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### STUDENTS AS CO-RESEARCHERS: USING PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH TO ADDRESS COLLEGE FOOD INSECURITY

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STUDENTS AS CO-RESEARCHERS: USING PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH TO  
ADDRESS COLLEGE FOOD INSECURITY

A Dissertation Presented  
to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

by  
Rachel Brand  
San Francisco  
April 2023

The University of San Francisco

Dissertation Abstract

Students as co-researchers: Using participatory action research to address college food insecurity

Studies indicate that college students experience high rates of food insecurity. Growing awareness of food insecurity on college campuses has resulted in efforts by many institutions to address the problem through innovative programs such as food pantries, campus gardens, and educational workshops. While these initiatives play an important role in facilitating food access, they fall short of meeting students' needs. There is little research on how students' experiences or knowledge can inform strategies to address food insecurity, nor is there extensive research on how students view this issue for themselves and their peers.

This study looks at the benefits of engaging students in participatory action research (PAR) to address college food insecurity. PAR is particularly well suited to address campus food insecurity given its tenets of research, reflection, and action. This paper examines how a PAR project, conducted throughout a semester-long community-engaged learning course at the University of San Francisco (USF), resulted in innovative strategies to address college food insecurity. This justice-based research approach deepened students' understanding of the issue and inspired them to want to change their campus food systems. Students worked to shift the narrative of food insecurity on campus away from an individual experience that carries stigma toward one of community, relationships, and collective action. This study shows the opportunities to address food insecurity not only through immediate needs-based solutions but also through a justice-based research methodology that centers student experiences and knowledge.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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Candidate

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Date

Dissertation Committee

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Chairperson

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