

**Fighting the Good Fight:
Food Banks as Social Justice Advocates?**

by

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ATM	Automated Teller Machine
CCFB	Clark County Food Bank
CSFP	Commodity Supplemental Food Program
C4C	Collaborating for Clients
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TEFAP	The Emergency Food Assistance Program
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WIC	Women, Infants and Children

Abstract

This research addresses the problems of hunger and food insecurity through the analysis of food bank mission statements and programs. This research examines how food banks are addressing the issues of hunger and food insecurity through the programs they conduct. The intent was to discover the types of programs food banks operate that go beyond charitable handouts. This was accomplished using thematic and content analysis methods that were guided by grounded theory methodologies. Food bank mission statements and programs were analyzed to identify the orientations of food banks and their programs on a spectrum of charity to social justice. A total of 196 food bank mission statements were examined and were categorized into the three categories of charity, amelioration, and justice. The three categories make up the charity to social justice spectrum to which 64 percent of mission statements were categorized as charity, 30 percent as amelioration, and 6 percent as justice. A total of 99 programs from the food banks comprising the justice category were analyzed and categorized as either food distribution or non-food distribution. Non-food distribution programs representing nutrition education and transformative programs, characterized as addressing problems of poverty, were found to be social justice oriented. The most surprising finding was that occupational training programs were not justice oriented. Clients in occupational training programs were taught skills to enter low paying and seasonal jobs in the food service and agricultural sectors. Based on findings, a social-ecological model was used to situate food banks within the charity to social justice spectrum and to show how their orientations on the spectrum relate to hunger and food insecurity.

Keywords: social justice, charity, food banks, hunger, food insecurity.

Chapter One

Introduction

It was a perfect day at the food bank farm, the sun was shining and the temperature had not yet reached 80 degrees. I finished loading the last milk crate of produce picked by the large summer camp group who had worked the two acre mixed vegetable field. We averaged roughly 1,200 pounds of produce that day. I remember being excited in my convictions that this food we picked, that this farming program, was the answer to connecting community members, kids and adults alike, to understanding the struggles of poverty. As the kids were beginning to walk down the hill towards the parking lot a parent chaperon pulled me aside. Standing next to the trailer stacked to the brim with fresh vegetables, with watery eyes she quietly whispered to me, “Thank you, thank you and the food bank for all you do.” “A few years ago I was getting out of an abusive relationship and I had nothing for me or my daughters.” She continued, “If it weren’t for the food bank we wouldn’t have made it.”

Food banks are the primary organizations concerned with the distribution of salvaged and donated food goods to partners such as food pantries and religious organizations. The general purpose of food banks is to feed the hungry and food insecure in their communities. While the problems of hunger and food insecurity are not new, the growing reliance on food banks by those experiencing hunger and food insecurity is a concern. This research examines how food banks are addressing the issues of hunger and food insecurity through the programs they conduct. It is concerned with identifying the types of programs food banks operate that go beyond charitable food distribution. Programs that were examined originated from a selection of food banks that were identified by their mission statements. Through the analysis of food bank mission statements and programs, the orientations of food banks and their programs, on a spectrum of

charity to social justice, are identified. Analysis of these orientations are important to the discussion of hunger and food insecurity for two reasons. First, although originally established to provide emergency food, food banks have become increasingly relied upon to fill the gaps created by weakened social safety net programs; they have become major institutions in the fight against food insecurity. Second, hunger and food insecurity are symptomatic of larger more complex social problems. Thus, food banks have become important players in the fight against hunger, which has its roots in systemic social problems. The purpose of this research is to identify the ways in which food banks are addressing social justice issues through programs that focus on the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity.

In this thesis I first discuss the background and contexts of food banks in the United States and explain in more depth what food banks are and how they operate. Charity and social justice are integral concepts in this research therefore I include a discussion on what charity is and the influences of donor motivations as it relates to charitable giving. An explanation of the importance of social justice is discussed that includes topics of discrimination, inequality, and oppression as well as equity, and equality. A detailed discussion of the methods and methodologies will follow and explain how data was gathered and analyzed as well as explain why specific methods were used. Following the discussion of methods and methodologies will be a discussion of the data analyzed and the results that were found. Tables 1 through 5, as well as Figure 1, will be introduced in this chapter. The data in this section will be explained separately under each of the three research questions that guided this study and will introduce an adapted social-ecological model of food banks. From this point I will discuss the contributions of the research and conclude with an overview of the problems discussed throughout this paper.

Chapter Two

Background and Significance

This chapter discusses the role of food banks as well as the problems that exist around the issues of hunger and food insecurity. Food banks and their roles as charitable organizations are explained in more depth. They are placed into context with other measures of addressing hunger and food insecurity through which a discussion of their historical roots are explained. Further discussion takes place around the political influences that have had a profound impact on the growth of food banks as a reasonable avenue through which hunger and food insecurity is addressed. The concepts of charity and social justice are found throughout this research and for clarification a discussion of these concepts are introduced first.

Food Banks in Context

This research examines how food banks are addressing the issues of hunger and food insecurity through their missions and the programs they conduct. The intent is to identify the intersections of charity and social justice within food bank programming by asking how food banks are addressing hunger and food insecurity. Identifying where charity and social justice intersect is important to creating long-term solutions addressing the problems of hunger and food insecurity through food banking efforts. To clarify, the term “food bank” is often used interchangeably with that of “food pantry” and while similar in their efforts are, however, two very different concepts. To describe the most basic differences, a food bank acts much like an actual bank in that food goods are accumulated in a central location and distributed to partner organizations. These partners act more like an ATM where those in need are able to access the food. On the other hand, food pantries are the physical locations where individuals in need are able to access the food accumulated and distributed by food banks. Food banks are largely non-

profit organizations dependent on volunteer labor and volatile funding sources that sustain their operations and the services they provide (Webb, 2013). Similarly, food pantries rely on volunteers and unstable funding sources, however, they may not always have the tax exempt 501(c)3 status. Every food bank is similar but different, many incorporate models dependent on their overall philosophy and mission as dictated by their board of directors and the communities they serve (Riches, 1986).

Food banks, as 501(c)3 charitable organizations, are intimately involved in areas of the food system concerning hunger and food insecurity which are symptomatic of larger systemic problems. These problems include, but are not limited to, poverty and unemployment as well as inequality in its many forms where children, female head of households, and members of racial and ethnic groups are affected disproportionately as a result (Waxman, 2015). For example, African Americans are three times more likely than their white counterparts to utilize food bank services in which 31 percent of food bank clients are African American as opposed to only 10 percent being white (Feeding America, 2016). As of 2014, 15.3 million children lived in food insecure households (Coleman-Jensen, Rabbit, Gregory, & Singh, 2015). Gender also has a role in the likelihood of someone experiencing hunger and food insecurity. The USDA (2015a) reports that 12.8 percent of single, female heads of household with children experience food insecurity in contrast to only 7 percent of single males experiencing the same.

Food banks augment federal programs and other food-relief organizations that address food insecurity (Cotunga & Beebe, 2002). Only recently has the concept of social justice in food banking been expressed by food banks. This occurred at the second Closing the Hunger Gap conference in 2015 in which a call to social justice was made. It is imperative that the issues underlying the causes of hunger and food insecurity are addressed in order to develop strategies

to address the effects of these problems on individuals and communities. Due to food banks' extensive operations directed towards addressing instances of hunger and food insecurity in the short-term for individuals, developing food banking programs that target systemic problems perpetuating hunger and food insecurity could help reduce food insecurity in the long term as well.

To understand the role of food banks in the context of hunger and food insecurity it is important to recognize the influences that have led to their conceptualization, growth, and institutionalization. Food banks are a relatively new concept having only been in existence for nearly 50 years. The first conceptualization of a food bank began with John van Hengel in 1967 in Phoenix, Arizona with the idea of a "deposit" and "withdraw" system of food distribution; excess food was deposited by businesses and organizations with an unused surplus to which those in need could withdraw that excess food (St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance, n.d.). Since these beginnings, food banks have grown exponentially in both their size and mission. The basic model of food banking has spread throughout the US and countries around the world and are supported by organizations such as The Global Food Banking Network and Feeding America.

Federal programs to address food insecurity were also developed. Around the same time as the first food bank was conceived, the US government established the Food Stamp Act of 1964 with the intent of "strengthening the agricultural economy" and to "improve levels of nutrition among low-income households" with a major provision being shared responsibility by both state and federal governments (USDA, 2014). From this grew the Food Stamp Act of 1977 to which increased participation was documented from 1964 to the early 1980s and seen as a success of the program. The food stamp program went through many changes, but most notable is the increased participation of 29 million participants per month in 2008 (USDA, 2014) which

coincides with the first full year of the Great Recession. Food banks have been a buffer between waxing and waning publicly funded social safety net programs. Riches (2002) argues that food banks “have become secondary extensions of weakened social safety nets” (p. 648). This is confirmed by Feeding America (2011), the largest US hunger relief organization, which states the nature of food banking is shifting from strictly food relief to addressing the chronic need for food assistance as long-term food provisioning strategies. Portraying the shift in increased usage of food bank assistance, Feeding America (2011) reported that only 19% of respondents reported using food assistance for just one month to help with food shortages, while over half reported using food assistance services for more than six months for an average of 28.3 months. A more recent study reported that unemployment, underemployment, and low wages are significant contributors associated to the use of food banks and that 54 percent of food bank users were employed (Feeding America, 2014a).

As food banks have filled the gaps created by weakened social safety nets there has been increasing reliance on food bank assistance (Riches, 2002; Tarasuk et al., 2014). Locating mission parameters through mission statements may help to identify the ways in which specific food banks are addressing hunger and food insecurity that go beyond charity. Charity by itself only addresses the problems of hunger and food insecurity in the short-term while social justice addresses the root of these problems in the long-term. Food banks generally operate regionally with the overarching mission of salvaging food that is no longer commercially relevant or surplus from “food donations, government food programs, and foods purchased with acquired funds” (Campbell, Ross, & Webb, 2013) (Tarasuk & Eakin, 2005). In addition to the general mission of food salvage, food banks develop and employ programs that support their operations such as food drives and capital campaigns that support their ability to acquire and distribute food.

Many variables affect the types of programs food banks incorporate into their overall mission and operations. Even though the central focus is to distribute salvaged food goods, a number of food banks have incorporated programs that parallel community food security initiatives (Wakefield et al., 2012) (Vitiello, Grisso, Whiteside, & Fischman, 2015). Community food security is explained as improving access to healthy food and promoting self-reliance for providing for food needs (USDA, 2015b). Community food security is also associated with addressing community development which is concerned with community members taking collective action to solve problems (PeerNetBC, n.d), health, and economic opportunity that are associated with financial stability.

Charity

Charity is contextualized in different ways, for example, it can be an act of giving or an organization that gives. In Christianity it refers to love and in some instances it is synonymous with pity (Krauszer, 2014). Charitable giving or charity is defined for this research as the benevolent act of generosity and helpfulness to those in need of specific resources. It is characterized as a benevolent act of generosity in which individuals are willing to give a portion of what they have for the perceived betterment of those who are in need. The portions individuals give are frequently donated as either time, money, or both and is more than likely to be donated through an organization such as a food bank. Charity is a reasonably straight forward concept regarding the act of giving. When it comes to donor intentions of giving time or money, time is closely associated with emotional meaning whereas donations of money are aligned with economic utility (Liu & Aaker, 2008). In other words, donations of time equate to donor happiness where donations of money are perceived as maximizing donations to meet more than a single need. Motives that compel one to donate vary greatly from the individual to organizations

and businesses with a range covering moral obligation, such as religious convictions, to tax incentives. In this sense, charity can be understood by acknowledging the factors of why charity is alluring.

The appeal to give to charity, to donate resources of time or money, is complex. Chang (2014) describes the characteristics of egoism and altruism in charity advertising that are relevant to understanding donor motives and thus charity. Altruistic motives are inherently empathetic and are more concerned with helping others. In contrast, egoistic motives are primarily concerned with what the individual donor will gain such as an aversion of guilt (Chang, 2014). The emotion of guilt plays an important role in charity, Chang (2014) argues that egoistic appeals in charity advertising may be more effective than altruistic appeals because donors are more motivated to abate the feelings of guilt (p. 212). In her book, *Sweet Charity*, Poppendieck (1998) writes that guilt is a major motivator in food banking charity, stating that, volunteers and donors who contribute often do so on the basis of relieving the guilt they feel for their privilege (p. 198).

Looking beyond guilt, charity itself is a motivating factor as it contributes to perceptions of involvement with an issue; such as being involved in the fight against hunger and food insecurity. Poppendieck (1998) points out that there is satisfaction in working towards a goal and having a meaningful role in addressing a problem for everyone involved. Feedback from charitable organizations regarding the impact of donor involvement and action helps drive charitable giving (Verpy, Smith, & Reicks, 2003). When speaking about charity in general, Rosato (2014) notes that “the biggest misconception people have is that good intentions and a lot of money mean a lot of impact” (p. 94). Rosato’s (2014) statement supports Poppendieck’s (2000) claim that the emotional responses to hunger lead to the vulnerability of our society to

adopt token solutions which she characterizes as surface level solutions that do not address the root causes of a problem (p. 567).

The driving forces of charity are the perceptions of addressing larger social problems, such as hunger, even though the problems being addressed do little to affect the underlying or root causes. Donor motives are at the heart of what charity is whether it is the idea or the act of giving. Charity can be explained as either altruistic or egoistic and encompasses a range of emotions that only a specific donor is privy to knowing. Charity in this sense is very much about what the donor has to gain whether it be an aversion of guilt, religious conviction, or satisfaction in addressing a problem and lends to the inception of charitable organizations. I argue that charity, by its very nature is incapable of producing long-term change even though a real and true problem is being addressed. This is primarily because charity is donor-centric, donors or volunteers are only compelled to address a problem based on how the problem resonates with them personally. Once the donor or volunteer is satisfied with their accomplishments there is no real need to address the problem further. Thus, charity is effective at addressing short-term aspects of a problem, such as feeding hungry people, but does not get at long-term solutions of keeping people from going hungry in the first place. This is where principles of social justice come in as important approaches to addressing the problems of hunger and food insecurity.

Social Justice

Social justice is a broad term and framework for addressing the issues of inequality that stem from oppression and is both a process and a goal. Injustice, or the lack of justice, is inextricably linked to concepts of fairness and therefore oppression is the hindrance of fairness which equates to inequality and inequity. Young (1990) explains oppression through the five

concepts of exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (p. 48-63). Exploitation is tied to the division of labor through which certain social classes are benefited over others through social mechanisms that dictate the type of work performed and by whom. Exploitation creates power differentials and inequality that are “produced and reproduced through a systematic process in which the energies of the have-nots are continuously expended to maintain and augment the power, status, and wealth of the haves” (p. 50). Marginalization deals with the expelling of whole groups from social participation such as racial and ethnic groups, elderly, and differently abled people. Marginalization is closely related to “material deprivation” characterized as an inability to provide material goods, such as food, through which social safety net programs have been developed to address (p. 53). Powerlessness is associated with the inhibitions of individual autonomy that is characteristic of a lack of power in decision making and the experience of poor treatment due to the class one occupies in society (p. 58). Cultural imperialism describes the social norms dictated by the dominate social class through which all others are measured (p. 59). The last characteristic of oppression described by Young (1990) is violence which can be physical, psychological, or both (p. 62). These five aspects of oppression describe the fundamental components of systemic injustice. Systemic injustices are the ordinary and often unconscious assumptions that are perpetuated in economic, political, and cultural institutions that disadvantage particular groups (Young, 1990). These disadvantages are closely associated with discrimination and the many “isms” such as racism, sexism, and classism that contribute to inequality through which social justice attempts to remediate.

The United Nations’ International Forum for Social Development directly addresses social justice in which three “critical domains of equality and equity” are mentioned (United Nations, 2006). These three domains are the equality of rights, the equality of opportunity, and

equity in living conditions that serve to address discrimination (United Nations, 2006) which are important components of inequality. The forum also describes a need to address the inequalities in the distribution of income, assets, opportunity, knowledge, health services, and civic and political participation that require attention for social justice to be realized (United Nations, 2006). Equity is the concept of fairness in which equality is the concept of being equal.

Principles of equity assume a position that acknowledges differences in access and obstacles to resources and serves to adjust resource allocation to account for these differences. Principles of equality refer to the equal distribution of resources by providing uniform access (Clow, Hanson, & Bernier, 2012). Inequalities such as those described by the International Forum for Social Development cannot effectively be addressed at any level without eliminating or reducing systems of inequity and inequality. Therefore, working toward social justice requires measures that address oppression, discrimination, and inequality through the principles of equity and equality. Social justice definitions from the National Association of Social Workers (2015) and The International Labour Organization (2011) were adapted to develop a definition of social justice for this research. Social Justice is defined as the equal distribution of economic, political, and social opportunities as well as human rights and equitable access to resources that bolster cultural and human dignity.

Food Bank Programming

While their primary role is to distribute food, many food banks also have programs that go beyond this function. There are a number of variables dictating how, when, where, and what type of programs are employed. Regional food banks develop and employ programs that support their mission and address specific problems in their area of operations. One example of going beyond food banking is that many, if not all, food banks are associated in some capacity with

federal food assistance programs such as the Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). In addition, many food banks have nutrition-oriented programs given concerns about the nutritional quality of food bank food in the midst of rising chronic health diseases that disproportionately affect under-resourced communities, whose members are more likely to seek food assistance, (Campbell, Ross, & Webb, 2013) tends to be the focus of many food bank programs. Food banks have also been recognized as areas important to promoting healthy nutrition (Shimada, Webb, Campbell, & Ross, 2013) (Tobin, Downer, Prendergast, & Marshall, n.d.). Other programs focus on instrumental support for food bank work, such as building and sustaining volunteer labor for daily operations like food repackaging and grounds maintenance. Differentiating the ways in which missions and programs address charity and justice is critical to clarifying where programs fall on the spectrum of charity and social justice.

Concerns Associated with Food Banking Efforts

There is no doubt that food banks are providing a needed service especially in the wake of eroding social safety net programs. Many more people would be hungry and food insecure without the work of food banks. However, it has been argued that food banks may be unable to meet the current needs of the growing number of clients who are hungry or food insecure (Riches, 2002). In 2014 alone, 17.4 million households experienced food insecurity which is characterized as lacking access to enough food for an “active, healthy life” (USDA, 2015c). As of February 2016, 45,411,036 individuals and 22,402,666 households received government food assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program (formerly known as food stamps) (USDA, 2016c). Food banks assert that they are not a replacement for social safety net

programs, yet, they portray an image of being an equal and adequate solution when petitioning for donations (Poppendieck, 2000).

The differences between food banks and state-sponsored social safety initiatives are that food banks are deeply involved with the issues of hunger and food insecurity at the community level. They are a pillar of food assistance and relief to those who are affected by the issues of hunger and food insecurity, but they do not and cannot replace public food assistance programs. Food banks complement rather than replace social initiatives; they are areas within existing approaches addressing food security (Cotunga & Beebe, 2002), not a replacement. Since they depend on monetary and food donations, they can also be outlets for corporations to portray an image of “good corporate citizenship” and a practical means of disposing of food goods in an “environmentally friendly” way (Tarasuk & Eakin, 2005). Due to eroding social safety initiatives, their incorporation into corporate business models as disposal outlets, and their centrality in the lives of the hungry and food insecure, food banks have become solidified as a social institution.

Chapter Three

Methodology and Methods

This research addresses the problems of hunger and food insecurity through the analysis of food bank mission statements and programs. It examines how food banks are addressing the issues of hunger and food insecurity through the programs they conduct. It is concerned with discovering the types of programs food banks operate that go beyond charitable handouts. Through the analysis of food bank mission statements and programs, the orientations of food banks and their programs, on a spectrum of charity to social justice, are addressed

Positionality

Understanding what can be known, how it can be known, and the source of this knowledge is critical to understanding one's own position relative to their research (Raadschelders, 2011; Takacs, 2003). The purpose of research concerning food banks should be to improve the lives of clients who utilize their services and should be directed as emancipatory measures of lifting people out poverty and improving health. For this reason, research into food banks must be rooted in focusing on what they are doing, how they do it, and how they can be improved. The purpose of critical inquiry, through which the construction of equitable change is based, acknowledges the inadequacies of current solutions and addresses problems as they exist in the present and how they can be addressed in the future.

My own positionality stems from having worked with the Clark County Food Bank's (CCFB) Farming and Gleaning Program in Vancouver, Washington in varying capacities. I am both intrigued by their existence and convinced that food banks in general are capable of addressing the underlying causes of why their clients need their services. The experiences I had

operating the program on CCFB's 10-acre farm is the impetus for this research. I had the opportunity to witness first-hand the extent of influence the food bank has in their community and how deeply rooted they are in the lives of the people they serve. This is something I feel is unachievable in government-supported programs because of their bureaucratic nature can be impersonal and rigid. Many volunteers with whom I came into contact at the farm were at one time beneficiaries of the food bank's services laud how much of a blessing it was to have been able to receive services in their time of need. There is no doubt that every person, and most volunteers, operating the food bank cares deeply for the people and services they provide. Their mission statement "Alleviating hunger and its root causes" (Clark County Food Bank, n.d.) led me to question, how exactly, food banks are getting at the root causes of hunger.

Methodology

This research analyzes food bank mission statements and programs through content analysis and grounded theory methodologies. These methodologies were chosen because of their flexibility in dealing with ambiguous text and inferred meanings as well as their orientation to systematic processing of information. Just as all food banks are similar yet different, so too are their mission statements and programs. Both content analysis and grounded theory methodologies incorporate inductive approaches. Information present in the text can be analyzed to bring recurrent themes to the surface to make generalizations that offer an explanation or theory (Bradford, 2015). This research explores the idea that food banks may be more than charitable organizations and could possibly be effective social justice advocates. It is for this reason that the inductive approaches of content analysis and grounded theory are valid methodologies for conducting this research. Content analysis is intended to create a representation of meanings (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013) and is appropriate in

exploring food bank mission statements and program orientations to answer the first two research questions: Are food banks, in general, reorienting their mission to address the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity? and What programs do food banks implement in their fight against hunger and food insecurity? Grounded theory develops a theory explaining the influences associated with a specific topic and developing a “discursive set of theoretical propositions” (Creswell, 2007). In this research, the principles of grounded theory will serve as a guide in data collection and analysis due to its flexibility regarding emergent data (Charmaz, 2006) and is an appropriate methodology for answering the third research question: What are the characteristics of food bank programming that have the potential to address the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity?

Methods

Two methods, content analysis and thematic analysis, are used to investigate, organize, and interpret data pertinent to the research questions. Data was collected using unobtrusive, qualitative methods from regional food banks and affiliate food banks in the Feeding America network. Using Feeding America’s *Find a Food Bank* function on their website, food bank websites in all 50 US states were analyzed for the existence of a mission statement. Community organizations that were not strictly food banks but were involved in food banking activities were excluded because they did not inherently fit the model of a food bank; characterized as a “storehouse for millions of pounds of food” (Food Bank of Southern Tier, 2016). Thematic analysis methods were used to analyze food bank mission statements to answer the first research question: Are food banks, in general, reorienting their mission to address the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity? Mission statements are used to identify those food banks that seem to incorporate social justice into current models of charity. The decision to analyze mission

statements as opposed to vision statements is due primarily to mission statements inferring action (Community Tool Box, 2015). Vision statements depict the ideal future of an organization whereas mission statements are the statements indicating how the organization will reach the idealized vision (Society for Human Resource Management, 2012). Vision statements can be thought of as the ultimate goal of a food bank in which mission statements are the necessary measures the food bank takes to achieve the goal. In total, 254 food bank websites were examined for specifically stated mission statements. Mission statements were frequently found on home pages and the “about us” sections and every effort was made to identify mission statements for each food bank. However, not all websites had a readily identifiable mission statement. Those without were excluded from further examination leaving 196 food bank mission statements to analyze. Three levels of analysis were used to differentiate between charity and social justice orientations in mission statements. The three levels of analysis were based on narrowing the latent differences between mission statements to identify those having the strongest orientations towards social justice. The three levels of analysis along with the differences will be explained in depth in Chapter Four. Programs from the food banks with mission statements found to have the strongest orientations towards social justice were used to answer research question two.

To answer research question two, a content analysis of food bank programs was conducted. The question asks: what programs do food banks implement in their fight against hunger and food insecurity? Programs from the food banks with mission statements identified as having the strongest orientations towards social justice were examined using content analysis methods. In total, 99 programs were analyzed. Program types were identified and categorized based on the nature of a program through its description on the selected food bank websites.

Categorization of program types were based on the overarching themes of food distribution and non-food distribution. These categories were known before the programs were analyzed and chosen because food banks are both food distributors and operators of programs that are not related to food distribution. Food distribution are the food banking activities centered around methods of distributing food such as supplying food pantries or providing meals. Non-food distribution are the food banking activities not associated with supplying food such as community outreach. The criteria for categorization of program type was a process of identifying programs that could be characterized as either food distribution or non-food distribution. The characteristics of program types were straightforward and needed little interpretation as to which category they aligned with.

Using a thematic analysis of food banks that is congruent with grounded theory methodologies, data discovered and analyzed to answer research questions one and two are used to answer the third research question: What are the characteristics of food bank programming that have the potential to address the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity? Findings from data on mission statements and programs previously analyzed are the data source for addressing the third research question. Primarily used in health disciplines, a social-ecological model was adapted to situate the findings of the first two research questions into the broader context of food banking. The model is a method of interpreting the findings to show the interactive characteristics between food banking, charity, and social justice as they relate to the problems of hunger and food insecurity. A discussion of the model as well as food bank mission statements and programs will be discussed in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter Four

Results, Analysis, and Contribution

This research addresses the problems of hunger and food insecurity through the analysis of food banks. The intent is to find out the ways in which food banks can or are addressing the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity through the analysis of charity and social justice orientations within food bank programming. This research was guided by the three research questions: Are food banks, in general, reorienting their mission to address the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity? What programs do food banks implement in their fight against hunger and food insecurity? What are the characteristics of food bank programming that have the potential to address the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity? Each question will be addressed in order.

Food Bank Missions

The analysis of food bank mission statements was a four-step process that analyzed and categorized mission statements. The analysis process provided clarity in differentiating mission statements on a charity to social justice spectrum. A definition of social justice was developed from the National Association of Social Workers (2015) and The International Labour Organization's (2011) definitions to be defined as: the equal distribution of economic, political, and social opportunities as well as rights and equitable access to resources that bolster cultural and human dignity. Charity is defined as the benevolent act of generosity and helpfulness to those in need of specific resources.

The first level of analysis was to identify food banks with specified mission statements; of the 254 food banks listed in Feeding America's *Find a Food Bank* database on their website,

196 food bank mission statements were presented. The second level of analysis separated mission statements between those having a strictly charitable orientation from those stating more than doing charitable work which was assumed to be indicative of a social justice orientation. An example of a charity statement is, “As a member of Feeding America, our mission is to gather and share quality food and nurture partnerships so that no one in Vermont will go hungry” (Vermont Food Bank, n.d.). An example of a mission statement that infers doing more than charity is, “Foodbank of Santa Barbara County’s mission is to end hunger and transform the health of Santa Barbara County through good nutrition” (Foodbank of Santa Barbara County, 2016). The second level of analysis separated 71 food bank mission statements from the original 196. This was accomplished by identifying embedded key words and phrases that infer doing more than charity, such as “eliminate hunger” or “reduce poverty” and is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Key words and phrases embedded in food bank mission statements

Cure hunger	Alleviate
Eliminate hunger	Prevent
End hunger	Address causes
Improve quality of life	Facilitate
Change lives	Lead efforts
Causes of hunger	Dedicated to
Eradicate	Leading the fight
Reduce poverty	Solutions to end
Solve hunger	In the future
Obtaining more	Create solutions
Pursue	Advocate
Reduction to root causes	Distribute food
By providing	Hunger free

Differences existed between the 71 mission statements that led to a need to perform a third level of analysis. The 71 food bank mission statements were differentiated and categorized

in the third level of analysis using the list of embedded words and phrases. These categorizations fielded the two categories of strong associations towards social justice and weak associations towards justice and are shown in Table 2 .

Table 2. Terms with strong vs. weak associations toward social justice in food bank mission statements

Strong Association	Weak Association
Cure hunger	Alleviate
Eliminate hunger	Prevent
End hunger	Address causes
Improve quality of life	Facilitate
Change lives	Lead efforts
Causes of hunger	Dedicated to
Eradicate	Leading the fight
Reduce poverty	Solutions to end
Solve hunger	In the future
Long-term	Create solutions
	Hunger free
	Advocate
	Distribute food
	By providing
	Obtaining more
	Relieve
	Pursue
	Reduction to root causes

The categories of strong and weak associations were chosen based on the perceived definitiveness or passivity of the embedded words and phrases. The words and phrases comprising the strong association category are definitive. They suggest radical changes to addressing the issues of hunger and food insecurity and thus have a strong association to social justice. Those words and phrases shown in the weak association category are passive. While they may indicate change they do not suggest the kind of change as those words and phrases in the strong associations category. Strong and weak terms are differentiated based on their order of

meanings. For example, the weak term “solutions to end” is ambiguous; the word “solutions” has multiple meanings and is thus passive. The strong term “eliminate hunger” is strong based on the verb “eliminate”. The meaning of the word is explicit and means only one thing in the context of food banking, which is to completely remove or do away with hunger and is therefore definitive. Table 2 was developed to discover the differences between the 71 mission statements but was not sufficient to do so. Due to the listed words and phrases occurring throughout most of the mission statements, additional criteria were developed to discover the latent differences between the 71 mission statements. This led to the fourth level of analysis.

The intent of analyzing mission statements was to discover whether or not food bank mission statements address the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity. Social justice criteria were developed to conduct a fourth level of analysis and to discover the differences in mission statements; addressing the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity is performing social justice. Social justice criteria are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Social justice criteria

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Does the Mission Statement reference poverty?2. Does the Mission Statement reference long-term solutions to ending hunger?3. Does the Mission Statement infer action towards change? |
|---|

Utilizing the differentiated words and phrases that depict strong associations towards social justice, in conjunction with the list of social justice criteria, the 71 mission statements were reanalyzed. Mission statements incorporating one of the three social justice criteria listed in Table 3, as well as having a strong association towards social justice, were pulled from the

sample of 71 mission statements. The fourth level of analysis yielded 12 mission statements. The categorization scheme shown in tables 1 through 3 developed three distinct groups of mission statements that I categorized as charity, amelioration, and justice. These three categories make up the spectrum of charity to social justice.

Mission statements categorized as charity are characteristic of traditional food banking approaches encompassing the distribution of salvaged and donated food goods. Due to the nature of food banks being 501(c)3 charitable organizations, all 196 food bank missions are associated with the charity category. However, 64 percent, of food bank mission statements fall strictly in the charity category. Food banks whose mission statements were categorized as having a traditional charity orientation state missions that do not include phrasing that would indicate any action of the food bank to go beyond traditional charity approaches of food distribution.

Food bank mission statements categorized under the category of amelioration, defined in this research as making improvements to the situations of hunger and food insecurity, showed an awareness and responsibility to the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity. A total of 30 percent of mission statements fall into this category. That is, they did not exhibit a predominately charity orientation nor a social justice orientation and are thus categorized as amelioration. The word alleviate is frequently referenced in many mission statements and may seem synonymous with amelioration. However, in this research, alleviate is defined as making something less severe or to “reduce the pain or trouble of something” (Merriam-Webster, 2015a) whereas amelioration is defined as “the act of making something better; improvement” (Dictionary.com, 2016). The distinction between ameliorate and alleviate is the emphasis of amelioration making improvements as opposed to alleviation that makes something less severe.

Making improvements suggests long-term strategies whereas making something less severe suggests short-term solutions in which short-term solutions are synonymous with charity.

The third categorization of justice shares aspects of the amelioration category because the category of justice was partly developed using the differentiated words and phrases of strong associations towards social justice. While the two mission statement categories of amelioration and justice share common language, they are distinct different. Mission statements in the justice category reference one of three social justice criteria in Table 3 and have phrasing aligned with the strong association towards the social justice category. The mission statements in the justice category make up six percent of the total food bank mission statements analyzed. The percentages of the three categories of charity, amelioration, and justice are compared in Table 4.

Table 4. Number and percentage of mission statements

Category	Mission Statements	Percentage (%)
Charity	125	64
Amelioration	59	30
Justice	12	6
Total	196	100

Examination of food bank mission statements has shown that a small fraction (6 percent) of food banks have an orientation towards social justice. This is a small subset of a larger food banking network and may be the emergence of a new trend in the emergency food system. An analysis of the 2015 Closing the Hunger Gap conference found that food banks see a need to

incorporate social justice in their efforts due to the increasing understanding that charity will not end hunger (Powers, 2016). However, the analysis did not find evidence that most food banks are currently incorporating social justice into their operations or doing more to improve client circumstances beyond meeting immediate food needs. The six percent of mission statements oriented towards social justice imply that they can and are willing to take on the additional responsibility of caring and providing for those in need beyond charitable handouts. While mission statements are indicative of action, the analysis only tells us what they say they are doing, not what they are actually doing. However, the mission statements examined do convey a strong message that there is a willingness to change the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity. However, the mission statements are necessarily general and are not the place where a specific route for accomplishing the mission would be stated. To identify how food banks may be addressing social justice, an analysis of the programs operated by the 12 food banks comprising the six percent of mission statements oriented towards social justice was conducted.

Food Bank Programs

A total of 99 programs operated by the 12 food banks whose mission statements exhibited social justice orientations were analyzed to answer research question 2: What programs do food banks implement in their fight against hunger and food insecurity? Table 5 shows the categorization of these programs followed by a discussion of the results.

Table 5. Categorization of program types

Primary Category	Sub-Category A	Sub-Category B
Food Distribution	Federal	
	Feeding	
	Emergency	
	Pantry	
Non-Food Distribution	Resource Access	Outreach
		Transformative
	Education	Nutrition
		Job Training

The primary categories of food distribution and non-food distribution describe the general orientations of the 99 programs analyzed. Shown in Table 5 under sub-category A, the four sub-categories associated with the primary category of food distribution are federal, feeding, emergency, and pantry. The sub-category of federal is solely related to the distribution of government aid through two federal food programs, the emergency food aid program (TEFAP) and the commodity supplemental food program (CSFP). Four food banks listed these federal programs as distribution programs they offer. TEFAP is a program operated by the USDA in which food is distributed to state agencies that in turn distribute the food to organizations such as food banks; the amount of food given to state agencies is dependent on the number of unemployed individuals and the number of people with incomes below the state's the poverty level (USDA, 2015d). The USDA's CSFP program is directed towards improving the health of people over 60 years of age in which food is distributed the same as with TEFAP but has a wider range of organizations involved to which food banks are one of many routes of distribution (USDA, 2016a).

Food banks often also have programs that provide food directly to clients. Programs categorized under the sub-category feeding are ones that operate backpack programs, after

school meals, mobile meals, and general activities encompassing the distribution of meals. Only two food banks did not operate feeding programs. Programs under the emergency sub-category are closely aligned with that of pantry programs and ranged from disaster relief to emergency pantries and food distribution and were operated by five food banks. Keeping in mind that food banks are organizationally different from food pantries, programs within the pantry sub-category are characteristic of the average food pantry to which food banks distribute. The only difference is that the food bank is essentially acting as its own partner. Of the 12 food banks examined, seven operated pantry programs that were either mobile, emergency, or school pantries enabling the food bank to distribute food in varying capacities. All of the programs under the primary category of food distribution are squarely charitable and as such are situated within a charity framework rather than a social justice framework.

Shown in Table 5 under the column sub-category A, the two categories of education and resource access were developed from the non-food distribution category. These sub-categories share similar attributes in that resource access is also about education. However, the categories are differentiated because of the focus of particular programs. Those under the category of outreach are oriented towards outreach efforts that provide clients with help and materials to apply for government assistance programs such as Women, Infants and Children (WIC) as well as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Programs in this category establish outreach efforts that are intended to educate and guide clients in applying for and accessing SNAP and WIC benefits. Programs in the category of outreach do not have a distinct orientation towards social justice or charity. Even though they go beyond charity, they are connective measures in which the food bank is not the organization directly addressing the issues of hunger and food insecurity. Programs in this category are more aligned with amelioration as a result.

The sub-category of resource access is separated by two classifications, transformative and outreach. Transformative programs are defined as programs that address problems beyond the immediate food needs of clients. Programs under the transformative category are somewhat unique to food banks in that the focus is not primarily on food but more aligned with addressing the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity. Many of the programs under the transformative category acknowledge that hunger and food insecurity are symptomatic of issues related to poverty, unemployment, and other hardships associated with housing and education. These programs build on this foundation to encompass efforts directed at hearing clients' experiences and needs to incorporate efforts that address these problems. Transformative programs combine resource access and advocacy that have the potential to reduce the need for food assistance. These programs are not necessarily a single program but a combination of programs and partnerships. The Mid-Ohio Foodbank's series of community initiative programs are an example. They offer meals, advocate for clients in public policy, bring together community leaders to address root problems, and develop measures to address both non-food and food needs. Transformative programs holistically address both the problems of hunger and food insecurity as well as the underlying causes and are thus aligned with a social justice framework. They simultaneously facilitate the delivery of food assistance and work toward eliminating the need for it.

Under the sub-category of education, two categories emerged as being directly associated with teaching skills. The category of nutrition encompasses programs that aim to create healthy lifestyle changes through the development of nutrition-related skills. The focus in these programs is to reduce the risks of chronic illness such as heart disease and diabetes by helping people in ways that can provide adequate nutritious foods for themselves and their families. Analysis of

these programs shows that efforts are directed at healthy food provisioning, preparation, consumption, and safety through the deliverance of nutrition courses, informational sessions, and informational resources. Many of these programs are aligned with and supplement federal SNAP and WIC outreach efforts. Often food banks offering nutrition education employ nutrition experts to oversee and deliver the programs. Examples of nutrition education programs are cooking and nutrition classes that are offered over a specified period of time. The alignment with SNAP and WIC outreach is complementary to nutrition education efforts given that these government programs are designed around nutrition, WIC is concerned with providing adequate nutrition to “low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk” (USDA, 2015e) and SNAP is directed towards providing nutrition assistance for low-income individuals and families (USDA, 2016b). Nutrition education addresses health disparities in the food bank client population and can be viewed as an extension of federal efforts to combat rising chronic health issues in the US.

The category of job training relates to food banks augmenting their missions through programs that build job-related skills. Under the category of job training, the sub categories of culinary and agriculture skills emerged as the only types of occupational training offered. Of the 12 food banks’ programs analyzed, five had culinary occupation related training programs and six had agricultural programs. These programs directly benefit the food bank as well as clients who partake in training. Many of the culinary training programs utilize food already donated to the food bank and it is through the preparation of meals created with this food that the food bank is able to distribute prepared meals to those in need. The agricultural training programs take a number of different approaches from community gardens to production agriculture and are

directed operated similarly to culinary training programs. Agricultural training programs teach the basics of how to grow food specific to the region that the program is offered on varying scales. Agriculture programs range from small gardens to larger areas of cultivated land. These job training programs are oriented towards building job skills and experience that would help enable clients to gain employment or grow their own food.

The analyses of food bank programs show that food banks have the potential to deliver programs that have an impact on both charity and social justice. This is characterized by a series of related programs offered by one food bank analyzed in which the culinary training program supported two additional programs, one that increased resources through a “social enterprise” catering service and one that offered additional services through prepared meal distribution (Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, 2015). Supporting other programs through culinary job training programs is common among the food banks analyzed that offered this type of training. Culinary training programs offered by the five food banks examined as having a training program offered courses ranging between 10 and 16 weeks. Job placement and internships were common results of completing these programs, however, problems exist with the occupational specialties offered through these programs.

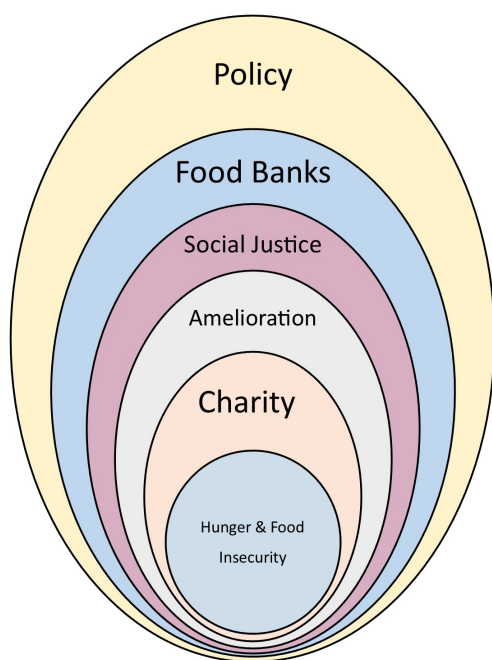
Training clients to enter food service jobs that typically earn \$7 to \$12 an hour or approximately \$16,000 to \$23,000 annually according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015a), is likely to maintain a need for food assistance, given the federal poverty level for a family of four is \$24,300 (Healthcare.gov, 2016). This is the same scenario for agriculture related training programs where the average hourly wage in 2014 was roughly \$9 an hour or approximately \$19,000 annually (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015b). The question here is whether food banks

occupational training programs can be seen as aligned with social justice principles if the jobs for which clients are being trained are poverty-level jobs. Clients in these jobs would probably still be officially in poverty and likely to still need food assistance. This is an important consideration, given that unemployment and low wages are key factors in why individuals utilize food bank services in the first place (Poppendieck, 1998). Feeding America, the largest hunger relief organization in America, reports that 89 percent of employed clients earn less than \$30,000 annually with 69 percent living at or below the poverty threshold (Feeding America, 2014a). If food bank occupational training programs focus on low-wage job categories, they may be doing little to diminish a client's need for seeking food assistance. Food bank programs falling under the transformative and nutrition education categories are programs aligned with social justice. Occupational training programs have the potential to be justice oriented if they provided training for jobs in higher paying sectors

Social-Ecological Model of Food Banks

Data collected and analyzed to answer research questions one and two regarding food bank mission statements and programs are used to answer research question three: What are the characteristics of food bank programming that have the potential to address the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity? A social-ecological model was adapted to explain the overlapping themes discussed in this research. The model, seen in Figure 1, is a visual of food banks in relation to hunger and food insecurity.

Figure 1. Social-ecological model of food banks



The model merges ecology, the relations of organisms to one another and their physical surrounding (Merriam-Webster, 2015b), with that of the social sphere. Used primarily in healthcare disciplines, the model recognizes that “individuals are embedded within larger social systems” and helps to understand interactive characteristics (Golden & Earp, 2012). The model along with its description is appropriate to the study of food banks because it situates the individual problems of hunger and food insecurity into the contexts of food banking. The purpose of the model is to depict that all levels are interactive with one another in which meaningful change can only be realized by simultaneously addressing each one. The model would suggest that a change in the outermost level would influence change at all levels. The six levels of the model will be explained in more depth following this brief explanation of the model’s different levels. Policy, due to eroding social safety net programs, is the enabling environment through which food banks operate. Food banks, shown as the second outermost

level, are the organizational structure needed to implement and intervene at all levels. Social justice is the level concerned with long-term transformational change addressing individual efficacy and systems change. Amelioration is the middle-ground or bridge through which social justice can be realized or through which charity is the emphasis. The level comprising charity is an interpersonal level addressing the individual problems of hunger and food insecurity. At the core of the model lies hunger and food insecurity which are the individual level problems associated with the physical and economic effects of not having enough food.

Overall, the analyses of food bank mission statements and programs indicate that food banks are dynamic organizations that change to meet current needs of their clients. If this were untrue, then all food banks would still only be distributing salvaged and donated food goods unchanging since their 1967 inception. The categories of charity, amelioration, and justice depict the spectrum of charity to social justice in food banking. Findings suggest that food banks and their approaches to addressing hunger and food insecurity operate within a larger social spectrum that ranges from the emergence of a problem to solving the problem, from relieving hunger and food insecurity to working to end hunger and food insecurity. Analyses of food bank mission statements and programs shows that different food banks operate at varying points along the spectrum of problem to solution. The social-ecological model of food banking shows that a change in one level affects change in another. For instance, a change in policy would affect all levels down to hunger and food insecurity. As such, in order for social justice to be realized, change at the very least must happen at the food bank level. Ideally, food banks must work towards ending hunger and food insecurity while simultaneously addressing the immediate needs of clients.

Charity approaches addressing the first level of the social-ecological model are short-term solutions that fill an immediate need but do not address why or how individuals are in need of food bank services. Analysis shows that charity orientations are the primary and only way in which the majority of food banks address issues of hunger and food insecurity. While there is a real need and tangible result that benefits hungry people, charity alone is incapable of sustainably addressing the need for food assistance. Although there are 46,000 food relief agencies, 58,000 food programs, and over 100,000 volunteer hours associated with Feeding America's (2014b) network alone, hunger and food insecurity still persist.

The third level of the adapted social-ecological model consists of amelioration of hunger and food insecurity. Amelioration emerged as the middle-ground between charity and social justice and is indicative of incorporating intermediate approaches to addressing hunger and food insecurity in conjunction with charity. Progression to social justice from amelioration includes the incorporation of programs that are aligned with nutrition education and transformative approaches. Occupational training programs are also categorized as ameliorative due to their likely ineffectiveness in reducing reliance on food banks. Amelioration may be a pivotal step in linking charitable approaches to social justice because amelioration is the middle ground between the two; that is, it is not wholly charitable nor is it wholly justice. Occupational training programs are not necessarily charity even though they are components of charitable programs which points to these types of programs as being a bridge between charity and social justice.

Social justice occupies the fourth level of the social-ecological model. The analysis of the programs of the 12 food banks' that had mission statements oriented towards social justice suggests that nutrition education and transformative programs are social justice oriented and are

attempting to address long-term solutions to hunger and food insecurity. Programs aligned with the transformative categorization address not only food related needs, but also acknowledge and advocate for whole-systems solutions. An example is the Mid-Ohio Foodbank's Collaborating for Clients (C4C) program that takes a "holistic" approach to meeting client food needs while addressing the "intersecting symptoms of poverty" (Mid-Ohio Foodbank, n.d.). This is accomplished through gathering opinions and experiences of those experiencing hunger and food insecurity who utilize food bank services. The Mid-Ohio Foodbank transfers this information into actions advocating for policy change while simultaneously building strategic partnerships to address poverty.

In the fifth level of the adapted social-ecological framework are food banks. This level represents the encompassing of social justice, amelioration, charity, as well as hunger and food insecurity. Food banks determine how hunger and food insecurity are addressed for their clientele, whether that be through charity, amelioration, or social justice. The sixth level of policy encompasses all concepts and is the enabling environment that contributes to the ways in which food banks are able to address the problems of hunger and food insecurity. The policy level primarily refers to public policy at the state or federal government levels. Policy that has eroded social safety net programs has had a profound influence on the reliance of food banks to meet food needs and can help reduce the pressures food banks face to meet client needs if reversed.

Hunger and food insecurity are not isolated problems but are instead symptomatic of larger social issues such as unemployment and poverty (Feeding America, n.d.) in which multiple approaches are needed to reduce the numbers of hungry and food insecure peoples. The

social-ecological model shows the environment that hunger and food insecurity occupies in regards to food banking. It shows the conceptual ways in which food banks address hunger and food insecurity and the interactions that can occur between all levels. To “solve hunger” as a number of food banks put it, means to develop strategies that direct policy to more effectively address the issues associated with poverty and unemployment and for food banks to critically analyze their position regarding how they address hunger and food insecurity.

Contribution

Food banks play an integral role in the immediate relief of hunger and food insecurity yet they do not generally approach the causes of these issues due to their foundations in the charitable giving of salvaged and donated food. This research contributes to the understanding of hunger and food insecurity through the analysis of how food banks are approaching the utilization of social justice measures to combat the important issues of hunger and food insecurity. The purpose was to develop a framework that could illuminate the ways in which food banks could integrate measures into their already existing operations. The measures developed stem from the analysis of food banks already attempting to address the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity and are rearticulated to describe how food banks may improve efforts to foster social justice. A charity to social justice spectrum was developed and has the potential to be used as a tool of measurement to locate where a particular food bank is situated. The research conducted is complementary to existing research that critically analyzes the allure of charity and the downfalls of the food banking approach to address hunger and food insecurity. Contributions to the understanding of food banks and how they are addressing hunger and food insecurity is depicted through the analysis of their orientations to social justice. Further contributions are presented in the finding that occupational training programs must train clients

for jobs that are not poverty level jobs in order to address root causes of hunger and food insecurity.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Given their centrality to the issues of hunger and food insecurity, food banks are uniquely positioned to address these issues. This research has attempted to depict the ways in which food banks approach and can approach hunger and food insecurity through the analysis of mission statements and programs. Food banks are dynamic organizations that differ from one food bank to another. The analysis of food bank mission statements and select programs from the 12 food banks oriented towards justice produced a spectrum ranging from charity to justice. All food banks fall somewhere along this spectrum and is complementary to the social-ecological model of food banking as way to gauge the efforts of food banks in relation to social justice.

Since their inception, food banks have become increasingly relied upon to address hunger and food insecurity in the wake of weakened social safety net programs that reduce resources for those in need. This is problematic given the growing numbers of individuals seeking emergency food assistance as well as those utilizing food banks as long-term food provisioning strategies. Policy changes diminishing the social safety net along with the loss of living wage jobs resulting from the Great Recession have led to the increased use of food banks. These processes have institutionalized food banks as primary organizations working to address hunger and food insecurity. Food banks were initially constituted as organizations to address short-term, individual hunger and food insecurity problems; they continue this mission in the face of increased need. However, measures are needed to address the underlying causes of hunger and

food insecurity as whole systems solutions that require intervention at all levels. The interventions required are not the sole responsibility of food banks, of course, but given their involvement in the issues of hunger and food insecurity they are positioned to advocate for change if they are willing and able to do so.

Analysis of food bank mission statements and programs in this research points to food banks as organizations empowered to improve efforts addressing hunger and food insecurity. Of the 254 food banks initially discovered, 196 had identifiable mission statements. Of the 196 food bank mission statements, 59 showed an orientation towards addressing the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity, and 12 exhibited a strong association towards social justice.

Programs from the 12 food banks were examined to discover the types of programs employed by food banks having strong orientations towards social justice. It was found that programs offering occupational training are social justice oriented in concept, but lack the necessary occupational specialties that would be likely to combat poverty and low wages. Nutrition education programs are justice oriented on the basis that they are addressing health disparities among the hungry and food insecure, which are all symptoms of poverty. Programs most closely aligned with social justice were found to be those that addressed both long and short-term needs of clients through unique combinations of advocacy, short and long-term solutions that encompass multiple aspects of poverty. These programs were categorized as transformative and approached the problems of hunger and food insecurity as a whole systems problem. All other programs were found to be congruent with the common model of food banking which is the distribution of salvaged and donated food goods to those in need. These programs do not fit the definition of social justice defined for the purposes of this research as they do not address the root causes of hunger; however, these programs offer immediate relief to those experiencing hunger and food insecurity

and are very much needed as long as food insecurity exists. Through the analysis of food bank mission statements and programs a social-ecological model was used to show the environment in which food banks exist and to help understand the influence food banks have on the problems of hunger and food insecurity.

Looking Forward

There is no doubt that food banks operate within their resources and believe that what they are doing is of great good, because it is. There are individuals and families from all corners and walks of life that are very much in need of the services food banks offer. Many circumstances propel the need for people to utilize food bank services that range from individual to larger systemic influences. While food banks are addressing a real need that has tangible results such as providing food where there is none and rallying efforts to address problems, they are also much more. Food banks are important contributors in the fight against hunger and food insecurity; aligning with social justice principles and efforts will serve to benefit both the food bank and the clients who utilize their services.

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