

Research Plan

Team name: Cheezeblock

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Introduction

Background

Our team has chosen to focus on food insecurity through the lens of food assistance programs. Knowing that there are many programs within our local area, we are curious about the impact and implications such programs have on those who benefit from them.

Hypotheses

The team identified and prioritized the following hypotheses as areas of focus:

- People receiving assistance aren't necessarily getting highly nutritious food and/or an adequate quantity of food for the family. (Dave K, Connor, Jenn, Stefanie)
 - What do you want to learn
 - Understand the history of how SNAP came to be and the current policy and eligibility requirements. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items>
 - How many food banks/shelters are in Washington?
 - How many people are currently enrolled in food assistance programs in Washington?
 - What foods are given out at food banks/shelters?
 - What important nutritional difference exist between adults and children?
 - Do different food banks/shelters give out different amounts of food compared to each other or based on specific family circumstances?
 - **Who can help you learn it**
 - Talk to food banks and shelters
 - Gather data from USDA on Washington specific stats
 - People in Washington who currently use or have used food assistance programs
 - **Where and when can you find them/find information**
 - Government statistics from Washington, private/government funded food banks that provide aid to Washington state
 - <https://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Food>
 - Private Food Banks (so many)
 - Northwest Harvest is the only nonprofit food bank distributor operating statewide in Washington with a network of 375 food banks, meal programs and high-need schools.
 - <https://www.northwestharvest.org/wa-hunger-facts>
 - <https://www.northwestharvest.org/research-reports>

- Interviews about food bank shortcomings [country by country report (*super important*)]
 - https://www.northwestharvest.org/stuff/contentmgr/files/1/5fa7e4b8e1b3dc79b2eb7346e9bc8f90/pdf/fgr_17_18_webflipbook.pdf
 - White Center Food Bank
 - <https://www.whitecenterfoodbank.org/>
 - University District Food Bank
 - <http://www.udistrictfoodbank.org/>
 - Churches
 - Just Seattle
 - https://www.needhelppayingbills.com/html/king_county_food_pantries.html
 - Food Banks
 - All of Washington
 - https://www.needhelppayingbills.com/html/washington_food_banks.html
- Which methods do you think will work
 - Comparative Analysis
 - Rapid Ethnography
 - Surveys & Questionnaires
 - Shadowing
 - Guided Tours
 - User Interviews
- How long do you think this will take
 - ~4 weeks for this hypothesis. The remaining time we have in the class is used to work on our design question.
- How will you know when you are done (what criteria will you use)
 - Secondary research: Have large samples of research data in this area to support or disprove this hypothesis.
 - Have primary research data (smaller sample - given the time we have).
 - Both secondary research should reach to the same conclusion.
- We believe people feel a stigma when taking part in food assistance programs (Lauren, Carrie, Veronika)
 - What do you want to learn (Carrie)
 - What kind of stigmas people feel?
 - What contribute to that stigma?
 - How does it affect their life?
 - Is the stigma also apparent when they don't receive food assistance programs?
 - Who can help you learn it (Carrie)
 - Food assistance program staff
 - People who receive food assistance program
 - People who don't receive food assistance program
 - Where and when can you find them/find information
 - Conduct research with food assistance programs to see if they have insight

- Psychological research publications - historical and current
- Interviewing individuals
- Trump administration wants to cut SNAP, could further stigmatize low income folks <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2018/02/12/585130274/trump-administration-wants-to-decide-what-food-snap-recipients-will-get>
- Which methods do you think will work
 - Interviews will likely be most effective
 - Psychological research publications / studies
- How long do you think this will take (Veronika)
 - 2 weeks for background research
 - 2-3 weeks for interviews
- How will you know when you are done (what criteria will you use) Veronika
 - Until a confirmation is found that proves/disproves the hypothesis
 - Enough data is collected (more for quant, less for qual)

Research Goals

Understanding the domain

Goal: gain a deeper understanding of current food assistance programs

Scope

- Focus on programs within Washington State
- What kind of food assistance programs?
- Do we want to focus on specific organizations? (Food banks, food lifeline, shelters, urban pop-up meal provider [happens a lot near Westlake ctr])

Previous Research

1. Definition of stigma in the food assistance domain:

<https://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/235698/2/Do%20Personal%20Attitudes%20about%20Welfare%20Influence%20Food%20Stamp%20Participation.docx.pdf>

- This paper proposes that under-enrollment in food assistance programs is largely due to the stigma surrounding its participants (based on a survey from 2002)

Understanding the user

Goal: to understand user pain points and validate or invalidate our current assumptions about who they are and what they experience

Criteria we will address:

- Age of the users

- Location
- SES
- Employment
- Marital Status
- Family Size

Activities involved:

Understanding the competitive landscape

Goal: to evaluate existing tools within our defined problem space

Criteria we will address:

- What problems do they solve
- Who do they cater to - user group
- What features do they contain to solve the problem
- What is the user experience like?
- What strengths do these solutions have?
- What weaknesses do they have?

Activities involved:

- Comparative feature analysis - looking deeply at the features and the value they bring
- Heuristic evaluation - evaluating current tools based on how well they adhere to common usability principles, accessibility standards, and design conventions
- Reading user reviews - looking at what real users are saying about current solutions
- Contextual inquiry - observing individuals who currently use the existing tool(s) in the actual context of use

Schedule

We'll elaborate on this as a group :)