

# **Gas or groceries?**

**The intersections of income, health, and community  
in low food-access rural communities.**

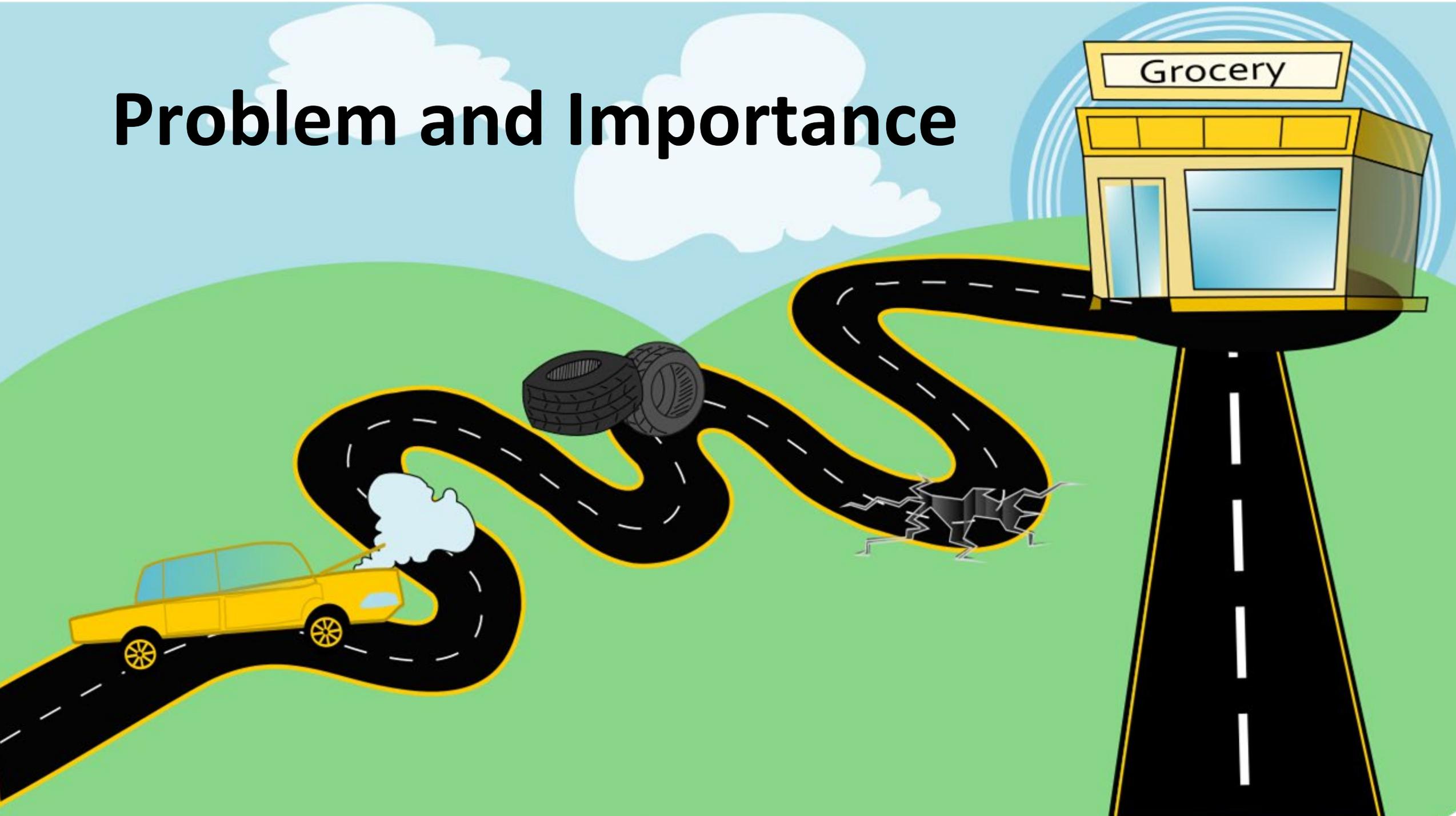
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# Problem and Importance



# Research Question

What are the resources for and barriers to obtaining groceries for rural consumers in Northwestern Minnesota food deserts?

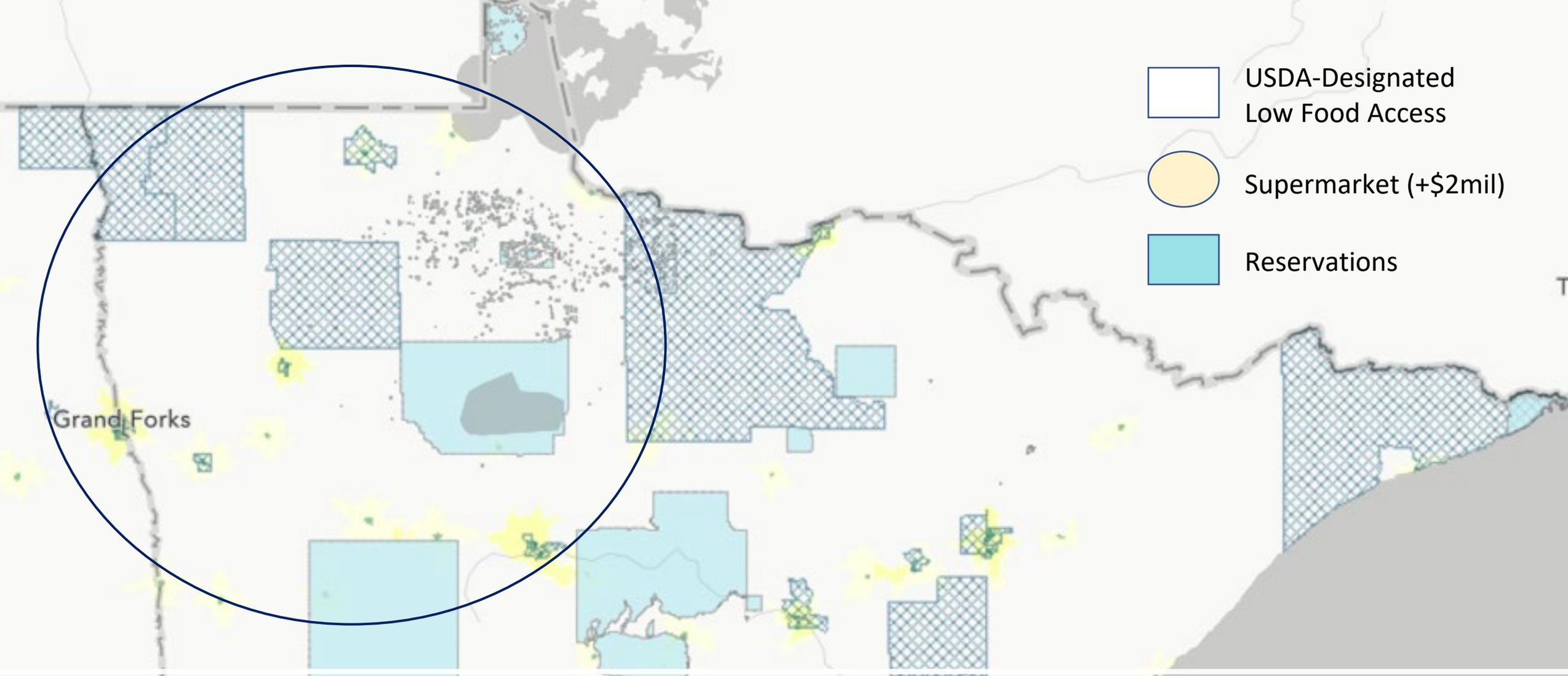
# Data Collection and Methods

## Methods

- In-depth Interviews
- Ethnographic Observation

## Participant Criteria

- Northwestern Minnesota
- USDA identified food desert
- Live more than 20 miles from large supermarket
- One or more barrier to food access



## Northwestern MN Food Access

# Literature Gaps

- Consumer needs and experiences
- Populations with disparate food access outcomes not well represented
- Social environment

# Barriers to Food Access

Distance/Transportation

Time

Physical/Medical

Racialization

Low Incomes

High food costs

Social Isolation

# Resources

## Formal

- **Transportation:** Red Lake Transit, Paratransit
- **Food Shelves:** Volunteer-based
- **Meal Programs for Seniors**
- **Medical Services:** Public Nursing Programs, Personal Care Assistants
- **Food Relief/Safety Net:** SNAP, WIC, SSI Disability, Commodity Foods

## Informal

- **Household:** Adults, Vehicles, etc.
- **Family and Friends**
- **Neighbors**
- **Faith Community**
- **Connections to business:** owners or employees

“We help people here”

Differences in Social Capital;  
Having people who can help get resources

# Social Capital: Having people who can help get resources

- Social Capital as a Stress Reducer
- Social Capital as a Reflection of Social Structure
- Social Capital as Social Exclusion
  - Groups that tend to be excluded: people with physical or medical barriers, indigenous people, those who are “not from here” in small towns

# Bridging and Bonding

- **Bridging:** connections between individuals that cross social boundaries. Based on reciprocity and trust.
  - Tap into a social network of resources belonging to other social groups
  - Can create access to formal and informal resources
- **Bonding:** connections between individuals within the same social group. Based on shared norms and history.
  - Sharing limited resources
  - Access to informal resources, usually family and friends

# Differences in Social Capital; Having people who can help get resources

- Group 1: Don't Need Social Resources
- Group 2: Need Resources, Tapped into a social resource network
  - Bridging and Bonding
- Group 3: Need Resources, Not tapped into a social resource network
  - Bonding or Isolated

# Differences in Social Capital; Having people who can help get resources

- Group 1: Don't Need Social Resources
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*“We live in a very close-knit community. We have a couple of neighbors that if we were ever to need anything, I’m sure we could call them, and they would pick something up. My boyfriend could pick it up on his way home from work, or, I mean, worst case scenario, we would go without for a couple of days. And we have been through that, I mean, we live in northern Minnesota. There have been times where we haven’t been able to leave the house for two days, and you just go without it.”*

*-May, Retired, Middle-Income, Physical/Medical Barriers*

# Differences in Social Capital

- Group 1: Don't Need Social Resources
- Group 2: Need Resources, Tapped into a social resource network
  - Bridging and Bonding
- Group 3: Need Resources, Not tapped into a social resource network
  - Bonding or Isolated
  - Physical/Medical barriers
  - Indigenous
  - "Not from here"

# The Next Question:

- Understanding the nature of community resilience in a diverse region
- How do communities increase bridging relationships?
  - Those that connect people to greater resources
  - Requires connections across class, race, ability, etc.

# Demographics

DEMOGRAPHICS	REGION	PARTICIPANTS
High Income (\$60,000+)	35.6%	20% (n=8)
Middle Income/Above Poverty Line	42.3%	52% (n=21)
Low Income/Below Poverty Line	13.3%	28% (n=11)
Use SNAP/WIC	Unknown	42% (n=17)
Physical/Medical Barrier	13.6%	25% (n=10)
Racialized as Non-White	14%	40% (n=16)
No Vehicle	6.6%	7% (n=3)

Source: MN Compass, Wilder Research

# Core Literature and Theoretical Approach

- **Food Access Literature**
  - Distance to food sources
  - Nutrition landscape
  - Population health
- **Social Capital Theory**
  - Resources through social relationships
  - Social position
  - Connects social structure and social interaction