead University student activists who participated in this research understand the issues of food insecurity on their campus and direct their action and initiatives to combating them. These student activists understood the larger context of food insecurity and food justice and want to push beyond their institution. As John says,

> it's not a Lakehead specific issue, because I mean food insecurity is not Lakehead specific. Student food insecurity is across the country, so we will not fix it by just focusing on Lakehead. We need to make these connections to other universities, this is an issue of post-secondary education, of the corporatization of post-secondary education, of neoliberal policies, where we see that governments give less and less funding to university, which then trickles down into the practices that the university applied to make up for that lost funding. So, we really have to tackle that on the larger level, and we cannot do that with just focusing on our campus, we need to make these connections (John).

There was a shared sentiment that student activists want to move beyond charity work, yet they are often met with resistance from administration and institutional regulations leaving students feeling frustrated because food charity will not solve student food insecurity. While some

administrators noted that emergency food responses are not the solution, they did not know how or have the capacity, willingness, or imagination to move beyond charity.

Although students often advocated and educated the student body about the need for structural changes, such as affordable international tuition rates, the student's activism also often fell back to charity responses, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, where they provided relief to students through gift card and free or subsidized good food box distributions. This tension between food charity and food justice, which requires structural changes to broader post-secondary education policy including addressing rising tuition costs was felt most strongly by the student activists, who themselves experience the impacts of provincial and institutional policies governing the delivery of post-secondary education.

6.3 Outcomes of Student Food Activism

Student participants saw the benefits of their activism in the relationships they were able to form with one another, and with key partners, such as faculty and community members in their activist work. Relationships with other students, organizations and clubs created a sense of belonging, similar to the findings of Wawrzynski and Naik (2021). As well, some student activist participants found confidence in themselves, and their desire to keep pushing for change.

As well, the fact that the student activists were able to contribute to lessening the hardships of food insecurity was meaningful for the participants. Although the student activists were familiar with the problems of charity and were demanding food justice and structural changes in the institution, they also recognized that the need to support their fellow students through the difficult experiences of being food insecure. As mentioned above, this tension between charity and food justice never went away for participants and was present in how the

activists approached their work in advocacy and also in what types of activities or programs they chose to run and undertake to bring awareness of the issue to the wider campus.

The desire for social change was strongly evident in the narratives of the activists who participated in the focus group and shared their experiences, and perspectives on student food activism. Although there were many frustrations and defeats in their work, the student activist participants wanted to continue to advocate and seek food justice for future students.

6.4 Conclusion

The research presented in this thesis adds to our understanding of the experiences of student food activists in the context of a feminist intersectional case study of one regional university in Northern Ontario. Food insecurity is a feminist issue, and an intersectional approach enables us to understand how intersecting identities that are classed, gendered, and racialized as well as experienced through the structures of student status impact on how student food activism is enacted within the post-secondary setting.

Student poverty is growing and although the experiences of students who are food insecure are diverse, there are many shared characteristics, some of which lead students themselves to student food activism. Although many institutions acknowledge the problems of student food insecurity, the dominant approach is charity, which means that the structures of student poverty (i.e. high tuition, higher costs of living generally) are left intact. Student food activists are speaking up and advocating for changes to the campus food environment and demanding more affordable education because they understand the problems students face in juggling the high costs of a university education and needing aforadable food on campus. Yet tensions between food charity and food justice remain embedded in the activism that students undertake which runs parallel to the issues in wider Canadian society in that food banks are not

going to eliminate structural income and economic inequalities. To further understand these tensions, future studies should examine more broadly the work of student food activism beyond this case study of Lakehead University.

Appendixes

Appendix A: Focus Group Email

Focus Group Email:

Hello ____:

I am working on my Master's thesis research project which focuses on student food advocacy work. I am inviting you to participate in this research project because I know you have been concerned about student food insecurity at Lakehead University.

My research is set up as Participatory Action Research (PAR) which is collaborative with participants. The aim of my project is to understand how food advocacy is being actioned around food insecurity in the context of Lakehead University.

As a starting point for the project, I am inviting you to participate in a focus group to talk about the issue of food security on the Thunder Bay campus. I am hoping to conduct the focus group by early April 2021.

I have attached a doodle poll to complete at your earliest convenience. The information letter says the focus group will last between 45-60 minutes, but I have made the time slots at 1.5 hours because we don't want to be rushed. I know these conversations are very engaging and will more than likely run the full 60 minutes.

Further information is provided in the information letter which I have attached to the email. I have also included the consent form for your review and sign if you are willing to participate.

This research has been approved by the Lakehead REB Protocol #1464891

Here is the link to the doodle poll. If you are interested in participating, please fill out all the times you are available, if none of these times work for you, please send me and email:

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to send me an email.

Thank you,

Sierra Korczynski

Appendix B: Focus Group Information Letter

Information Letter Focus Group

Participatory Action Research (PAR) on Student Food Advocacy Work

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Sierra Korczynski and I am a student at Lakehead University. I am currently working towards an MA degree in Sociology with a specialization in Gender and Women's Studies. I am inviting you to take part in my Master's thesis research project on student food insecurity at Lakehead University because you are concerned about the issue of post-secondary student food insecurity.

My Project is set up as participatory action research (PAR). Participatory action research is collaborative with participants who work with the researcher to understand the issues with the goals of education and social change. For my PAR project, the aim is to understand how food advocacy is being actioned around food insecurity in the context of Lakehead University. As an initial starting point, I am inviting you to participate in a focus group to talk about the issue of food insecurity on the Thunder Bay campus. As an outcome of this focus group, I am hoping that we can share our stories, areas of concern, and collaborate to understand how food (in)security manifests on our campus.

If you agree to participate in this research, I ask you to participate in a 45-60 minute focus group at a scheduled time on Zoom. The focus group will be made up of 5-6 Lakehead University students who are also concerned about student food insecurity.

The following list of questions are meant as a guide and will be asked in the order that makes sense through the conversation:

1. What are your experiences working on food security on campus?
2. How are these experiences gendered? Racialized?
    a. Is the work you do gendered? Racialized?
3. What work are you aware of that is being done in relation to food (in)security on campus? (Indigenous food sovereignty; Meal Exchange; Emergency Food Support through LUSU foodbank; etc.)
    a. How have these initiatives / projects been successful?
    b. What have been the challenges
4. What kinds of changes on campus do you think would be beneficial for students in achieving a food secure campus?

With your permission, the focus group will be recorded and later transcribed. Field notes may also be taken. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or discontinue your participation at any time during the focus group. You have the right to refuse to answer any question. After the focus group, I will provide you with a copy of the preliminary themes emerging from the analysis for your review. I welcome your feedback on this document and, if you would like, we can schedule a follow-up interview. As well, you may contact us to withdraw from the study up until the time that the focus group transcript has been made anonymous.

Appendix B Cont.

As we are in a group setting, we ask that you please respect each other's privacy with regard to our conversations in the Focus Group. We want to hear about your experiences; however, we will maintain confidentiality by assigning a pseudonym to each of you for any written or published discussion of what is shared. Participants will be kept anonymous unless they wish to share their identity as a co-collaborator in the project.

Audio records and original transcripts of the focus group will be stored for five years on a password-protected Dropbox folder only accessible by me and my supervisor. The paper records will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Five years following the completion of this study, the digital data will be deleted and the paper records will be shredded. Your data will not be used for any future research project and will be deleted after 5 years.

While we are discussing your work and advocacy with student food insecurity, I am mindful that personal stories may be shared which may cause students to experience emotional distress. All students who participate in the study will be given a list of resources for mental health, emergency food access programs, and food banks in Thunder Bay.

Your willingness to share your knowledge and experiences will contribute to a better understanding of the work being done on campus and where improvements may be needed. There is an opportunity to build new critical knowledge about Lakehead students experiences with their food environment on campus, and changes could be made on campus from the new knowledge. Furthermore, as a group, I am hoping we can collaborate on this research that will result in more education on food (in)security on our campus.

The results of the focus group will be used for my master's thesis, as well as, for potential academic publications. A copy of the thesis will be available for interested participants. After August 2022, you may call or email either myself or Dr Parker to request a copy of the study results.

Attached you will find a consent form that is to be signed by you before we will start the focus group. The focus group is completely voluntary and confidential.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact me at (807) 630-7044 or snkorczy@lakeheadu.ca; or my supervisor, Barbara Parker at (807) 343-8792 or Barbara.parker@lakeheadu.ca.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team, please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

Thank you for considering participating in this project.

Sincerely,

Sierra Korczynski

Contact Information Student Researcher:
Sierra Korczynski
MA Sociology candidate
Lakehead University
Phone: 807-630-7044
Email: snkorczy@lakheadu.ca

Contact Information Supervisor:
Dr. Barbara Parker
Associate Professor of Sociology
Lakehead University
Phone: 343-8792
Email: Barbara.parker@lakeheadu.ca

Appendix C: Focus Group Consent Form

Focus Group Consent Form

Project Title: Participatory Action Research (PAR) on Student Food Advocacy Work

Researchers: Sierra Korczynski (student researcher), Dr. Barbara Parker (supervisor)

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

My signature on this consent form means the following:

_______I have read and understand the information contained in the Information Letter.

_______I agree to participate in the project and have been told that I can change my mind and withdraw from the study at any time prior to the anonymization of the transcript. I also understand that I can withdraw from the focus group at any time without penalty and may choose not to answer specific questions or discuss certain subjects.

_______I understand that the focus group will be recorded for transcription purposes only, then deleted.

_______The risks and benefits of the study have been explained to me.

_______The data collected from this focus group will be securely stored for a period of five years.

_______ You will receive a copy of the emergent themes to review for accuracy before the data is used.

_______I understand that the research findings will be made available to me upon request by email to the researchers after August 2022.

_______I understand that I will remain anonymous in any publication or public presentation of the research findings.

_______I have had a chance to ask any questions about the project.

Name of Participant (Please Print): ______________________________

Signature: ________________________________ Date: _____________________

If you have any questions about this research, please contact Sierra Korczynski at (807) 630-7044 or snkorczy@lakeheadu.ca; or Barbara Parker at (807) 343-8792 or Barbara.parker@lakeheadu.ca.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to

Appendix C Cont.

speak to someone outside of the research team, please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

Sincerely,

Sierra Korczynski

Contact Information Student Researcher:
Sierra Korczynski
MA Sociology candidate
Lakehead University
Phone: 807-630-7044
Email: snkorczy@lakeheadu.ca

Contact Information Supervisor:
Dr. Barbara Parker
Associate Professor of Sociology
Lakehead University
Phone: 343-8792
Email: Barbara.parker@lakeheadu.ca

Appendix D: Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions

Preamble: *Food Insecurity "is the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food, or the ability to acquire such food in a socially acceptable manner. The most extreme form is often accompanied by physiological sensations of hunger" (Goldrick-Rab, et al., 2019). In 2016 a report released by Meal Exchange, showed that 46% of students at Lakehead University experience food insecurity, with 14.7% facing severe food insecurity (Silverthorn, 2016). Food insecurity remains a significant problem on our campuses and under the current context of the global pandemic, even more so.*

We know that many of you are concerned about the issue of post-secondary student food insecurity, which is why you have been invited to participate in this focus group.

Hello, my name is Sierra, and I am a Master's student in Sociology hoping to do participatory action research on this topic. Participatory action research is collaborative with participants who work with the researcher to understand the issues with the goals of education and social change. For my PAR project, the aim is to understand how food advocacy is being actioned around food insecurity in the context of Lakehead University. As an initial starting point, I am inviting you to participate in a focus group to talk about the issue of food insecurity on the Thunder Bay campus. As an outcome of this focus group, I am hoping that we can share our stories, areas of concern, and collaborate to understand how food (in)security manifests on our campus.

PRIVACY –We ask that you please respect each other's privacy with regard to our conversation today in this Focus Group. We want to hear about your experiences, however, we will maintain confidentiality by assigning a pseudonym to each of you for any written or published discussion of what is shared today.

Questions: (these are meant as a guide and will be asked in the order that makes sense through the conversation).

5. What are your experiences working on food security on campus?
6. How are these experiences gendered? Racialized?
    a. Is the work you do gendered? Racialized?
7. What work are you aware of that is being done in relation to food (in)security on campus? (Indigenous food sovereignty; Meal Exchange; Emergency Food Support through LUSU foodbank; etc.)
    a. How have these initiatives / projects been successful?
    b. What have been the challenges
8. What kinds of changes on campus do you think would be beneficial for students in achieving a food secure campus?

Appendix E: Focus Group Member-Checking Email

Member-Checking Email:

Hello (Participant name),

As we discussed at the focus group you participated in for the project, PAR on Food Advocacy Work, on April 1st, 2021, I have attached the emerging themes for your review. You are not required to respond however I really welcome your thoughts on the preliminary analysis of the focus group transcript.

Specifically, can you please read over the transcript and let me know if there is anything you said in the focus group that you would like to clarify. Does the transcript accurately represent your contributions? Please clarify or let me know if you have additional information that you would like to have included.

I am also looking for your input on the themes that I have coded with my supervisor, Dr. Barbara Parker. Do the themes represent the conversation that we had in the focus group? Are there additional themes you would like us to consider? Please use the comment feature in track changes on the transcript document to make comments.

As well, I was hoping you could list your top three themes of importance in order of priority to you. You can do this by replying to my email.

Lastly, I have created a profile for you with non-identifying information (see attached) that will be included in my thesis as an Appendix. Can you please review and add or change anything that you feel would best represent who you are and how you relate to the project. Also, I am wondering if there is a pseudonym you would like used instead of your name. Please include this on your profile.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

I am hoping that you can send it back to me at your earliest convenience or by July 5th, 2021.

Thank you,
Sierra Korczynski

Appendix F: Interview Email

Interview Email:

Hello _____

My name is Sierra Korczynski and I am working on my Master's thesis research project which focuses on food advocacy work. I am inviting you to participate in this research project because I know you have been concerned about student food insecurity at Lakehead University.

My research is set up as Participatory Action Research (PAR) which is collaborative with participants. The aim of my project is to understand how food advocacy is being actioned around food insecurity in the context of Lakehead University.

I am inviting you to participate in a one-on-one interview to talk about the issue of food security on the Thunder Bay campus.

Further information is provided in the information letter which I have attached to the email.

This research has been approved by the Lakehead REB Protocol #1464891

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Sierra Korczynski

Appendix G: Interview Information Letter

Interview Information Letter

Participatory Action Research (PAR) on Food Advocacy Work

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Sierra Korczynski and I am a student at Lakehead University. I am currently working towards an MA degree in Sociology with a specialization in Gender and Women's Studies. I am inviting you to take part in my Master's thesis research project on food advocacy work at Lakehead University because you are concerned about the issue of post-secondary student food insecurity.

My Project is set up as participatory action research (PAR). Participatory action research is collaborative with participants who work with the researcher to understand the issues with the goals of education and social change. For my PAR project, the aim is to understand how food advocacy is being actioned around food insecurity in the context of Lakehead University.

I am inviting you to participate in a one-on-one interview to discuss the issue of food insecurity on the Thunder Bay campus. As an outcome of this interview, I am hoping that we can share our stories, areas of concern, and collaborate to understand how food (in)security manifests on our campus. If you agree to participate in this research, I ask you to participate in a 45-60 minute interview at a scheduled time on Zoom.

With your permission, the interview will be recorded and later transcribed. Field notes may also be taken. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or discontinue your participation at any time during the interview. You have the right to refuse to answer any question. After the interview, you may contact us to withdraw from the study up until the time that your transcript has been made anonymous. We will maintain confidentiality by assigning a pseudonym to you for any written or published discussion of what is shared. Participants will be kept anonymous unless they wish to share their identity as a co-collaborator in the project.

Audio records and original transcripts of the interview will be stored for five years on a password-protected Dropbox folder only accessible by me and my supervisor. The paper records will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Five years following the completion of this study, the digital data will be deleted and the paper records will be shredded. Your data will not be used for any future research project and will be deleted after 5 years.

Your willingness to share your knowledge and experiences will contribute to a better understanding of the work being done on campus and where improvements may be needed. There is an opportunity to build new critical knowledge about Lakehead students experiences with their food environment on campus, and changes could be made on campus from the new knowledge. Furthermore, I am hoping we can collaborate on this research that will result in more education on food (in)security on our campus.

The results of the interview will be used for my master's thesis, as well as, for potential academic publications. A copy of the thesis will be available for interested participants. After August 2022, you may call or email either myself or Dr Parker to request a copy of the study results.
Attached you will find a consent form that is to be signed by you before we will start the interview. The interview is completely voluntary and confidential.

Appendix G Cont.
If you have any questions about this research, please contact me at (807) 630-7044 or snkorczy@lakeheadu.ca; or my supervisor, Barbara Parker at (807) 343-8792 or Barbara.parker@lakeheadu.ca.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team, please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

Thank you for considering participating in this project.

Sincerely,

Sierra Korczynski

Contact Information Student Researcher:
Sierra Korczynski
MA Sociology candidate
Lakehead University
Phone: 807-630-7044
Email: snkorczy@lakheadu.ca

Contact Information Supervisor:
Dr. Barbara Parker
Associate Professor of Sociology
Lakehead University
Phone: 343-8792
Email: Barbara.parker@lakeheadu.ca

Appendix H: Interview Consent Form

Interview Consent Form

Project Title: Participatory Action Research (PAR) on Food Advocacy Work

Researchers: Sierra Korczynski (student researcher), Dr. Barbara Parker (supervisor)

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

My signature on this consent form means the following:

_______I have read and understand the information contained in the Information Letter.

_______I agree to participate in the project and have been told that I can change my mind and withdraw from the study at any time prior to the anonymization of the transcript. I also understand that I can withdraw from the interview at any time without penalty and may choose not to answer specific questions or discuss certain subjects.

_______I understand that the interview will be recorded for transcription purposes only, then deleted.

_______The risks and benefits of the study have been explained to me.

_______The data collected from this interview will be securely stored for a period of five years.

_______ You will receive a copy of the transcript to review for accuracy before it is used.

______ I understand that the research findings will be made available to me upon request by email to the researchers after August 2022.

_______I understand that my personal information will be confidential and kept private in any publication or public presentation of the research findings.

_______I have had a chance to ask any questions about the project.

Name of Participant (Please Print): ______________________________

Signature: ________________________________ Date: _____________________

If you have any questions about this research, please contact Sierra Korczynski at (807) 630-7044 or snkorczy@lakeheadu.ca; or Barbara Parker at (807) 343-8792 or Barbara.parker@lakeheadu.ca.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team, please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

Appendix H cont.
Sincerely,

Sierra Korczynski

Contact Information Student Researcher:
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MA Sociology candidate
Lakehead University
Phone: 807-630-7044
Email: snkorczy@lakeheadu.ca

Contact Information Supervisor:
Dr. Barbara Parker
Associate Professor of Sociology
Lakehead University
Phone: 343-8792
Email: Barbara.parker@lakeheadu.ca

Appendix I: Participant Profiles

Participant Profiles

*Participants	Student or Administrator	Gender	Food Security Committee	Student Clubs & Committees	Organizations (Meal Exchange)
Prisha	International Undergrad	W	X	X	X
John	International Graduate	M	X	X	X
Dawn	Indigenous Domestic Graduate	W	X	X	X
Sarah	White Domestic Undergrad	W	X	X	X
Vivian	Administrator	W	X		
Kathy	Administrator	W	X		
Adele	Administrator	W	X		
Mohamed	Administrator	M	X		

*All participants were assigned a pseudonym

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