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In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed that access to adequate and nutritious food is a human right (United Nations, 2015). However, in many developed countries, including Australia, the issue of food insecurity is a silent crisis that affects many individuals and families (Rosier, 2011; Foley, Ward, Carter, Coveney, Tsourtos & Taylor, 2009). According to the National Preventative Health Taskforce (NPHT), there are many at-risk groups within Australia where the notion of food insufficiency is a reality; such groups include low-income and single-parent families (Law, Ward, Coveney, 2011; Collins, 2009). Many not-for-profit agencies that work to administer much-needed support and food relief are doing their best to combat this problem. Unfortunately, due to an increase in demand, agencies such as Foodbank are unable to provide the appropriate assistance to everyone struggling with food insecurity (Foodbank, 2016). This literature review attempts to critically analyse empirical research on the barriers of attaining food security for single-parent and low-income families; and the psychological impacts that may result from food insecurity. The strengths and limitations of the studies will be presented, alongside an exploration of their similarities and differences. This paper aims to provide a coherent view of the research to increase understanding of the 'hunger crisis' in Australia. In turn, this can shed light on where current policy change can occur to more adequately combat food insecurity for the long term (Booth & Smith, 2001).

According to the Foodbank hunger report (2016), the prevalence of food insecurity is a significant concern within Australia. Their survey indicated that as high as one in six Australians experience episodes of food insecurity, 28 per cent of which were confronted with it recurrently. Many of the research studies under analysis define food insecurity as "limited or uncertain ability to acquire appropriate foods in socially acceptable ways" (Ward et al., 2013. p. 2). Within Australia, the concern of food insecurity is particularly crucial for certain at-risk groups, such as low-income and single-parent families, who account
for 23 per cent of those facing food insufficiency (Law, Ward & Coveney, 2011; Rosier, 2011; Kleve, Davidson, Gearon, Booth & Palermo, 2017). The hunger report stipulated that over 644,000 individuals access food relief from Foodbank agencies monthly, suggesting an urgent need for food relief agencies (Foodbank 2016). These agencies aim to provide food and food-related products to provide immediate assistance to those in need of food relief. However, as food insecurity increases in Australia, many agencies are unable to provide the appropriate relief to all who come seeking assistance (Foodbank, 2016). The effects of food insecurity are far-reaching, impede an individuals' mental and physical wellbeing. Studies have suggested that food insecurity is inextricably linked with symptoms of depression, anxiety, social isolation and poorer health outcomes (Temple, 2008; Collins, 2009). Hence, many of the studies to be analysed have suggested a policy change that may combat the issue, which can provide long-term solutions to ensure food security for all (Booth & Smith, 2001).

For this review, empirical studies were collected via several online searches using various databases, predominantly, EBSCOhost, google scholar and ProQuest. The search began using terms such as 'food security,' 'food insecurity,' and 'food relief.' Initially, searches were restricted to articles within Australia, dated between 2005 to 2018. The goal of this particular literature review was to zoom in on empirical research completed on the effects of food insecurity on low-income and single parent families. As such, words such as 'single parent/mother/father,' 'low-income' and 'family' were added to the search criteria; yet this yielded limited results. Australian literature commonly spoke of the barriers of attaining food security; however, it was evident that research regarding the psychological effects of food insecurity on low-income and single-parent families has not yet been completed in Australia despite this particular group being categorised as high-risk (Law, Ward & Coverney, 2011). The search was then broadened internationally where studies surrounding this specific group are prominent. Research articles were gathered from the United States of America, Canada
Name  Project 1

and the United Kingdom. 16 empirical research were selected and critically evaluated, all of which focus on food insecurity and its effects on low-income and single-parent families. Five articles will be presented in this literature that used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, including surveys and interviews. The analysis of the articles demonstrated several reoccurring themes, as such the following review will be presented thematically.

Booth and Smith (2001) denoted that food security is the reliable and consistent access to safe and nutritious food that enables healthy and active longevity. They outlined four essential aspects of food access, one of which was economic stability. One of the main barriers that appeared in all research was financial instability. Law, Ward and Coveney (2011) aimed to further understand food insecurity and its impacts on the population of single-parent families within South Australia. They conducted 73 interviews and discovered that the most prominent risk factor for food insecurity was low-income. Furthermore, their results strongly illiterate that limited financial stability prevents families from purchasing adequate and nutritious food, which in turn reinforces negative health consequences, both imminent and long-term (Law, Ward & Coveney, 2011). Similarly, these results were replicated by Kleve et al. (2017). They found that low-to-middle income families were experiencing episodes of food insecurity on a weekly to fortnightly basis. These results also indicated that these families compromise on nutritional diets to ensure enough money is left to for other essential household requirements, for example; rental or mortgage payments.

Affordability was another barrier that was intrinsically linked with both economic uncertainty and food insecurity across many of the research under analysis. Ward, Verity et al. (2013) stipulated single-parent families struggle to remain food secure due to the increase in costs of healthy food and general living expenses. Their study used the healthy food basket survey to calculate affordability on nutritiously safe and required foods. Results
indicated that for a single-parent family to purchase nutritiously safe foods, they would need to use 28.6 per cent of their income, which is not feasible given the costs of general living (Ward et al. 2013). Empirical research completed by Foley et al. (2009) expanded on these findings suggesting that at-risk groups fear running out of food. In an attempt to ensure some semblance of food security and cope with the ever-rising cost of basic foods, low-income families choose less expensive food options that often have no nutritional benefits thus increasing the prevalence of long-term chronic health conditions, such as heart disease, obesity and diabetes (Collins, 2009).

The previously mentioned studies provided valuable insight into the day-to-day barriers that low-income and single-parent families face when attempting to maintain food security (Booth & Smith, 2001). A weakness of the majority of the outlined research is in relation to underestimating the prevalence of food insecurity within this population (Foley et al. 2009). For example, Foley et al. (2009), conducted 19037 telephone surveys of different households, the most apparent flaw within this methodology is that it does not take into account low-income families that cannot afford a landline. Thus, indicating a large section of the population that face food insufficiency were excluded, therefore potentially diminishing the integrity of the results (Foley et al. 2009). Similarly, Law, (et al. 2011), used a qualitative approach that involved 73 face-to-face interviews with single-parent families. This proved useful in that it allowed researchers to gain a greater understanding of the exact experiences of the participants, specifically their needs and challenges in regards to food insecurity. However, for the end report, only eight interviews were analysed, and unfortunately, the experiences of eight families cannot be considered an accurate representation of an entire community, and can therefore not be generalised (Law et al., 2011).

Australian research on food insecurity focuses primarily on prevalence and barriers. Australian research fails to adequately investigate the psychological and social
determinates that coincide with food insecurity particularly for low-income and single-parent families (Law et al., 2011; Rosier, 2011; Collins, 2009). As such, the following empirical research to be analysed is from international sources that focus on the psychological impacts of food insecurity within this population. According to Collins (2009), food insecurity has been linked to a “multitude of negative physical and mental conditions” (p. 254). Collins (2009) stipulated that some of the psychological effects of food insecurity are stress, irritability, anxiety, heightened emotional responsiveness and depression. In fact, Bronte-Tinkew, Zazlow, Capps, Horowitz and McNamara (2007) found that families experiencing food insecurity contained higher levels of depression, particularly for the parents. The findings indicated that food insufficient households were four times as likely to present with symptoms of depression than those who were food secure (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2007).

The relationship between food insecurity and depression was further supported by Stevens (2010) who investigated food insecurity and its effects on young mothers. It was discovered that their experience of food insufficiency coincided with significant episodes of depression, which was linked with intense fear of being unable to provide food for not only themselves but their children (Stevens, 2010). These two studies were similar in they also discovered an alarming prevalence of parents (particularly single-parents) compromising their own nutritional needs to ensure their children had enough food (Stevens, 2010; Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2007). However, due to the chronic stress of food insecurity and its adverse effects on parents which in turn impacts the health and well-being of their children, irrespective if they have sufficient food or not (Collins, 2009; Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2007). It was suggested that even though children may have not directly felt food insecure themselves, witnessing their parents struggle with food insufficiency and its consequences, make them more susceptible to experiencing episodes of depression and suicidality than if their family was food secure (Collins, 2009; Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2007).
In contrast to these previous studies, Melchior et al. (2009) argued that families, particularly if lead by a woman, are more susceptible to food insecurity if the mother has endured depression, psychosis or domestic violence. They postulated that it is because of a decrease in interest and will, and an increase in fatigue and impaired cognitive functioning that causes food insecurity in these households (Melchior et al., 2009). This indicates the difficulty in drawing causal inferences between depression, mental illness and food insecurity (Vozoris & Tarasuk, 2003). There is a definite link between food insufficiency and adverse psychological effects, but the direction of the relationship has not yet been accurately defined (Hanson & Olson, 2012). Further research needs to be completed to gain greater clarity on the directional relationship of depression and other psychological implications with food insecurity (Hanson & Olson, 2012).

Food insecurity is a growing social and health concern within Australia (Foodbank, 2016). However, it is not an isolated problem as many compounding issues exacerbate and perpetuate the prevalence of food insecurity (Temple, 2008; Booth & Smith, 2001). Rising food costs, financial instability, poverty, mental and physical health conditions such as depression must all be taken into consideration when attempting to fix the problem of food insecurity (Temple, 2008). Initiatives such as Foodbank, are essential in providing immediate relief by delivering food and food-related products to those facing food insufficiency. However, these companies are failing to cope with the increase in demand, and therefore many families are unable to receive the help they need to push through another week (Foodbank, 2016). Some have suggested that programmes such as these keep the problem of food insufficiency continuing as they are only a temporary 'band-aid' solution to a large and growing concern that ultimately prevents long-term food security (Booth & Smith, 2001).
As Nolan et al. (2006) suggest, "longer-term upstream initiatives [are] likely to have the greatest impact on food insecurity" (p. 252). Law et al. (2011) proposed policy measures that should encourage food suppliers "to enhance the opportunity for individuals to utilise existing capabilities... including taxing unhealthy food and subsidising healthy foods. (p. 465). Some food relief programs focus on combatting food insecurity of children, for example through school breakfasts, however as the results of Bronte-Tinkew et al. (2007) suggest, taking a preventative approach, that is looking at ways to support struggling parental figures both at an economical and psychological level (Collins, 2009). Community programs that build knowledge of how to access and store nutritious foods and social connections work not only to combat food insecurity but also psychological implications such as depression (Nolan et al., 2006).

Food insecurity is a 'silent' crisis within Australia that continues to grow, particularly for at-risk groups such as low-income and single-parent families. More needs to be done to combat the problem, as current solutions such as Foodbank and other food relief agencies are struggling to cope with the increase in demand. Currently, the barriers of reaching food security are too significant, such as financial instability and general affordability of adequate and nutritious food. Despite this, other compounding factors that result from food insecurity are overlooked in Australian research, such as the prevalence of psychological implications such depression. Too many Australian families are suffering, and therefore policy change needs to occur such as greater price transparency from food suppliers and programs targeted towards supporting parental figures in both an economical and psychological level. Only then can food security be a reality for many families currently struggling.
References


