Convening on Food Insecure Adolescents: Recommendations by Practitioners

Johns Hopkins University and Maryland Institute College of Art

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Food Insecurity Ideation Session Summary

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Practitioners interviewed

Matt Burke, Food Rescue Baltimore
Alicia Diehl, Food Access Coordinator, Healthy Harvest
Alice Huang, Food Access Planner, Baltimore Food Policy Initiative
Alice Kennedy, Deputy Commissioner, Housing Authority of Baltimore City
Liz Marchetta, Director, Food and Nutrition Services, Baltimore City Public Schools
Melissa Moore, Program Director of Food Access, Family League
Nicole Mooney, Executive Director and Founder, Black Girls Cook
Sara McLean, Director of Program Services, Moveable Feast
Anne Palmer, Food Communities and Public Health Program Director, Center for a Livable Future
Kara Panowitz, Senior Manager, No Kid Hungry Campaign
Kathy Schulman, KidzTable, St. Vincent de Paul

Project Overview

Building on research by Dr. Kristin Mmari (Mmari K, Offiong A, Gross S, and Mendelson T. (in press). How Adolescents Cope with Food Insecurity in Baltimore City: An Exploratory Study. Public Health Nutrition.), Johns Hopkins University and MICA partnered to explore whether there are opportunities to increase the use of research evidence by experts in the field of food insecurity among adolescents. In March and April of 2019, a research team comprised of Anushka Jajodia, Social Design Fellow, Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA); Max Marshall, Research Associate, JHU School of Engineering; and Nadir Al Kharusi, Research Associate, GovEx, interviewed practitioners who are experts in the field of food insecurity, or who work with the adolescent population. As described below, the researchers and practitioners used qualitative research and human centered design methods to generate ideas and discuss next steps.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD

- Evaluated our resources and goals and designed our research accordingly.
- In-depth small scale qualitative research method to build on previous research by Dr. Mmari with focus on data usage and challenges.
- Multidisciplinary approach with focus on social design.
- Connected with Baltimore organizations that occupy food insecurity space.
- Conducted the interviews and aggregated our findings as a team.
- Brainstorm together!
On April 2, 2019, the team presented the themes and findings to experts in the field of adolescent food insecurity. Based on the insights from the interviews, a set of 'How might we...' questions were created to prompt actionable ideas within groups.

Research into practice
The full list of ideas that were generated can be found in the “Themes and Ideas” section of this document. Below are the next steps that participants identified at the end of the meeting, to immediately act on some of the ideas.

- Dr. Mmari will involve practitioners, youth, funders, and other stakeholders in conversations to develop a blueprint to address food insecurity in Baltimore City
- Researchers will explore an [Undoing Racism training](#)
- Participants are welcome to attend [Food PAC meetings](#) to discuss issues related to equity and food access
- Some members of the research team have submitted a grant to explore how transportation affects food insecurity among adolescents in Baltimore
- Researchers will be mindful of representation, including people of color and youth in conversations like this going forward
- When discussing ending food insecurity, we’ll have an honest conversation about the end goal - is it about superficial measures like increasing participation in federally funded meal programs, or is it about making fundamental, systems-level change to increase accessibility to food while addressing poverty and institutional racism?
We kept track of research questions. Here’s what people wrote:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How does transportation policy affect adolescents who experience food insecurity?</th>
<th>How will Summer SNAP affect SNAP participation, Summer learning loss, Food insecurity</th>
<th>How does food insecurity impact mental well-being and resiliency?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost-benefit analysis of existing programs/services</td>
<td>Less “research,” more evaluation of best practices (research fatigue)</td>
<td>How to eliminate adolescent stigma of school meals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How to promote education/awareness of food system and demand for healthy food among adolescents?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Themes and Ideas
The themes and ideas that we discussed are below. For statements with an asterisk, the text in parentheses was added after the event.

Theme 1: Data use and collection

What we heard from our interviews:
"Organizations use statewide data and data tracking meals utilization and snap - Use it to come up with strategy to be put in place to address dips"

"Community eligibility shifted the type of data used, no longer collecting free/reduced meal forms from every student - trying to find new data points and proxies to use instead"

"Some of ‘good data’ used by most: poverty related statistic at state and city level, proxies for food insecurity like eligibility for WIC or SNAP, free and reduced meals"

Connecting pre existing data- example of the youth that are unsupervised at home for more than 10 hours and those who experience food insecurity, how much overlapping is there?

"Because I know at what point in the market sales had ran out - I can project for next time - 'How much more to send"

How to measure equity and what data needed for that?"

Question based on insights from interviews:
How might we improve the collection and use of data to advance the individual and collective work of organizations?

Ideas from the session:
● Website with SNAP data
● Create cross-sectoral partnerships for data sharing, a data dashboard
● Bring data back to those it is collected from in meaningful ways (+ they can contribute)
● Research questions from community
● Promote evaluations of programs to know what works and not
● Centralized Database for multiple organizations to contribute to and pull from
● Need local/neighborhood level data on food insecurity
● Identify pre-existing poverty data without more forms
● Improved communication of data/reports
● Workshop days to share what is public information
● Data Success Stories
● Research Briefs
● Live Visualization Tool
● Data Collection Workshops
● Training people to collect and use data

**Theme 2: Community members as experts with lived experience**

**What we heard:**
"Organisations are experts in their communities and we want them to be able to flex the model. So understanding the balance of what changes they can make and have our own core model but with an adaptation"

"We realised even if you live next door or close to a healthy store, it doesn't mean that it's affordable for you and only 8% were receiving after school programs so we formed a coalition: 'Administrative barriers for after school meals: Advocacy on why they're unnecessary'"

"In East Baltimore Markets an elderly man walked up and he was so elated, he pointed at his house from the market - I've lived in that house my entire life, but I've never been able to get fresh produce"

“Biggest learning is to keep learning- youth culture is changing rapidly so it is important to listen to them and understand the context they are coming from"

"The idea of breaking bread with people, Not only information and skills but the relationships that we're forming"

"They are good problems in the sense that there is a demand for this but we just didn't realise it"

**Question based on insights from interviews:**

**How might we improve the sharing of information with communities, and the gathering of information from communities?**

**Ideas from the session:**

● *Resident food planners planning academy [additional training for resident food equity advisors]
● Events like food insecurity convening, create time to share
● Train more youth to hold "listening" sessions among youth
● Being critical of IRB
● Commit - Staying in the same neighborhood
● Bring community members onto the research team and pay them
● Paid professional development training / info sessions
● Coordinating other organizations to know what's being asked
● Empower cafeteria managers and staff as community organizers
● Human Centered Data - "I am a human, not a data point"
● **Participatory Action Research (PAR)**
Theme 3: Policy and Regulation

What we heard:
"The goal is we're reaching as many kids as possible. There is frustration around that because the USDA has guidelines about where you can serve meals: Certain amount of kids for free reduced meals"
Community Sites: You have to be in the attendance area of one of those schools.

"Sites around state that provide adult meals for people 18 or older said that they can't get reimbursed for. But they either fund themselves or find a partner who fund them. It's a tricky unfortunate situation when kids get a meal & adults are sitting without. It's hard to make that happen without extra funding for it. It's a huge challenge"

"A lot of schools have started serving in spring and winter but a lot of kids are not getting meals/nutrition in the break which is frustrating"

School has to be 50% or more students eligible for free, reduced price meals"

“Some people who miss qualifying for SNAP benefits, are still not financially stable”

“We know that we’re missing kids who are still in need of meals because of regulations, we can’t reach them"

Question based on insights from interviews:
How might we elevate the community work to change policies for improved food access for adolescents?

Ideas from the session:

- Accessibility to vacant building/land
- Eliminate barriers for child headed households to access meal programs
- Youth lobbyists group
- Dollars to community work
- Public Spaces - Collaborating - There's a lot of work you are not able to see
- Partner to share data / experiences with leg - Quantitative / Qualitative
- Alter SNAP eligibility
- Paid youth jobs with links to existing food programs (SNAP School Meals)
- Funding / Grants framed around community assets and not liabilities
- Accessibility to funding (grants) to support programs that impact food insecurity and education
- Acknowledging and addressing Institutional Racism
- Mandatory resource and training for funding
- Involve youth as partners
- Community Workers decide policy
- Sovereignty
- Not just about food
- *Fund change [root causes, not just superficial solutions]
● Work with restaurants + other businesses to utilize wasted food
● Funding for afterschool OOST programs
● Create safe spaces for some of these programs such as youth-only days
● Amplify youth voice by create opportunity for them to contribute
● Make time in the day
● Build partnership into funding resources
● This is a good start, what is next?

Theme 4: Research

What we heard:
“Some people (researchers) are operating under the illusion that talking about doing something has anything to do with actually doing something.”

“Relying on experts to provide data-related insight”

Using Food PAC as a gateway to connect researchers, non-profit sector, retailers to each other

“That 40% figure (NRDC estimate of food waste in the US) showed me that there is enough food that's unaccounted for in our society that's going to waste that we could with those resources, if we were to mobilize properly around that, we could extensively feed every single person in this society for free with really no additional production growth necessary”

Question based on insights from interviews:
**How might we facilitate strong relationships between practitioners and researchers to support a healthy Baltimore?**

Ideas from the session:
● Researchers asking non-profit communities what data they need
● Build partnership into funding resources
● Undoing racial bias through training for researchers
● Develop "Implementation" Research
● Communication / Transparency / Partner Projects
● Opportunities to meet
● Data Day (BNIA) Program Day
● Cost Benefit Analysis
● Change incentives for researchers (Money or Community?)
● Grants for collaborative research between community and researchers
● Promote that anyone can conduct research with a little xyz
● More program evaluation studies
● Researchers connect with grant applicants
● When is there enough data?
- Consistency & Personable
- Community groups on boards deciding who gets grant

**Personas**

All participants chose one of the 6 available personas, non-profit, researchers, government.