

Using Photovoice to Understand Food Insecurity in Cleveland

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BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic caused much upheaval for residents of Cleveland, OH. Specifically, it brought to light for many communities the problem of food insecurity and the need to solve it on a local basis (Yamoah et al., 2021). While the system serves people of all kinds with dignity and respect, it also faced unprecedented demand during the pandemic (Block, 2020). This unprecedented demand exposed potential holes in the Emergency Food Delivery system. While some holes can be identified by researchers and by those serving the community, the recipients of the assistance also can provide vital insight into what needs to be fixed and how to fix it to best serve the community going forward, particularly in future crises.

POPULATION

Recipients of Emergency Food Assistance were identified in conjunction with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank. All were residents of the Greater Cleveland area and all visited food pantries on at least a semi-regular basis.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Apply previous research experience to find ways to categorize data.
2. Analyze data from a large study.
3. Synthesize data to come up with commonalities in a dataset.

PRACTICUM DELIVERABLES

- Assisting in combing outreach databases and creating an invitation list of 50-70 people for a photovoice dissemination event.
- Reviewed and assessed potential options for a speaker at the photovoice dissemination event.
- Creating a codebook and thematically coding 6 interviews on food security and food pantries using NVivo (see Methods for more information)
- Co-authored an abstract accepted for the 2022 Photovoice Worldwide Conference
- Reviewed and provided contributions to a manuscript about food security and the COVID-19 pandemic.

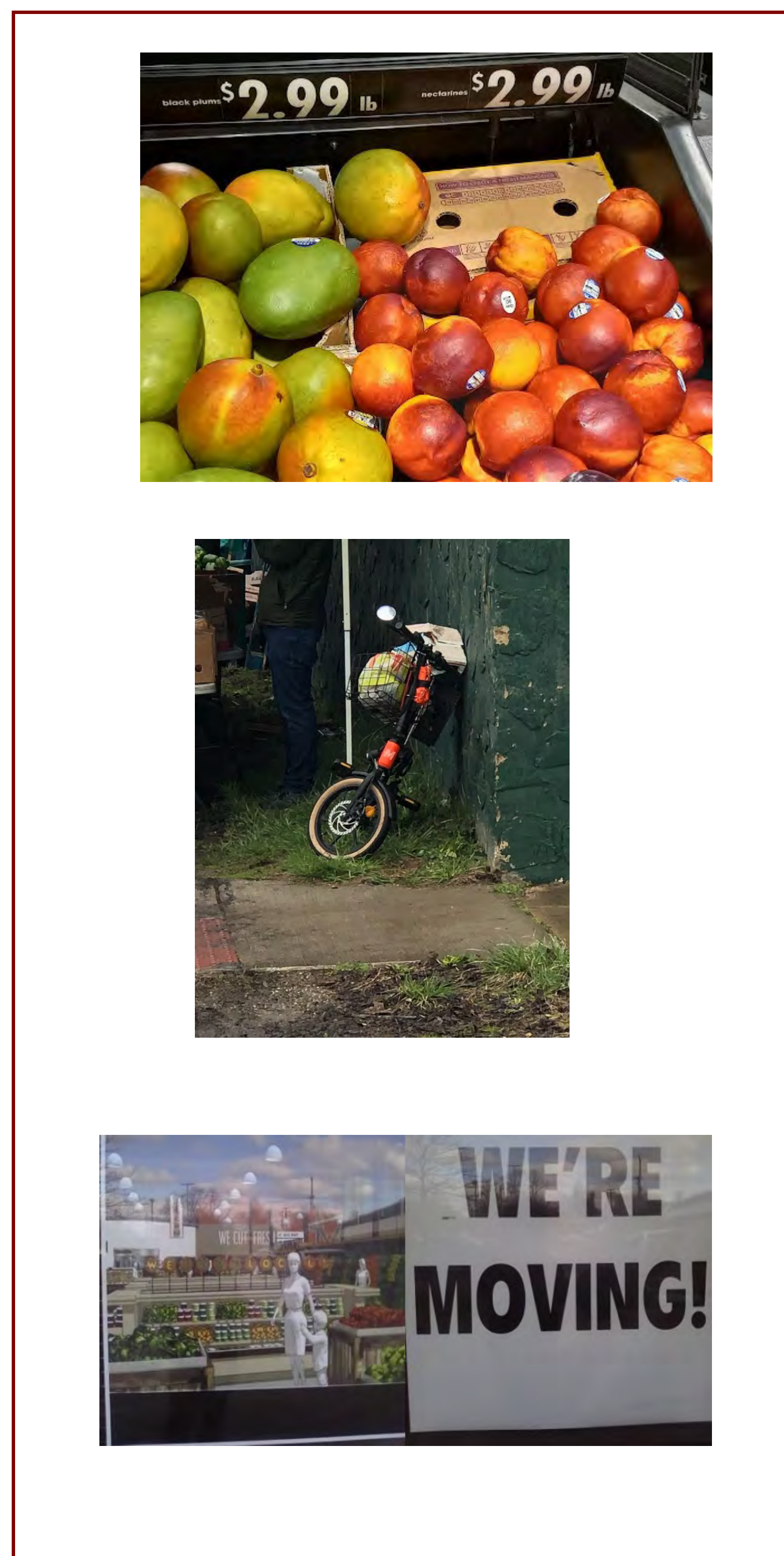


Figure 1: Seen above are some examples of photos that participants took in the study.

METHODS

My preceptor and her PhD student worked with the Food Bank to identify folks who use the food pantry. From there, participants were instructed to take pictures of what they were proud of and what they wish would change. Preceptor and PhD student interviewed all participants using the SHOWeD method (Wang, 2006, p. 151). Then, I came in and started applying qualitative codes to interview transcripts using the framework from Freedman et al. (2022). Codes were added as deemed necessary and preceptor double coded to ensure accuracy.

RESULTS

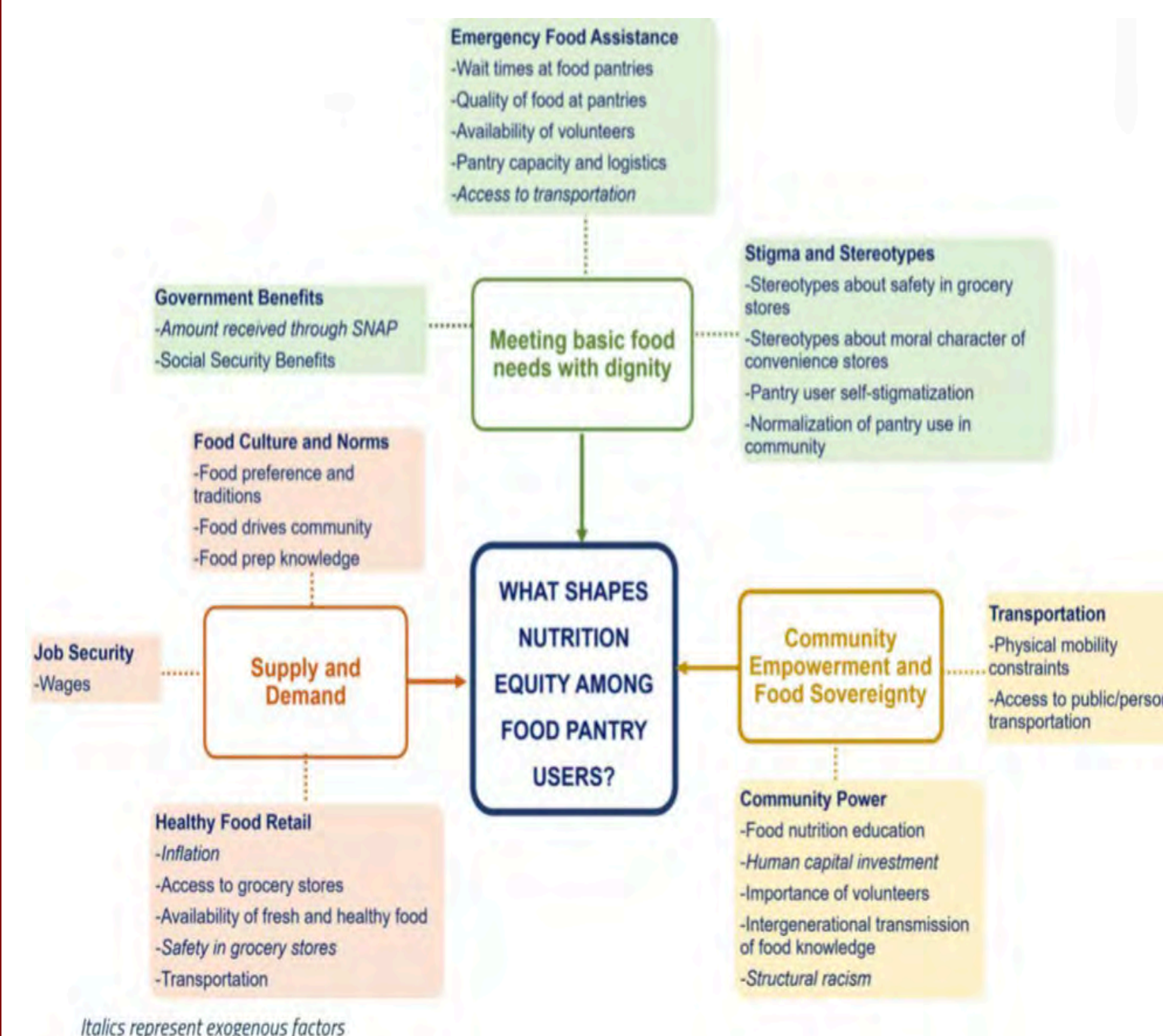


Figure 2: This figure shows codes made as a result of the study. Nutrition equity is defined as "having freedom, agency, and dignity in traditions resulting in people and communities healthy in body, mind, and spirit," (Freedman et al., 2022) Special thanks to Owusua Yamoah for helping organize this diagram.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Photovoice allowed for new themes in the lives of those who use food pantries, like inflation, crime, and transportation, to be identified.
- Other parts of the food system that were previously thought to have relevance turn out not to be as potent. For example, urban agriculture was thought to be a valuable part of the food system (Freedman et al., 2022), but hardly anyone discussed it.
- Participants frequently discussed the quality of food available at pantries. Fresh fruit and vegetable options and low-sugar alternatives to high-sugar products were noticeably lacking.

PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- Public policy addressing food insecurity needs to come from multiple different sectors, including the economic sector, public safety sector, and public transportation sector.
- Policymakers should also consider how to address the continually high demand at food pantries. Even though some of the public assistance programs have run out, people continue to struggle.

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