

FNH 473 CBEL: UBC Farm and Acadia Park

Emma Robinson, Holly Heximer, Janet Broening, Jenny Huang, Julia Manke, Taryn Miller

University of British Columbia

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Final Written Report

April 17, 2017

Janet Broening, Holly Heximer, Jenny Huang,
Julia Manke, Taryn Miller, and Emma Robinson

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Executive Summary

Acadia Park Residence is a family-targeted housing residence on the University of British Columbia's campus. Our project focused on addressing the food security and food sovereignty of families living at the Acadia Park Residence. This population may face obstacles such as tight budgets, limited time, and family responsibilities, all of which may serve as barriers and increase the threat of food insecurity. We partnered with the UBC Farm to develop a project that would help assess and understand the barriers and opportunities surrounding food access, affordability, and preferences as experienced by Acadia Park residents.

The goal of our project was to inform project leads and stakeholders about the perceived barriers and limitations to food security among student families currently living in Acadia Park, as well as highlight opportunities to increase food security within this community. In order to meet these goals, we decided to create documents and tools to prepare for two focus groups to be held in April 2017. We prepared a list of possible Acadia Park Resident's Association (APRA) survey questions, an email inviting residents to participate in focus groups, and a poster to advertise for the upcoming focus groups. We also prepared questions that would be used during the focus group sessions.

Due to changes in our project and a restricted timeline, we were not able to perform data analysis from these focus groups. Instead, our community partners will be using the information from the focus group to propose a project moving forward. We recommend that future groups conduct another survey and focus groups to evaluate if the focus groups were effective and if the following project is successful in improving food security for Acadia Park residents.

Introduction

Our project focuses on the perspectives of families living at the University of British Columbia's (UBC) Acadia Park Residence with regards to food accessibility, food security, and food sovereignty. Our project aims to better understand the challenges and opportunities surrounding food as perceived by residents of Acadia Park, for the purpose of informing future interventions.

Acadia Park offers eligible students and their families on-campus housing within a vibrant and child-friendly community (UBC, 2016). Recent surveys conducted within Acadia Park suggest that while residents generally find the neighbourhood to be safe, friendly, and a convenient place to raise children while pursuing higher education, accessing affordable food can be a formidable struggle (APRA, 2016). Mature students and students with families experience a wide array of challenges in addition to the rigours of academia, including financial strain, time constraints, and family responsibilities (Bishop et al., 2012). Additionally, on-campus food security initiatives may not be appropriately targeted towards this non-traditional student population.

Future food security and food sovereignty programming within Acadia Park must consider the lived experiences of residents, including the reality of balancing work, academics, and family life. Through the development of surveys and focus groups, this project seeks to assess and understand the specific desires and barriers experienced by current residents, to appropriately inform future community-based initiatives.

Situation Analysis and Planning Framework

A) Problems or issues relevant to the target population

Individuals pursuing higher education while raising a family experience many challenges regarding food access and healthy eating. Mature students typically have less financial assistance from government or family and increased home and employment-related responsibilities (Bishop et al., 2012). These interaction of these challenges may reduce the food security and food sovereignty of Acadia Park residents.

According to the 2016 Acadia Park Resident's Survey, slightly over half (51.8%) of survey respondents have an annual income of less than \$30,000 and about a quarter (23.6%) of respondents have an income less than \$20,000 per year (APRA, 2016). It is estimated that Acadia Park families earning less than \$20,000 per year spend at least 85% of their total income on housing costs, leaving very little for food and other necessities. This issue becomes particularly striking in light of the 2015 Food Costing in BC report, which indicates that the cost of eating a nutritionally adequate and balanced diet for a family of four is \$997 per month (PHSA, 2015).

A needs assessment conducted in Acadia Park in 2013 revealed that some residents felt their budgets were strained as a result of living in Point Grey, particularly with regards to the purchasing of food and groceries (Mahal, K., 2013). Two nearby grocery stores, Save-on-Foods and Safeway, were cited by residents as being unaffordable. The UBC community has access to the UBC Farm which offers fresh, local, and organic foods in a geographically convenient location. However, Acadia Park families likely cannot afford to purchase groceries regularly

from the UBC Farm as prices are markedly higher than those of neighbouring grocery stores (Alba et al., 2016).

B) Behaviours that contribute to the problems identified above

Barriers experienced by university students such as low budget and limited time often mean food purchasing and preparation decisions are driven by convenience and cost with students opting instead for vending machine snacks, fast food meals, or skipping meals altogether (Bishop et al., 2012). Choosing highly processed snacks and fast food meals often translates to lower nutrient density and higher intakes of sugar, saturated fat, and sodium. Perceiving these foods as not particularly threatening or detrimental to health may also increase their consumption, which may be the case if individuals have limited knowledge about what constitutes a healthy diet (Lovelace and Rabiee-Khan, 2013).

The demands of balancing employment, academic, and family responsibilities may hinder an individual's ability to participate in or even gain awareness of potentially usefully student resources (Loopstra and Tarasuk, 2013; Bishop et. al, 2012). In the context of Acadia Park, residents may not be aware of resources that exist within their community that could potentially improve their food security and sovereignty (eg. seasonal pop-up Farmer's Markets at UBC, the Acadia Park Community Garden). Alternatively, residents may be aware of such resources but are unable or unwilling to use them. Evaluation of food security programming targeted at lower-income families (comparable to Acadia Park residents earning less than \$30,000 annually) demonstrates that engagement declines when program constructs fail to match population needs or take into account time constraints (Loopstra and Tarasuk, 2013). This highlights the importance of understanding perceived barriers for the development of effective interventions.

C) Mediating factors relating to individual, interpersonal, and environmental factors

Acadia Park residents may struggle to maintain food security and food sovereignty due to a host of mediating factors occurring at individual, interpersonal, and environmental levels. Bishop et al. (2012) examine factors related to both positive and negative impacts on nutrition among college students. At an individual level, financial and time constraints are mediating factors that negatively influence the eating habits and ultimately the nutrition of college students (Bishop et al., 2012). The interpersonal level must be considered given that all residents of Acadia Park live as part of a family unit (UBC, 2016). Women appear particularly susceptible to the effects of household food insecurity, as mothers often reduce their own dietary quality and quantity to ensure family members do not go hungry (Tarasuk et al., 2007). More optimistically, in households where the nutritional adequacy of children's diets is low, positive changes in the dietary patterns of parents often sparks improvements in their children's diets (Lovelace and Rabiee-Khan, 2013). Lastly, several environmental factors may contribute to reduced food security and sovereignty among Acadia Park residents. As previously mentioned, a recent needs assessment conducted at Acadia Park revealed many residents felt the closest grocery stores were not within their limited budget. The *Farm Food for All Seeds Report* suggests that reducing the price of farm produce and cafeteria food may increase access and reduce risk of food insecurity (Alba et al., 2016), but this may not be a feasible intervention. In all, these mediating factors should be taken into consideration as we progress with our project to better understand and address Acadia residents' concern in local food accessibility.

D) Health behaviour theories used in project planning and rationale for choices

A multilevel approach was adopted in the project planning phase of the Acadia Park focus group sessions. This multilevel approach allowed for development of focus group questions based on the situational analysis and desires of community partners. This also ensured questions would provide data for different possible areas of intervention that the project leads are considering.

The Health Belief Model (HBM) was the theory used for program planning and question development. The HBM was used to determine how susceptible the residents of Acadia Park feel to the threat of food insecurity, whether they believe the consequences of food insecurity are serious, and whether they believe they can take steps to increase their level of food security (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute, 2005, p. 13). The HBM informed questions that examine participants' knowledge of organic farm-fresh food as well as the perceived benefits and barriers to such produce. The survey and focus group questions seek to gather information on perceived benefits of being food secure as well as the perceived negative consequences of food insecurity. For example, questions regarding accessibility of preferred and culturally-appropriate foods examine perceived physiological and psychological impacts (perceived severity and perceived benefits). The survey and focus group questions also gathered information regarding factors limiting food security, including experiences surrounding budget, access to food on campus, and time constraints within the context of student families (perceived barriers). Lastly, questions asked will inform future programming designed to increase residents' self-efficacy through the eventual development and implementation of educational workshops, such as gardening and nutrition education.

E) Limitations of our situational analysis:

We acknowledge that families living in student residences are unique and do not have the same needs as a typical student or the same needs as a working family. We also acknowledge that research pertaining to mature students with families conducted in the United States may not apply directly to the UBC context. With these acknowledgements, our situational analysis is limited in the data and research about food security for student families at UBC.

Another limitation is changing nature of our project. As stakeholders refine their vision and the project becomes more specific in its scope, all aspects of the situational analysis may not be entirely relevant by the completion of the project.

Project Goals and Objectives

Objectives

To learn about the food preferences and food security issues experienced by UBC student families living at Acadia Park. Specifically, we seek to understand motivations and barriers surrounding access to culturally appropriate, affordable, and preferred foods. We also plan to assess participants' interest in growing their own food as well as engaging with community gardens and farmers' markets at UBC.

Goals

Short-Term Goals: Inform project leads and stakeholders about the barriers and limitations to having food security for student families in Acadia Park.

Medium-Term Goals: Within the next two years ensure 60% of student families in Acadia Park are food secure.

Long-Term Goals: Within the next five years ensure all student families in Acadia Park are food secure.

Outputs

The outputs for our project consist of documents and tools used to prepare for two focus groups to be held in April 2017; in a way, these outputs act as a larger project's inputs. We prepared a list of possible Acadia Park Resident's Association (APRA) survey questions, an email inviting residents to participate in focus groups, and a poster to advertise for the upcoming focus groups. These outputs are meant to address our short term goals, which are to inform the project leaders and stakeholders of the challenges experienced by Acadia Park families, with respect to food security. Outputs are summarized in our project logic model in *appendix 5*.

A) Original Outputs

Hypothetically, our main output would have been conducting two focus groups at Acadia Park with a diverse group of residents. This would include preparatory documents and subsequent data analysis. These focus groups would facilitate discussion and gleaned important perspectives regarding barriers and opportunities for food security on campus. These focus group conversations would be transcribed, collated, and analyzed with the final report being delivered to the UBC Farm for UBC Families project leaders and stakeholders for use in future research and programming. Unfortunately, due to time constraints and unexpected complications we were unable to conduct the focus groups and analyze the data ourselves; therefore we completed the research and preparation of focus group content for the project leaders. Please see *appendix 2* for the Focus Group Guiding Questions.

B) APRA Survey Questions

The survey questions developed are to be included in a larger APRA survey to be sent to Acadia Park residents during the month of April 2017. Six to eight of our proposed questions

will be included in the final survey, as determined by project leads. Questions address topics such as gender, country of origin, household food purchasing, monthly food expenses, and frequency of cooking as well as questions relating to food sufficiency and preferences. The surveys also address community interest in future involvement with community gardens, food growing workshops, and the UBC Farm. Please see *appendix 1* for the survey questions.

C) Email and Poster

Our email invitation includes important details about the time, place, and topic of the upcoming focus groups. It highlights the incentives for attending focus groups, who is involved in the project, and how to attend. It was important to generate focus group interest through the email invitation so as to attract a variety of Acadia Park families to participate. The poster we developed is an artistic representation of the email invitation, also meant to generate interest and attract Acadia Park residents to attend one of the focus groups. Please see *appendix 3* for the email invitation and *appendix 4* for the poster.

D) Delivery and Who We Reached

To deliver our outputs we held weekly in-person meetings with community stakeholders Claudia Paez and Magdalena Ugarte. Communications were maintained through email and the sharing of online documents. This allowed us the flexibility to make and share ongoing adjustments as the project progressed. Our outputs and contributions to the larger, overarching UBC Farm for UBC Families project will be available for future campus research and program development. In this way, our project will reach Acadia Park families, UBC Farm, UBC Farm for UBC Families project investigators, APRA members, SEEDS representatives, local community stakeholders, future FNH 473 students, and future residents of Acadia Park.

E) Connection to Health Belief Model

Our project outputs are grounded within the Health Belief Model. All of our outputs are “cues for action”; the email invitation, the APRA survey questions, and the poster are all visual reminders that prompt involvement with the project. For example, the email will be seen by Acadia Park families that may not be able to attend a focus group, but it may motivate them to look into UBC Farm programs. The email states, “We want to hear your concerns, your preferences, your likes and dislikes”, indicating that the project investigators are interested in the resident’s perceived susceptibility to food insecurity on campus. The questions within the APRA survey are meant to assess baseline perceptions of food security/insecurity of the Acadia Park residents and their families. For example, the question “What are factors that most influence your decision to purchase/get food from those places,” demonstrates the concepts of “perceived barriers and perceived benefits” from the Health Belief Model.

F) Evaluation Plan

Short-Term:

Inform project leads and stakeholders about the barriers and limitations to having food security for student families in Acadia Park. An outcome indicator of success of this short term objective would be the generation and compilation of relevant data. Relevant data will include information regarding residents experiences related to food security which include but is not limited to their access to a sufficient quantity of preferred, culturally appropriate foods. The data should clearly demonstrate respondents’ perceived severity of the threat of food insecurity as well as the perceived barriers to food security. This data will be used to inform the development

and implementation of an intervention.

Medium-Term:

Within the next two years ensure 60% of student families in Acadia Park are food secure. One year post initial implementation of the intervention, a second survey designed by project leads will be administered through APRA. This survey will evaluate the efficacy of the intervention in meeting medium- and long-term objectives. A third survey accompanied by focus groups will be administered 2-years post initial implementation to assess whether medium-term goal was achieved. The second and third surveys and the focus group will include questions similar to the baseline assessment, and will address accessibility of desired/culturally appropriate foods, common recurring barriers to food access, weekly spending on food, affordability of food relative to income, and where foods are commonly purchased. These assessments will evaluate barriers as perceived by both longer term and new residents, as there will likely be turnover among families within Acadia Park. As food security increases, perceived benefits to the individual and the community will be reassessed.

Long-Term:

Within the next five years ensure all student families in Acadia Park are food secure. At the 5 year mark, surveys and focus groups will once again be conducted. The results of this assessment will influence future direction of the project. If long-term objectives are successfully met, it will be crucial to continue with the intervention as well as document and publish the experience so as to influence other communities. If the long-term objectives are not met, re-evaluation of perceived barriers and possible restructuring of the intervention will be necessary.

Limitations of the proposed evaluation include: lack of population data at baseline. For example, data collection has not yet occurred so there is no prior data indicating rates of food security amongst Acadia Park families. Our objectives reflect the assumption, based on situational analysis (APRA, 2016), that less than 50% of Acadia Park residents are food secure. If data analysis reveals a significantly different proportion of families experiencing food security, objectives will have to be changed to reflect population data at baseline. Funding for the project leads is not confirmed and is based on grants. This unreliable financial situation may render the intervention and any subsequent evaluation infeasible.

To address content validity, the survey and focus group questions were assessed by experts (ie. community partners and course instructor) to ensure questions put forth were relevant and necessary to the research question. Obtaining a true score could pose difficulties regarding the reliability of data collected from surveys and focus groups. There is a possibility of error in residents self-reporting or estimating details due to issues with recall, over- and underestimation, mistakes, misinterpretation of questions, and situational and personal factors. The survey questions are designed to be straightforward and facilitators will be present to provide clarification and guidance. However, a barrier to accessibility is that surveys and focus groups will only be conducted in English.

Conclusion

A) Key contributions of this project:

Our project aims to contribute to academia through conducting focus groups on UBC students families within Acadia Park. In addition, another key intent of the project is to gain a better understanding of food security issues and food preferences identified by the targeted population, in hope to address the food security challenges that they undergo.

B) Key lessons learned:

Through collaboration with our instructor and community partners, we came to the realization that it is crucial to take time constraints for applications (such as the ethics approval) into consideration. We learned to be adaptable, and restructured our original plan to include online survey questions akin to the focus group questions as a possible back-up plan. We remained positive and learned to draw upon the strengths of all team members such as taking concise notes, performing leadership by delegating tasks, and communicating during meetings to ensure everyone is on the same page.

C) Recommendations:

A crucial recommendation to conducting community-based research is to respect the timeline and recognize that unexpected barriers may arise. Other recommendations include establishing and clarifying research parameters prior to conducting situational analysis, as well as developing common goals that meet the expectations identified by both the research team and the community partners. Effective communication with the community partners allows for clear research parameters and common goals, which can result in increased efficiency on finding relevant research related to the project.

Authors' Contribution

The authors for this paper include Julia Manke, Holly Heximer, Taryn Miller, Jenny Huang, Emma Robinson, and Janet Broening. All of the authors did research for the project. Throughout the process of writing all authors revised and edited the paper. Once completed, we all confirmed the final copy of the paper.

Miller and Broening were responsible for drafting the outputs of the project. Miller formulated the introduction. Broening drafted Part B - "Behaviours that contribute to the problems identified" and the conclusion. Huang drafted Part C - "Mediating factors - relating to individual, interpersonal, and environmental factors" along with the section, "Lessons Learned". Manke designed emails, communicated with the community partners, created the posters, and drafted the author's contributions. Heximer and Robinson developed the Evaluation Plan. Heximer drafted Part D - "Health behaviour theory", goals, and objectives. Robinson drafted Part B and the visual representation of the Logic Model.

Our non-author contributors were our community partners Claudia Paez, Magdalena Ugarte, and FNH 473 professor, Dr. Gail Hammond. They reviewed our research proposal and regularly met with us to clarify our goals and objectives. Paez and Ugarte will be continuing with the project and they will be conducting the focus groups.

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Appendices

A) Appendix I - Introductory Survey for the Focus Group

1. Do you identify as:

Female

Male

Transgender

Non-binary

None of the above. I identify as _____

Prefer not to answer

2. What is your age?

18-22 years

23-30 years

31-40 years

41-50 years

51-60 years

61-70 years

71-80 years

>80 years

3. Do you study at UBC?

Yes

No

If no, what is your current occupation?

Household composition

4. How many children (0-12 years of age) live in your household?
5. How many teens (13-18 years of age) live in your household?
6. How many adults -including you (19-59 years of age) live in your household?
7. How many elders (60+ years of age) live in your household?

B) Appendix II - Focus Group Guiding Questions

Part I – Food Security

1. Who in your home makes most of the decisions about the kinds of food to purchase?
Who in your family prepares food most often?
2. How do you decide where to shop for groceries? What factors influence your decision?
3. Do you experience any recurring, common barriers when trying to access the food you want (transportation? affordability? limited choices?)?
4. Does the UBC area, and Acadia Park in particular, influence your food choices? In what way?
5. How often can you cook the dishes that you traditionally ate in your home country?

Part II – Organic/local produce and UBC Farm

1. Do you attribute any importance/value to eat local and organic food?
2. Have you ever heard about the UBC Farm? If so, what do you know about it?
3. Have you ever purchased food at UBC Farmers Market? Why yes / why not? 4. Would you purchase produce at a UBC Farm market if it was located in Acadia Park? Why yes or why not?

C) Appendix III - Email Invitation

Dear Acadia Park resident,

- Would you like access to affordable, local, organic produce in Acadia Park?
- Do you have opinions about local produce? Healthy food options?
- Do you enjoy shopping at farmers markets or growing your own food?

We want to hear from you! We want to hear your concerns, your preferences, your likes and dislikes, regarding access to affordable, organic food at UBC.

The project **UBC Farm for UBC Families** and students from the course FNH 473 (Applied Public Health Nutrition) invite you to attend a focus group in order to better understand your views on these topics. For more information about the focus groups and the project, please see the attached document.

We are conducting two identical focus groups at Acadia High Rise Tower (2725 Melfa Rd.) in Acadia Park on **April 7th, 5:30-7pm** and **April 8th, 4-5:30pm**. We will provide snacks and refreshments. Each participant will receive a \$10 discount coupon for UBC Farm markets and will be entered into a draw to win one of two \$25 gift cards for UBC Food Services. If it is inconvenient for you attend due to your children's schedule, please bring them with you. We will have popcorn and play a movie in the adjacent room.

If you are interested in participating, please reply to the email ubcfarmforubcfamilies@gmail.com with the following information. We want to ensure a multicultural and diverse group of participants:

- Which session would you like to attend? (April 7th or 8th)
- What is your country of origin?
- How many people live in your household?
- Will you bring your children with you? (if so, please indicate how many)

Each focus group will have a limited number of seats available and room capacity for children, so please RSVP as soon as possible. We will email you back with the consent form.

Your input will be extremely valuable and used to assess the possibility of a collaborative relationship between the UBC Farm and Acadia Park, regarding food security on campus, which

may include workshops about nutrition and food growing, and a pilot UBC Farm pocket market at Acadia Park during the summer.

Thank you very much for your interest and we look forward to hearing from you!

Principal Investigator, Contact, and FNH 473 Instructor:

Dr. Gail Hammond

University of British Columbia

Faculty of Land and Food Systems

214-2205 East Mall

Vancouver BC V6T 1Z4

Phone: 604-822-3934

On behalf of the UBC students in FNH 473.

Co-Investigators, and FNH 473 Students:

Magdalena Ugarte, UBC Farm, PhD student School of Community and Regional Planning

Claudia Paez, UBC Farm, MSc. in Integrated Studies in Land and Food Systems

Janet Broening: BSc (Dietetics), Food, Nutrition & Health

Holly Heximer: BSc (Dietetics), Food, Nutrition & Health

Jenny Huang: BSc (FNH), Food, Nutrition & Health

Julia Manke: BSc (FNH), Food, Nutrition & Health

Taryn Miller: BSc (FNH), Food, Nutrition & Health

Emma Robinson: BSc (Dietetics), Food, Nutrition & Health

Project partners:

Clare Cullen, Operations Director CSFS at UBC Farm

Eric Douglas, President of Acadia Park Resident's Association, APRA

Emma Chartrand, Residence Life Manager, Student Housing and Hospitality Services, SHHS.

D) Appendix IV - Poster

Do you have opinions about local
& organic produce?
Do you enjoy farm markets?

Conversations About Food



We want to hear
from you!

The project UBC Farm for UBC Families will host
focus groups to hear your views on these topics
**
Join us and get a \$10 discount coupon for
UBC Farm markets and a chance to win one of two
\$25 UBC Food Services gift cards
**
Snacks, beverages, and activities for children provided

– LIMITED SPACES AVAILABLE –
Please email ubcfarmforubcfamilies@gmail.com to register

Acadia High Rise Tower
Activity Room | Fri. April 7 | 5:30pm - 7 pm
Activity Room | Sat. April 8 | 4pm - 5:30 pm

Partnership with APRA, SHHS, CSFS at UBC Farm, and FNH 473 SEEDS Project

E) Appendix V - Logic Model

INPUTS	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
<p>-Funding from APRA and SEEDs for refreshments, gift certificate incentives</p> <p>-Research and development time</p> <p>-Information regarding Acadia Park residents from 2016 APRA survey</p> <p>-Advertising by way of posters ad email invitation</p>	<p>WHAT WE DO</p> <p>-Survey questions for 2017 APRA survey</p> <p>-Focus group discussion questions</p> <p>-Compilation and analysis of data</p>	<p>SHORT</p> <p>-Increase understanding of food security and sovereignty issues among Acadia Park residents</p> <p>-Inform project leads and stakeholders about the barriers and limitations to having food security for student families in Acadia Park.</p>
	<p>WHO WE REACH</p> <p>-Residents of Acadia Park</p> <p>-Future residents</p>	<p>MEDIUM</p> <p>-Within the next two years ensure 60% of student families in Acadia Park are food secure.</p>
	<p>-Acadia Park Residents Association and UBC SEEDS</p> <p>-UBC Farm</p>	<p>LONG</p> <p>-Within the next five years ensure all student families in Acadia Park are food secure.</p>