

BANKING FOR THE FUTURE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY ON THE LOCAL
FOOD BANK, ITS ROLE ON FOOD JUSTICE, AND PATRON PERCEPTION

By

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ABSTRACT

BANKING FOR THE FUTURE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY ON THE LOCAL FOOD BANK, ITS ROLE ON FOOD JUSTICE, AND PATRON PERCEPTION

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Food banks are antithetical to the food justice movement because they usually rely on government commodity surplus to alleviate need and promote notions of dependence through the charity model. This research examines Food for People, the only food bank in Humboldt County, within the context of local food security and patron perception using ethnographic observation, surveys, literature review, and interviews to generate data that would allow the food bank to fulfill its mission of ending hunger. Through ethnographic approaches, this thesis focuses on food security, what affects perception and actual food security in the context of food justice and food sovereignty, and the power dynamics discovered in the food bank. Questions to the study include: Does the food bank empower its patrons and does it fit under the food justice model? What are patrons' perception of their food security, and what are their attitudes and beliefs of their shopping locations? This ethnography critically examines the food banking system and attempts to place Food for People within the spectrum of food justice/sovereignty and dependence. To contribute to the food bank's mission of ending hunger, this research suggests the organization could create an environment more conducive to self-empowerment by an integration of horizontal power structures, and

addressing patron needs that affect food security beyond the immediate distribution of food.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my loving, hard-working parents whose blood, sweat, and tears instilled in me compassion, hard-work, and a strong moral compass.

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The moral support I received from my family and friends was immeasurable and greatly appreciated. I am especially thankful to my partner Ileana Naranjo for her love and support. Thank you.

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Finally, I want to thank the good-hearted people at Food for People for opening their doors and providing a welcoming and cooperative environment during my internship and research activities.

Food pantries, food banks, and other food services across the nation help mitigate hunger to families in need of food and other services. The personal impact that these organizations and the individual members of their respective community that contribute through a myriad of functions have onto others is immeasurable.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Food is a vital aspect of one's life and is something that directly contributes to our health. If a person regularly consumes food that is not healthy for them, then that person will have a greater chance of health problems than someone who eats a diet better suited for them (Gordon et al., 2011). Some people are limited to sub-optimal food options because of barriers that prevent them from accessing foods ideal for their health (Allcott, 2018; Coveney, 2009). A lack of affordable healthy food options can be attributed to not having locations where healthy food can be accessed, food being out of the budget, or not having transportation to access it (Allcott, 2018; Coveney, 2009; Walker, 2010).

In this thesis, I will build on USDA definition of food deserts and add: areas where access to affordable fresh food is hindered by a myriad of factors including, but not limited to, transportation, locations, prices, and perception (Allcott, 2018; USDA, 2009). Accessibility, in this thesis, is defined as having the quality and perception of being easy to use or obtain (Layton, 2015). To this definition, I add distance, affordability, and amount of locations because these factors affect the usage of goods and services. Often, food deserts are associated with a low degree of access to sites offering affordable fresh food and a high degree of access to locations that offer snacks or fast food (Sbicca, 2012). Living in an area classified as a food desert does not impact the quality of food options, rather it is the accessibility in these locations which limits individuals' food choices (Larsen, 2009).

Food pantries, food banks, and other free food services across the nation help mitigate hunger to families in need of food and other services (Bazerghi, 2016). The personal impact that these organizations and the individual members of their respective community that contribute through myriad functions have onto others is immeasurable.

Families and individuals across the United States that meet the United States Department of Agriculture, USDA, income guidelines can receive food from the various organizations that provide free to low-cost food (see Appendix E). The belief that people who receive this form of assistance are lazy exists in the community, from observations and verbal interactions, and this thesis will address some of the perceptions associated with receiving aid in the discussion section.

A food bank is a holding space for food that will be distributed to local organizations for distribution. A food bank can provide organizational, financial, and structural support to partnering institutions (Bazerghi, 2016). A pantry, by contrast, distributes the food received from food banks directly to their patrons and usually works under an umbrella organization to fulfill organizational or patron needs (Bazerghi, 2016). I use the term ‘patron’ as opposed to ‘client’ because it infers agency: to act independently and make free choices.

I find it necessary to share some background information on Humboldt County and the city which hosts Food for People to have a better understanding of the context behind some of the responses, inferences, and information shared throughout the thesis. I will briefly share some relevant information about the geographical location which will be used during our critical discussion of Food for People.

Humboldt County

Food for People is situated in Humboldt County, California, a rural county with a few small town-like cities (see Figure 1). The county is home to redwood trees, state parks, beaches, rivers, and very rugged terrain that at times poses transportation barriers. Humboldt County has one main highway, Highway 101, that connects it to San Francisco approximately 271 miles south per Google Maps. Interstate 5 lies west of Humboldt County), but can take three to four hours to connect depending on the highway chosen and road conditions.

Many towns in Humboldt County are limited to one store which can have higher prices and lower quality than stores in the central city. Humboldt County has small towns that lack access to affordable fresh food because of lack of available stores, pricing, or distance. Rural places like Willow Creek and Hoopa only have convenience stores that have lower-quality food and are considered expensive. The lack of places to shop for affordable and healthy food can have devastating health effects on those communities. For example, during the duration of my research, Hoopa had one grocery store that people considered expensive, but provided its residents access to food until the company closed it (see Figure 1). The residents there then had to travel down to Eureka to acquire affordable fresh food. Many people I spoke with from those towns, during trips in the mobile produce pantry and at Food for People, would narrate the message that it was a wiser choice to come to the main city and buy at the larger stores or bulk stores than stop by the other neighboring towns and pay higher prices for lower quality products.

Traveling throughout the county as part of the mobile produce pantry staff, I witnessed a similar phenomenon existing in many of the most rural towns in the county.

Accessibility and transportation are important factors in the acquisition of goods and services in rural communities because access to services are spread across longer distances (DHHS, 2015; USDA, 2009). Distances in Humboldt County can take longer time to traverse because of the landscape and the way roads are designed to be as safe as possible. Along with these variables, road conditions and weather also create a barrier in overall access to goods and services.

Per the U.S Census, the county has a population size estimated to be 136,646 with 74.7% of the residents being White, 11.3% Latino, 6.4% Native American, 5.5% Multi-Racial, 2.9% Asian, and 1.4% Black (US Census Bureau, 2016). The county's population per square mile stands at 37.7 throughout its 3,567.99 square miles of land (US Census Bureau, 2010). Compared the Los Angeles County, CA, that has a population density of 2419.6 per square miles and a land area of 4057.88 square miles (US Census Bureau, 2010), we can see that Humboldt County is almost as large in size with a fraction of the population. Most of the population is concentrated in Eureka, Arcata, McKinleyville, and Fortuna (See Figure 2) (US Census Bureau, 2016). The county has a household median income of \$42,685 (US Census Bureau, 2016), and faces higher levels of poverty and crime rates, per capita, compared to the state average and national averages (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017). Humboldt County's poverty rate is 20%, compared to the state's 14.5%, and the national average of 13.9% (US Census Bureau, 2016). This percentage indicates that one in five people face poverty in Humboldt County. These

numbers come from the Official Poverty Measure which compares the pretax income to a threshold. The poverty rates for the county and state may be higher if using the Supplemental Poverty Measure, which accounts for other factors such as housing costs (Legislative Analyst Office, 2017).

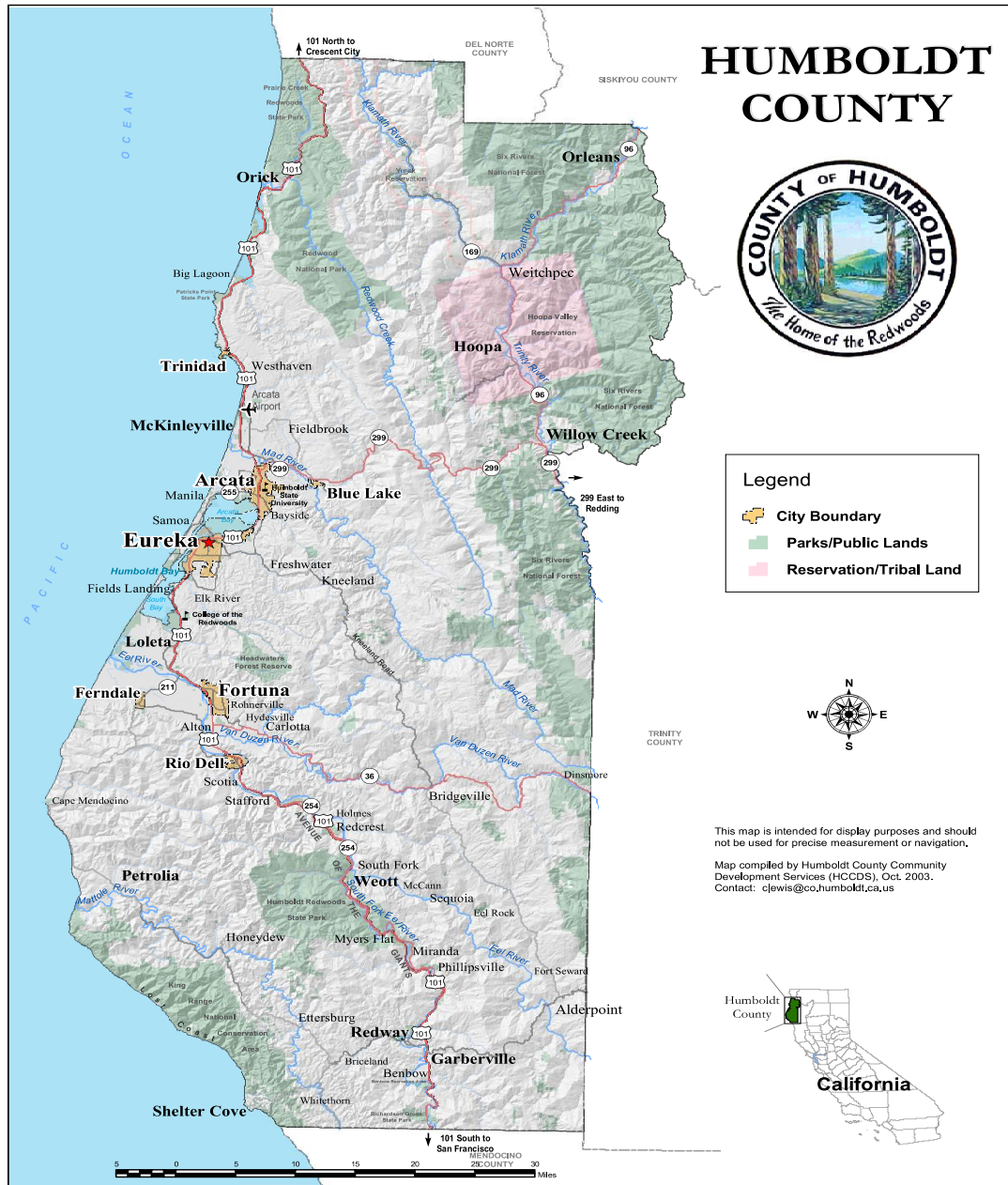


Figure 1, Humboldt County Map

Eureka, CA

Looking at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Living Wage Calculator (Wilcox, 2018), the required annual income before taxes for one adult in Eureka is

\$24,069 and increases with additional household members. Food alone accounts for \$3,564 a year for one person and almost doubles for a household of two (Wilcox, 2018).

The numbers tell us a lot about the economic situation that many people in Eureka may experience, but does not represent actual circumstances such as poverty, homelessness, or job insecurity. These numbers are meant to represent the overall economic health of the population, and shed some light to factors that may influence habits and beliefs on socio-economic issues such as poverty, homelessness, safety-net programs, and food security.

As we will see in future sections, beliefs and perception play an important role to the acquisition of food services provided by Food for People, as well as the reflexive nature between the food bank and their patrons. For example, this phenomenon can be observed with people who hold conservative-leaning opinions and are reluctant to accept services, in this case free food, as they believe themselves to be receiving a “handout.” Peoples’ unwillingness to accept a needed service can greatly impact their food security in areas classified as food deserts.

Food desert assessments done by the USDA indicate that Eureka has two significant areas with low accessibility to supermarkets due to the placement of stores and limited availability of public and private transportation (ATLAS, 2015). The USDA labeled the levels of accessibility as two separate tracts: tract one indicated that people live more than a mile, walking distance, from a store and do not have transportation; and tract two indicated that people lived within ten miles from a store and did not have transportation in an urban setting (ATLAS, 2015). Although most of the residents live

within the city, Eureka has areas that can be classified as rural, like parts of Samoa Boulevard, a roadway that connects the peninsula that houses Manila and Samoa to Arcata (see Figure 1). This is a roadway that requires the crossing of the CA-255 bridge approximately 1.6 miles long. It takes approximately 30 minutes to walk the bridge one way, per Google Maps, making actual accessibility to supermarkets and affordable fresh food a greater impediment to people without reliable access to a vehicle.

Transportation in rural communities is an important factor to accessing services and goods. Although Eureka is the main city in Humboldt County, it has a rural feel due to the landscape and layout of the city. City transportation in Eureka primarily consists of public buses through the Eureka Transit Service (ETS). The ETS operates Monday through Friday from 6:31 am to 7:00 pm, and Saturdays from 10:00 am to 4:59 pm. The ETS does not run on Sundays. The limited hours of operation hinder mobility and access to goods and services. It has four fixed routes with an approximate one-hour interval. In order to fully understand how the limited transportation options affect food access and food security in Eureka, a comprehensive study on transportation is necessary.

The Food Bank

Food for People, is a non-profit organization central to food security as it roughly assists 10% of the county's population through the various programs (Food for People, 2017). Food for People employs 16 staff members and is partially volunteer-run. Volunteers hold many positions and usually work in one capacity e.g. warehouse, intake, shopping assistant. Food for People distributes food from its Eureka choice pantry Tuesday through Friday and offers emergency food bags Monday through Friday. The

pantry patrons are seen by appointment on the week they want to shop in the pantry.

Pantry visits are framed as a shopping trip to create a welcoming environment, but no one is charged for food or service received. Food for People consists of 16 pantries throughout Humboldt County (Figure 3), that are limited by individual capacity: staff, storage, available programs, and budget (Bazerghi, 2016).

Food for People provides food assistance in 14 locations around the county through their mobile produce pantry. The mobile produce pantry consists of a refrigerated truck that drives to remote locations and distributes fruits and vegetables under a foldable tarp (see Figure 3). Each location is visited once per month. A CalFresh outreach staff member usually accompanies the mobile produce pantry, which provides CalFresh services to areas where services may be limited due to various factors. CalFresh is the California equivalent of the federally mandated Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) more commonly known as food stamps, which provides money for food to people that meet income requirements.

Through numerous partnerships and services, Food for People mitigates hunger in areas of the county where there is limited access to affordable fresh food. Food for People offers services catered to senior citizens such as a senior only distribution. Seniors who are age 60 and over who meet income guidelines can qualify for the program. A homebound delivery service for people that cannot leave their home or have special requirements is available for patrons that qualify. Furthermore, programs that are specific for children are offered year-round and may overlap with other services. The food bank has a Backpacks for Kids program that offers food for school-aged children to take home

during the weekends, and a summer lunch program that attempts to mitigate the loss of lunch meals during the summer school break. During the summer, the free produce market also offers fresh produce once a month. These produce markets take place in multiple locations around the county and provides a bit more assistance to people who may be facing hunger.

Food banks have been criticized for not promoting food justice or food sovereignty by being a part of the commodity surplus system (see Vitiello et al. 2015; Werkheiser, 2013); in this thesis, a critical perspective on the roles of Food for People will be used to examine the overall effectiveness of promoting food justice or food sovereignty. However, having witnessed the multitude of ways that Food for People serves their community, this thesis also considers the many ways in which services that are made possible from commodity surplus, or surplus food gleaned from large-scale agriculture, positively impact communities.

Food for People deviates from a classification of a commodities-surplus food bank because it does not solely provide government-funded commodities to people or solely surplus gleaned from big farms. The food bank utilizes its funds to purchase fruits, vegetables, and, sometimes, meat to fulfill patron needs. Community grants like the Locally Delicious Farmers Fund (see Food for People, 2017), provides funding for locally purchased food. The food bank purchases fresh and organic produce throughout the year made possible from partnerships with local farmers that the organization has established.

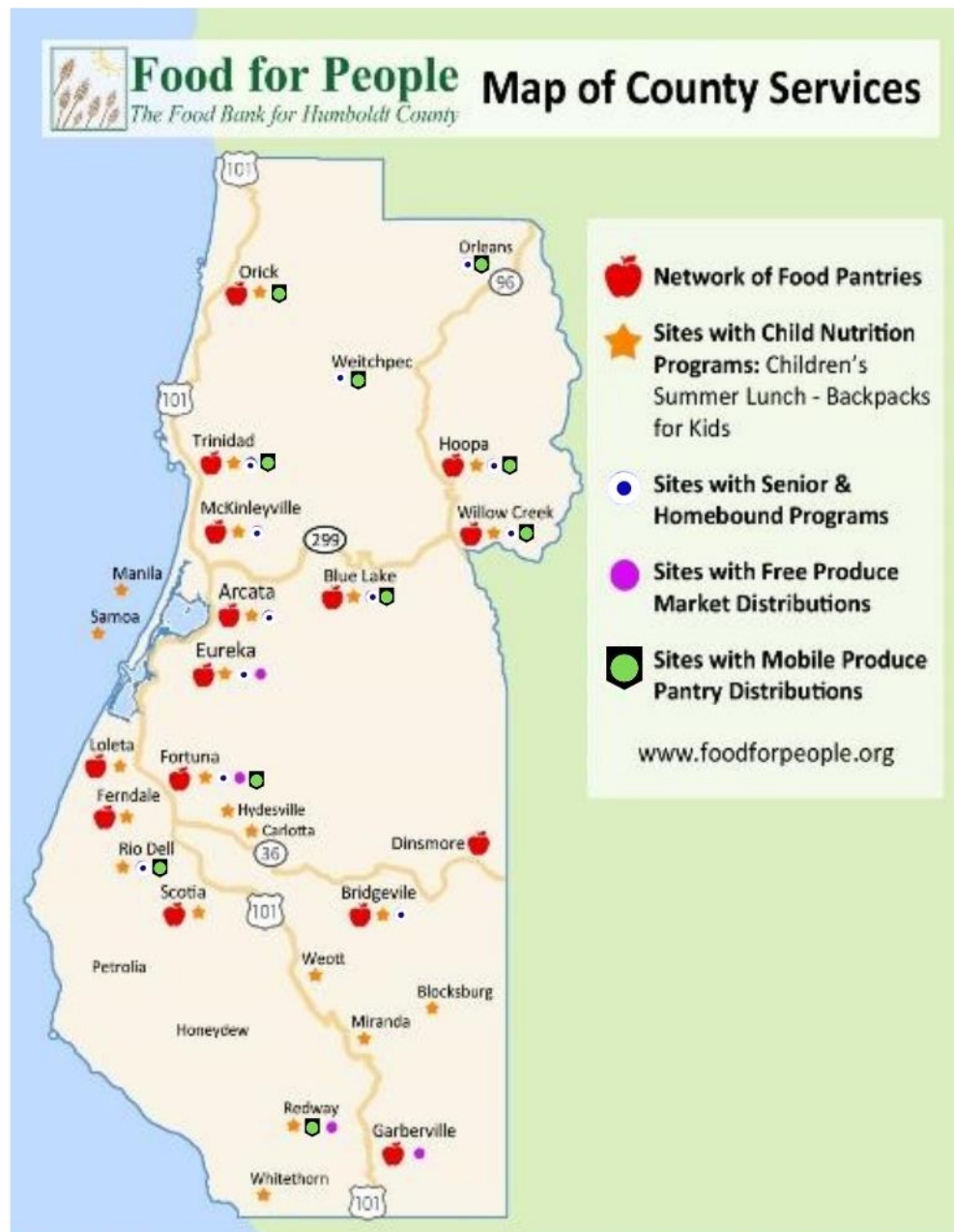


Figure 3, Food for People Service Locations

An important aspect of the food bank lies in the outreach efforts it provides. Their education and outreach coordinator oversees local and federal advocacy efforts by promoting, raising and maintain SSI benefits, CalFresh benefits, as well as policies that

affect the organizations' ability to mitigate hunger and food insecurity. Along with advocacy and outreach efforts, Food for People offers the Hunger 101 workshop that spreads awareness of CalFresh benefits and tries to eliminate the stigma of people that receive these types of benefits. Nutrition programs and cooking recipes are offered to promote healthy eating habits and spread knowledge on how to eat vegetables that many may not be accustomed to eating.

Food for People is a unique organization because it serves as the main distribution center for its network of pantries, and operates as a pantry. Food for People serves about 12,000 people monthly (Food for People, 2017). It is larger than many pantries, but much smaller than the larger warehouse distribution-type food banks like the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank that serves more than 300,000 people monthly (Los Angeles Food Bank, 2018). The size of the food bank affects its overall capacity, grants that it can acquire, and effectiveness.

Research Questions

This thesis assesses the services of the food bank within a social justice framework, explores how Food for People patrons perceive their economic circumstance, and examines the choices they make to mitigate their economic circumstances. The objective of this project is to contribute to the literature on food justice, provide insight to people interested in the food justice movement, and shed light on persistent food equity problems

Through the use of ethnographic observation, surveys, and interviews, this project addresses the following core questions: How does the food bank empower its patrons

under the food justice model? What are patrons' perceptions of their food security, and what are their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors related to food procurement? The following sections will illustrate how this the research sheds light on some of the attitudes and beliefs held by the food banks patrons and the role of the food bank in Humboldt County.

Rational and Importance of Research

My interest in food justice began in 2016 after watching *The Garden* (2009), a documentary about a 14-acre organic community garden located in South-Central Los Angeles that rose out the ashes of the 1992 LA riots. On multiple occasions, my parents and I visited the garden to purchase affordable organic produce and I remembered feeling a sense of community at the garden. In early 2016, I visited the site where the garden used to be and saw that it was an empty dirt lot. Community gardens such as the one that used to exist in that empty lot created greater access to affordable fresh food. My interest in the food justice movement stemmed from realizing the need for affordable fresh food in impoverished areas. In the summer of 2016, I moved to Humboldt County to attend Humboldt State University and study food access. While researching food access, I slowly began to realize that food security was dependent on more than a few community gardens and stores.

The basis of this project lies in finding equitable solutions to accessibility problems, or hindrance to a good or service, in areas classified as food deserts. Initially, I wanted to research the impact of community food gardens on the local communities in Eureka; but, my focus eventually shifted to transportation and finally to perception on

food security. I interned at Food for People, the only food bank in Humboldt County, where patrons shared stories that influenced my final research topic. Stories about “trying to make ends meet” were recurring and piqued my interest. As a person who grew up in poverty and lived in impoverished areas in Los Angeles, CA I recognized the signs of poverty like abandoned lots, high levels of crime, lack of economic opportunity, and a very visible homeless population. Living in Humboldt County, I saw the signs of poverty but noticed that food bank patrons did not associate themselves as being poor. Generally, being labeled as poor connotes negative stereotypes, so it’s not surprising that patrons did not label themselves as poor. As you will see in the discussion, the negative view on people who seek safety-net services may prevent people from seeking assistance. The negative perception of people utilizing safety-net services may prevent them from acquiring food from Food for People. this can lead them to acquire health-related problems because financial barriers limit people’s access to food. It is imperative to change the overall culture in the community by dispelling myths about people who receive safety-net services to create an environment where people are not hindered to food because of stereotypes.

Increasing food banks’ awareness of the impact they have on their communities could help them change their operations to better suite community needs. This research can help strengthen the relationship among food bank patrons and their community to foster an environment of self-sufficiency and empowerment. When discussing these issues, we must consider the effects of food deserts to get the bigger picture so-to-speak on behavior and adaptation.

The United States Department of Agriculture defines food deserts as a

low income tract with at least 500 people, or 33 percent of the population, living more than 1 mile (urban areas) or more than 10 miles (rural areas) from the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store (USDA, ERS, 2017),

but the USDA definition should not be taken as the gold standard because as we will see, other factors contribute to the food desert phenomenon (Allcott et al., 2018). The term ‘food desert’ reveals a distinct reality in which people have limited access to affordable healthy food due to lack of stores, prices, lack of available transportation, distance, and, among other things, one’s perception (Allcott et al., 2018; Vitiello, 2015). Food deserts can have a great impact on the daily life of individuals and can have dire health effects on people in regions limited to unhealthy diets (USDA, 2009; USDA, 2017).

This research, in part, addressed accessibility to the food bank and to other grocery stores through two surveys. The information gathered from this research can help the food bank create a plan to increase the overall accessibility for patrons that have limited transportation options. Further, findings from this project can provide a platform from which to address community planning and policy to create equitable access to affordable fresh food.

This thesis contributes to the overall discussion of food banks and where Food for People fits in the food justice and food sovereignty model. Food justice is a framework that attempts to empower underrepresented communities and give them a sense of agency through various functions such as education and community solutions that mitigate the effects of food deserts. Food sovereignty has a similar theory but focuses more on creating independent sustainable food networks and agricultural systems. This thesis

reveals problems to be aware of when working towards food equity. The research shares patrons' attitudes and beliefs of their investment in the food bank and food stores.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Food Desert/Justice/Sovereignty

The term ‘food desert’ is variously defined, but in this thesis, I use the definition adopted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA),

A low income tract with at least 500 people, or 33 percent of the population, living more than 1 mile (urban areas) or more than 10 miles (rural areas) from the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store (USDA, 2017)

and add an earlier definition from the USDA: “an area in the United States with limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly such an area composed of predominantly lower income neighborhoods and communities” (USDA, ERS, 2009). The definition of food desert is much broader than what the USDA defines it as. Communities living in areas classified as food deserts have a higher risk of acquiring health-related issues because of the lack of healthy and affordable food options (USDA, 2009; Clendenning, 2015; Gordon et al. 2011; Sbicca, 2012; Walker, 2010). Food desert areas have higher food prices which impacts the amount of food a person may be able to acquire (Larsen et al. 2009; USDA, 2009). Prices, location, transportation, and education all affect access to affordable fresh food (Allcott, 2018; Coveney, 2009).

Food deserts are often associated with areas where the poverty level is higher than the rest of the city or town (Gordon et al., 2011; Gottlieb, 2010; Walker et al., 2010). These areas have become food deserts for a variety of reasons including segregation, redlining, racism, withdrawal of economic opportunity, and development (Glasmeier, 2003; Sloan et al., 2006; Walker et al., 2010). Food desert areas are a result of years of community neglect and a misdistribution of community resources (Allcott et al., 2018).

On average, people living in food deserts are more economically impacted by food prices than people who are considered food secure (Jetter, 2010; Larsen et al., 2009; Walker et al., 2010).

The article, “Food Justice or Food Sovereignty? Understanding the Rise of Urban Food Movements in the USA”, by Jessica Clendenning et al. (2015), discusses the growing concern of poor communities living in food deserts and the impacts of commodifying food. She states that food prices are effected by the global market pressures (Clendenning et al., 2015). Global market pressures can have a negative impact on food production and food prices, as seen in the United States’ financial crises of 2007-08 when food prices rose significantly (Clendenning et al., 2015; Zezza, 2010). During times of economic strife, people lose access to affordable healthy food because the rise of food prices ultimately makes food unaffordable limiting caloric and micronutrient intake (Clendenning, 2015; Zezza, 2010).

Another aspect of the commodity surplus model, our current large-scale agriculture, deals with injustice. Many of the farm workers are treated with unfair labor practices and wages (Getz, 2015,121; Gottlieb, 2010; Singer, 2006). 90% of commodity surplus is grown by 12% of farmers (Getz, 2015), which produces a power imbalance between consumers and producers. Even among farmers, 90% live in poverty (Getz, 2015), which begs the question: is local farming an ethical alternative to the surplus model (Getz, 2015; Singer and Mason, 2006)? The commodity surplus model creates unjust practices, but it may be possible to change working conditions through local movements (Chavez, 2013; Singer, 2006; Singer and Mason, 2006). The idea behind

local agriculture lies in ethics and ethical practices. That said, local initiatives such as community vegetable gardens, or partnerships with small farms may be a starting point to promoting localized alternatives and overall justice in agriculture by asserting ethical modes of production as a dominant force (Banai, 2015; Singer, 2006; Sapontzis, 2004).

The prices in food deserts are driven by competition and demand (Jetter, 2010; Larsen, 2009). Introduction of new sources of affordable fresh food may have positive impacts on fresh food prices (Larsen, 2009). In one study, the introduction of farmers' markets lowered the price of goods in food desert stores by about 12% (Larsen, 2009, 1160). The price drop reflected the average prices outside of food deserts (Larsen, 2009).

Food Justice and food sovereignty arise out of the alternative food movement, which deals with the idea of social justice (Clennddenning, 2015; Hartman, 2013; Reynolds, 2014; Pothukuchi, 2015). Food justice mainly deals with promoting equity and the unequal distribution of assets between People of Color and White People (Allcott, 2018; Coveney, 2009; Pothukuchi, 2015; Sbicca, 2012). On the other hand, food sovereignty deals with food independence from commodity surplus – or large-scale agriculture – for various ethical reasons (Robertson, 2015; Shannon, 2014).

The food justice movement deals with the inequality in food and services due to racial bias and socioeconomic factors (Loo, 2014; Passidomo, 2014). It attempts to create equity by empowering the community to grow their food and educate on the effects of poor dietary habits (Allcott, 2018). The lack of healthy food consumption corresponds to poor health and diseases like diabetes (Gordon, 2011; Walker, 2010). The link between disease and the lack of healthy food is apparent (Sbicca, 2012). Ensuring access to

affordable fresh food can have a positive influence on members of marginalized communities (Sbicca, 2012).

Systemic oppression is a powerful factor that contributes to the lack of accessibility to affordable healthy food in disadvantaged communities (Cassady, 2015; Gordon, 2011, Sbicca, 2012). In Oakland, California the city is divided by the west and the east part. One part has greater access to affordable fresh food than the other. The West part of Oakland has limited access to affordable fresh food and higher rates of diet-related health problems (Allcott, 2018; Minkler, 2010; Sbicca, 2012). The city historically has a division because of race, which has left African-Americans and other People of Color disadvantaged. The term ‘food apartheid’ is mentioned to depict the perception and availability of affordable fresh food that one area has over the other (Sbicca, 2012).

One approach that communities in disenfranchised Oakland have taken is that of food-banking (Sbicca, 2012). Usually, food banks are not good promoters of *food justice* because they perpetuate concepts of dependence and models of charity (Vitiello, 2015). However, the local food banks in these communities have incorporated the needs of their local stakeholders to promote justice by teaching their patrons how to grow their own food and empowering them to make healthy food choices through education (Allcott, 2018; Sbicca, 2012).

Charity is usually associated with helping others out of good will, but the model that this altruistic action creates, perpetuates negative perceptions on the people served (Vitiello, 2015). The charity model enforces beliefs that certain social classes are

dependent on the government—or other people—because the values of the higher social classes—usually the volunteers and donors—fall within the parameters of the Protestant Work Ethic (Hofstadter, 1992; Hoynes, 2006; Hudson, 2005; Jo, 2012; Kluegal, 1987). The protestant work ethic states that a person’s position in society reflects the level of contribution or effort (Furnham, 1990; Hudson, 2005). However, the Protestant Work Ethic does not take into consideration the number of factors that contribute to inequality and social standing (USDA, 2009; Walker, 2010; Werkheiser, 2013).

A USDA report to Congress titled “Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and Their Consequences” (2009) reported that:

urban core areas with limited food access are characterized by the higher levels of racial segregation and greater income inequality. In Small-town and rural areas with limited food access, the lack of transportation infrastructure is the most defining characteristic.

This USDA report mirrors findings from other studies so it can be expected that locations with similar characteristics to those found in the study will have similar results (Chavez, 2015; USDA, 2009).

The food justice movement strives and works to empower individuals in disenfranchised communities through the topic of food (Vitiello, 2015, Werkheiser, 2013). Food is an essential aspect of having a healthy life, and promoting greater access to affordable fresh food can aid in having a healthier varied diet (Gordon, 2011; Walker 2010; Zezza, 2010). Many disenfranchised individuals live in areas where fast food and corner stores disproportionally outnumber affordable fresh food options (Sbicca, 2012; USDA, 2009). Finding solutions to overcome the lack of affordable fresh food is an

essential part to promoting social justice. The main problem in acquiring affordable fresh food lies in the access to transportation methods (Coveney, 2009). Living in a food desert does not necessarily imply having a poor diet, but accessibility does play a role in the acquisition of affordable food (Coveney, 2009).

Accessibility

Accessibility is not synonymous to food justice, but is a significant factor in granting access to affordable fresh food which directly contributes to the movement (Cassady, 2004; Sloane, 2006). Granting greater access to sites that afford individuals a healthier life can mitigate the effects of living in areas classified as food deserts (Byrd, 1999; Cassady, 2004; Cheng, 2015; Sloane, 2006). Many studies indicated that resources are utilized per the degree of accessibility to them, and that a greater degree of accessibility to services correlated to a greater use of those services (Chan, 2014; Cheng, 2015; Coveney, 2009; Mao, 2013; Layton, 2015).

A study done by Dara V. Chan (2014) indicated that mapping the proximity of transportation locations would give a map depicting accessibility. His study revealed that the proximal relation to transportation hubs, like bus stops, from a person's home indicated service usage (Chan, 2014). The study found that if more services were closer to a population, then those services would be used more as compared to services that were farther in distance (Chan, 2014; Werkele, 2004). The study indicated that the same proximal relation existed in the use of public transportation.

Mao gauged accessibility through qualitative analysis using descriptive mapping and questionnaires (Mao, 2013). Descriptive mapping consists of asking questions about

locations accessed and determining the frequency or importance of those locations (Coveney, 2009; Mao, 2013); the results are then mapped in relation to the patrons' location or the location accessed. The study utilized questionnaires to assess the perception of accessibility and discovered that more active individuals did not perceive accessibility as a great problem when distance or obstructions were factors on their way to a transportation hub (Mao, 2013). People who were advanced in age, disabled, as well as those who were less active perceived accessibility as a main concern (Mao, 2013). Those who perceived accessibility as a bigger problem were less likely to utilize a service, indicating that problems in accessibility, both perceived and actual, also affected the use of goods or services (Layton, 2015).

Theoretical Background and Framework

My thesis is based on the framework of social justice, specifically the food justice movement, and utilitarianism through the concept of Jeffersonian usufruct: the enjoyment of the fruits of the land by future generations (Robertson, 2015). This thesis also builds on ethical responsibility to the earth and sentient beings, and horizontalism, a power structure that promotes justice and equity (Hooker, 2005; Reyes and Kaufman, 2011).

The food justice movement attempts to create equitable and sustainable solutions to problems associated with living in a food desert (Dixon, 2014; Levkoe, 2006). The movement is focused on providing equity through education, and the integration of urban farming to create a localized economy that builds community among the residents (Pothukuchi, 2015). The movement aims to provide healthier alternatives to the readily available junk food such as fast food restaurants and snacks found in convenience stores.

Phillip G. Robertson in “A Sustainable Agriculture?” (2015), stresses that the way we practice agriculture creates a multitude of problems, especially to sustainability. He defines sustainability as usufruct, or laying down the foundation for intergenerational equity, which he states is the same notion behind today’s sustainability movement (Robertson, 2015). Robertson points out that as the population grows, the amount of cropland decreases. He poses the question: can intensive agriculture be sustainable (Robertson, 2015; Schuppert, 2016)? Robertson acknowledges that some crops may be sustainable in small-scale agriculture, but may lose the quality of being sustainable in large farming practices (Graham, 2005; Robertson, 2015; Singer, 2006). He mentions that sustainability must be considered as a world phenomenon and not solely at the individual farm level. Soil is key to growing food and, by extension, a healthier life. Sustainable agriculture needs to be approached in a holistic manner because biodiversity is key to promoting a healthier life (Robertson, 2015). Robertson proposes that the impacts of unsustainability result in a lower quality of life affecting both the producers and the consumers (Robertson, 2015; Singer, 2006). Ultimately, usufruct is an ethical approach to growing our food that will generate the most amount of good for the majority of people.

An ethical approach to food consumption and the minimization of suffering is the backbone to this work (Dixon, 2014; Hartman, 2013; Getz, 2015; Park, 2012; Singer, 2006). Laura Hartman in “Seeking Food Justice” (2013), takes an ethical approach to our food choices and utilizes Christian ideals to promote the ethical treatment of people, animals, and the environment. She states that consumer demand causes unjust practices in the food industry (Hartman, 2013; Singer, 2006). She senses a disconnect with the food

we consume and the individuals that produce it, referring to the field workers that are often marginalized, oppressed, and exploited to the point that they cannot afford what they produce (Hartman, 2013; Levkoe, 2006). She claims that it is our moral duty to change the modes of productions to a more ethical one to account for the mistreatment of our planet and the beings that inhabit it (Hartman, 2013; Shuppert, 2016; Singer, 2006; Singer and Mason, 2006). Our current agricultural system is a locus for modern-day slavery which goes against universal human rights and our sense of morality (Gottlieb, 2010; Hartman, 2013). Mark E. Graham, a moral theologian, states that “eating food is a moral and theological activity whereby we define ourselves; construct political, social, and economic institutions; and respond to God” (Graham, 2005). This raises a crucial question that we must ask ourselves: where do we draw the line, and should convenience trump morality?

Hartman (2013) proposes community food movements as key to changing food practices to ethical ones. It seems that the commodity surplus system, and by extension greed, plays an important role in the rapid deterioration of humane treatment and of the environment (Singer and Mason, 2006). We must look inward to find ethical and sustainable solutions to our current agricultural systems and the webs that it underlays to better promote justice.

Peter Singer, an ethical philosopher, argues that the most ethical approach to our current agricultural system and the treatment of sentient beings should arise out of utilitarianism, an ethical model that proposes the greatest good for the greatest number (Singer, 2006). Singer takes it a step further in his philosophy and argues that sentience is

an important quality to gaining an equal say at the table (Singer, 2006). He challenges us to use models that lessen the mistreatment of sentient beings and the environment (Park et al., 2012). He states that we have been disconnected with the reality of things, that we kill to eat, consume what is convenient, and affect our environment by our choices (Park et al., 2012; Singer, 2006; McLain et al., 2014). Singer shares a few examples of the mistreatment of livestock, facts about the animal social networks, and the level of emotional apprehension that these animals possess raising ethical dilemmas about our current agricultural system (Loo, 2014; Singer and Mason, 2006). Singer notes that the language used in production farms is meant to desensitize their personnel so they can perform normal farm operations (Singer and Mason, 2006). Retention rates are poor for many jobs in large agriculture, like turkey semen collector and inseminator, due to inhumane practices (Singer, 2006; Singer and Mason, 2006). One of the problems that Singer points to is that of consumer demand. The demand for cheap meat and dairy create neoliberal agricultural systems which minimize costs to maximize profits at the cost of humane treatment of livestock, environmental degradation, and pollution (Singer and Mason, 2006). Companies speed up production lines to meet consumer demand, but doing so increases the chances for an animal not to be killed instantly, increasing overall suffering (Singer, 2006; Singer and Mason, 2006).

Singer proposes that we give up a bit of convenience for ethicality. He proposes buying organic produce from ethically responsible small-scale agriculture, and buying locally produced products (Singer and Mason, 2006). He acknowledges that this might

not always be possible, but is the only way to steer the large agricultural system to a more ethical path (Loo, 2014; Singer, 2006).

Deric Shannon in “Operationalizing Food Justice and Sustainability” proposes that the ideas of food justice be implemented to promote opposition to inequalities (Shannon, 2014). Food justice and sustainability are concepts that are embedded together and must be addressed to provide ethical results to address social inequality. Shannon proposes to use the feminist theory of intersectionality, to view the overlapping relations of dominance in the food system (Shannon, 2014). The issue of food access must be addressed to resolve economic inequality. A critical approach and intersectionality are needed to find our moral ground.

An important aspect of this thesis is to create a platform for food justice and sovereignty. One aspect within the food justice/sovereignty movements is addressing the power dynamics created by the commodity surplus system, and the cultural reinforcement of vertical power structures. Communities such as the Zapatistas in regions of Chiapas, Mexico have established horizontal models of power (Hooker, 2005; Reyes and Kaufman, 2011). The horizontal power structure in these communities allows for a more democratic rule, promotes empowerment, and self-sufficiency while diminishing corruption and the concentration of power (Hooker, 2005). Zapatismo, in these communities, arose out of government overreach and disregard of indigenous peoples’ needs (Stahler-Sholk et al., 2014). Zapatismo became a phenomenon of its own when those communities declared autonomy after the North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA, was signed in 1994 (Reyes and Kaufman, 2011; Stahler-Sholk et al., 2014). The

model of power that Zapatistas employs creates a sense of empowerment that fosters unity and community (Reyes and Kaufman, 2011). One notion that the Zapatistas live by is that of *Mandar-Obedeciendo*, which roughly translates to govern by obeying (Reyes and Kaufman, 2011). The principle of *Mandar-Obedeciendo* is that all members of the community should maintain ethical rule and obey the laws without the use of loopholes (Reyes and Kaufman, 2011). *Mandar-obedeciendo* is the notion that the people governing must be role models to the rest of the community. Another practice employed is that of revolving power figures and participation. Under this practice, all community members must assume governance when it is their turn, which focuses power on the people and not the governing structure (Reyes and Kaufman, 2011; Stahler-Sholk et al., 2014). Institutions whose purpose is to create equity, promote justice, and empower people, such as Food for People, can learn from this structure of power and incorporate it to their practices to fulfill their obligation of effecting social good.

Comparison to Other Results of Other Studies

Studies done by Food for People, Humboldt County, the California Center for Rural Policy, and St. Joseph hospital, have indicated transportation and housing as being the primary factors to accessing affordable fresh-food (Wilcox, 2015).

The *Humboldt Food Access & Pantry Services Report 2015* (Wilcox, 2015) relayed survey results from surveys taken at 15 food pantries located in Humboldt County during the fall of 2014. The survey asked multiple questions that gauged various aspects of the people utilizing the food pantry's services including demographics, transportation, food security, satisfaction, and services used. The survey participants were

offered two dollars as an incentive. Participation to the survey ranged from 660 to 1175 respondents depending on questions answered.

The 1175 surveyed participants reported that other expenses compete with food purchases. When participants were asked “The months when money is tight, I sometimes have to choose between food and... (check all that apply).” The top four responses were: transportation with 240 responses, rent with 197, phone with 193, and utilities with 189 (Wilcox, 2015). Transportation is an essential aspect for accessing services and often takes financial priority (Coveney, 2009; Wilcox, 2015).

Out of a sample of 696, 56% of participants responded that they had “very low food security.” Overall, 88% of participants indicated that they have marginal, low, and very low food security (Wilcox, 2015). Food security was gauged through ten questions designed to assess the levels. The 12% of participants that reported high food security were determined not to have had food access problems or limitations. The rest of the participants reported problems or limitations to food security (Wilcox, 2015). Overall, the study indicated that about 50% of respondents had limited transportation to desired locations. This study gives insight on the people who utilize the food pantries in Humboldt county and provides context on food security and the factors that affect it (Wilcox, 2015).

The study “Desert in the Springs: Ethnography of a Food Desert,” by Margeaux Alana Chavez (2013), indicated that urban agriculture could increase accessibility to fresh food through community supported agriculture. The study is centered around a mixed-methods, qualitative and quantitative, approach to account for the various aspects

of food insecurity in food deserts. Her study indicated that the populations surveyed lacked diverse diets, often being rich in fat and calories while missing vital micronutrients found in fruits and vegetables (Chavez, 2013).

Chavez states that we must “focus on the historical or political processes underlying food security” to acquire the big picture on food deserts (Chavez, 2013). Looking at all possible factors that contribute to the description of food deserts allows for an in-depth account of perceptions, accessibility, and food security. Chavez’s study did not directly gauge the methods of transportation or the effect it has on people living in food deserts. Through her literature review, she noted that the lack of transportation and its effects on food in similar studies could be linked to her study based on demographics and similar contributing factors (Chavez, 2013). Her study indicated that convenience stores were missing an average of 61% of items surveyed. In contrast, supermarkets were only missing an average of three percent of the items (Chavez, 2013). Chavez shares similar findings done by the Department of Health and Human Services’ *Healthy Stores Healthy Communities Survey* which indicated that only 13% of all convenience stores met the healthy food store standard in Eureka, CA (DHHS, 2015).

METHODS

Research Design or Approach

I used a mixed methods approach, or the incorporation of qualitative and quantitative data, to triangulate findings and mitigate for weaknesses found in individual methods (Creswell, 2003). I used surveys to acquire quantitative data such as demographic information, transportation trends, shopping trends, and beliefs of personal food security. Ethnographic observation was used to collect visual and auditory information in a natural setting. This allowed for the discovery of information that could not have been gathered using surveys while interning at the food bank. I used ethnographic observation to provide context. The use of ethnographic observation allowed me to interpret survey results holistically. Critical analysis of literature and other forms of information from Food for People was undertaken to better understand the food bank's impact in the community. Finally, interviews revealed important information about the food bank and the people that utilize its services.

I used two different surveys to acquire data on accessibility to the food bank, local grocery stores, and attitudes and beliefs about the locations that patrons shop in. The first survey was done as a pilot and gauged patron accessibility to the food bank. The second survey built on the pilot survey to examine transportation issues and other factors that influence food security. In addition, the second survey explored food bank patrons' perceptions of the grocery stores they shopped in, and perception of their food security.

Participants for these surveys were chosen at random during the intake process. Every other patron that checked in at the front desk was asked to participate in the

survey. The survey was administered during one week. I explained the survey to the patrons that were interested and asked for them to read and sign the informed consent form (see Appendix A). If they agreed to participate, patrons were given the survey to complete. Patrons had the option to have me translate, further explain my research, or read the survey to them. People who mostly spoke Spanish and had difficulties reading English, were given the option for me to translate. My goal for the pilot study was to acquire 50 participants or about 20% of the weekly patrons to measure the effectiveness of the survey, and acquire strategies for the main survey. The weekly percentage is taken from the monthly average of 1150 households (Food for People, 2017).

Data Collection and Analysis Methods

I collected data using surveys, interviews using my cell phone to record them, internal literature, and personal notes from observations and informal conversations. Unpublished documents from Food for People were provided when asked.

Surveys

I administered two surveys at Food for People. The first survey was a pilot study and had a small representative sample of 49 households and gauged the level of accessibility patrons had in reaching the pantry (Appendix B). The pilot survey was administered during one week and had a 18% sample of the weekly pantry patrons. Both surveys had a random sample as every other patron was asked to participate during check-in at the front desk. The second survey had a representative sample size of 311 patron households, about 24% of the overall households accessing the pantry for the month (Appendix C). This second survey gathered data on themes relating to preferred

shopping locations, transportation methods, personal perception of the affordability of stores shopped in, the perception of the local stores, and on food security. This thesis will discuss the findings from these two surveys, the information gleaned from ethnographic observation, and various forms of information acquired from Food for People. I collected survey data using a paper format because of the higher return rate, as opposed to other types of surveying, and immediate results. The return rate for surveys was not measured, but I can safely say that almost all participants returned the survey. The households who agreed to participate were handed a clipboard, writing utensil, and the consent and survey form.

The pilot survey had 49 households who participated during the month of May 2017. The survey mainly focused on accessibility of the food bank. It asked questions about modes of transportation to the food bank, the time it took a person to get to the food bank, and if they found it difficult or easy to access the food bank (see Appendix B). The survey had ten questions and dealt with patrons' ability to access the food bank. The first question asked if the patron household had completed the questionnaire before to eliminate duplicates. The second question asked the age of the patron completing the survey. The age ranges were 18-24, 25-39, 40-60, and 60+. The third question asked the participant's gender. This question gave a binary male-female choice, which was later ratified in the main study to include a non-binary choice. Question number four asked about the mode of transportation used to access the food bank. The question included examples to create a better understanding of what I was asking for. The examples included were; walking, biking, by bus, and by car. Question number five asked about the

approximate amount of time the patron took to reach the food bank. Question number six asked what neighborhood the patrons were coming from. I provided examples to guide the participants. The examples provided were; Old Town, Myrtle Town, Fortuna, etc. Question number seven asked about the patrons' usual mode of transportation. Question number eight asked patrons if they found it easy or hard to get to the food bank and to explain their response. Question number nine asked if the patron had transportation available to reach the food bank. Options for this question were: never, sometimes, most of the times, and always. Question number ten, asked if the patron had access to a car that they could drive. The choices for this question were yes or no. The pilot study helped the patrons acclimate to surveying and eased the transition to the main survey. The goal for the main study was 20% (n=223) of the average monthly (n=1115) population.

The larger survey was administered in August of 2017. Households accessed the food bank on a monthly basis and administering the survey in one month avoided duplicate responses. The survey included 10 questions and was analyzed using the online survey program SurveyMonkey. The survey was designed for people to circle from potential answers to expedite responses (see Appendix C), as clients often worried about the amount of time the survey would take. Furthermore, the survey included sections where the participant could write in their answer to allow for individualized responses. Some of the participants included side notes or explanations of their answers.

The first question asked about gender and included male, female, and non-binary. The second question asked patrons to choose an age group. Age groups were chosen to maximize anonymity. The ranges were; 18 to 25, 26 to 34, 35 to 45, 46 to 54, 55 to 64,

and 65 or older. The third question asked where patrons acquired food and included a list of the common stores or services that sold food at the time of the survey. There were 12 choices to choose from with an option to write in a response. The choices included were: WinCo, Eureka Natural Foods, CVS, Farm-share, Safeway, Walgreens, Walmart, Dollar Tree, Target, Grocery Outlet, Kmart, and the North Coast Co-Op. Question number four asked how long the patrons had been shopping at the chosen stores. The options for the question were: six months or less, six months to a year, one to two years, two to three years, and four or more years. This question was included to determine residency.

Question number five asked clients to attribute words or phrases to the stores that they chose to acquire themes from their shopping choices. The options included: affordable, organic, far, convenient, close-by, expensive, variety, small, large, has deals, friendly, fresh, accessible, reflects my values, and quality. The question included space for individualized answers. Question number six asked about the clients' transportation methods when accessing the stores they most frequent. The options were: walk, bike, bus, car/truck, get ride, carpool to store, borrow vehicle, and other. Patrons were indicated on the question to specify the "other" choice in a write-in section. The response options for this question were generated based on the results from the pilot study. Question number seven asked whether the stores that patrons shopped in were easy or hard to access. Question eight asked clients to make a hypothetical choice of one store to shop in and explain their answer. This question did not have options to choose from and was left open-ended for thematic analysis. Question nine asked a series of questions that required participants to answer yes or no. The questions included: when I am hungry I always

have something to eat, there is always food at home, I always eat healthy, I am a healthy person, and I exercise frequently. These questions were meant to determine perceived food security and physical ability. The last question asked clients' opinion on the food prices in Humboldt County. The question was meant to assess perception on overall prices and quality of food.

I analyzed the surveys using a thematic analysis approach, otherwise known as coding, which is the process of arranging the data in a manner that will reveal themes for analysis (Creswell, 2003). This process may reveal main concerns or reasons behind actions or sentiment (Creswell, 2003). Write-in responses were combed for general themes, and later inserted to an Excel spreadsheet for graphing.

Survey Monkey, an online survey service, generated described statistics including graphs, and itemized responses from open ended questions. The questions that had a write-in response were populated in a separate section under the accompanying graphs. The graphs represent the frequency of responses. The write-in responses were broken down by themes, or frames, and then compiled into graphs or word-clouds that represented frequency. Responses from open ended questions were combed for themes and compiled in an Excel spreadsheet. Responses were placed into general themes categories (e.g. affordability, convenience, values, etc.) (see Appendix G). Themes for these questions were graphed.

Interviews

I chose interviews as my final method. Interviews provided the patron's perception of things, and context to the answers from the survey and my observations.

Survey participants were asked if they would like to be interviewed after completing the survey. I interviewed three patrons using a semi-structured form. The interview questions ranged from why they accessed the food bank, to what reasons did they have to shop at the stores that they indicated in the survey (see Appendix E). I only interviewed three patrons because of an unwillingness to go “on record.” Interviews were held at Food for People in one of their rooms designated for patron intake, or in their lobby. The time of interview was determined by the patrons.

Interviews were recorded using my personal cellular phone. I asked the patrons to be interviewed twice. During the first request for interview, and if the patron agreed, I scheduled a date for the actual interview. The second time I asked them to interview was during the agreed scheduled time. Most patrons rescinded their participation at the scheduled date. For those who agreed to participate, I gave them the option to choose a recording preference, either an audio-only interview or a video interview. All the interview participants chose audio-only interviews which were recorded using a recording application on my personal cellular phone. Interviews took place at food for people during times indicated by the patron.

Audio recordings were also broken down into themes and analyzed for main or recurring themes on an Excel spreadsheet. Interviews were not transcribed, but tallies of themes found in the survey were integrated into the Excel spreadsheet. The themes were charted in a bar graph to represent the frequency of each and compare it to survey responses and observations. The main themes found in these recordings were: convenience, and affordability. The interviews were broken down by sections and

dissected by general theme. For example, one interviewee mentioned that the locations where she shops are close by, or on the way to home; so, in this case, I would place the bulk of this part of the interview under convenience because the stores she shops in are not necessarily the most affordable, but make it easy to acquire food. Conversations that dealt with not being able to access the best quality of food, or mentions of knowing the number of items that their budget can buy were placed under affordability.

I acquired substantial data from the phone surveys I did for Food for People. I surveyed approximately 90 food bank patrons (see Appendix G). Food for People provided a patron list for their senior and homebound programs. Every patron on the list was called and those willing to participate remained on the phone. I recorded the information provided during these interviews on an Excel provided on Food for People's computer network. Patrons were asked a series of questions regarding their overall satisfaction of the program and food received. I recorded general themes on open ended questions. Graphs and thematic analysis, for these interviews was done by Food for People staff (see Appendix G).

Participant Observation

A portion of my information was gathered through informal conversations during my interactions with Food for People's patrons, staff, volunteers, and community members. Conversations were not recorded. Conversations occurred during outreach, pantry operations, and in many of their distribution sites.

Ethnographic observation, or the collecting of information through the integration of oneself into the normal routine of the organism using etic and emic lenses (Creswell,

2003), was utilized to acquire data that may have been missed through the surveys.

Ethnographic observation was chosen as a method to incorporate attitudes, beliefs, and narratives about the patrons and the food bank. Using this approach, I participated in the food bank's operations over a year and interacted with the patrons and staff where I gleaned information through informal interviews, conversations, observations, and by phone surveying two of Food for People's programs (see Appendix F).

My ethnographic observations were kept in paper journals. I made tallies of recurring themes in my journal and wrote down things that were memorable to me from certain days, patterns that I noticed, and patrons' opinions about the food bank, poverty, and themselves. Tallies from these observations were not included for thematic analysis, but were used to guide survey questions, interview questions, and acquire context to responses and situations.

Document Analysis

Along with the ethnographic observation approach, I analyzed surveys and training documents available to me through my internship. I used coding techniques to acquire themes in survey responses (Creswell, 2003). Analysis of available literature allowed for the discovery of themes and helped with correlating information from surveys. Much of the literature involving Food for People was gleaned from organizational materials such as reports, surveys, and phone interviews. Surveys were combed for themes and tabulated using the program Excel.

Lastly, I collected public and internal documents from Food for People to glean information on the organization, its overall effectiveness per its mission, and culture.

Available documents gave insight into the language used, the organization's reach in promoting its mission, and provided information that was convenient to access.

Documents and information were gathered from the organization's website, www.foodforpeople.org, from staff members, and from surveys the organization commissioned.

Data Management

Both surveys were collected as paper surveys and later manually imputed into www.surveymonkey.com, an online survey tool, to generate basic graphs and a .pdf file with the results. All the paper surveys and consent forms were stored inside folders in a cabinet in my office. Audio interviews were stored in a memory card in my passcode-protected phone. The audio files are also stored in a cloud service which is password protected. Notes were kept in a notebook and placed with the other paper documents in a cabinet. All files will be stored for three years.

Population and Sample

The survey was conducted from August 1st to the 31st of 2017 at Food for People's main pantry site in Eureka. Every patron household was asked to participate in the survey. The results from this survey account for the people that participated and may not reflect the overall population. 11% of the pantry patrons suffer from homelessness while the majority have a secure form of housing (see Figure 4) (Food for People, 2017).

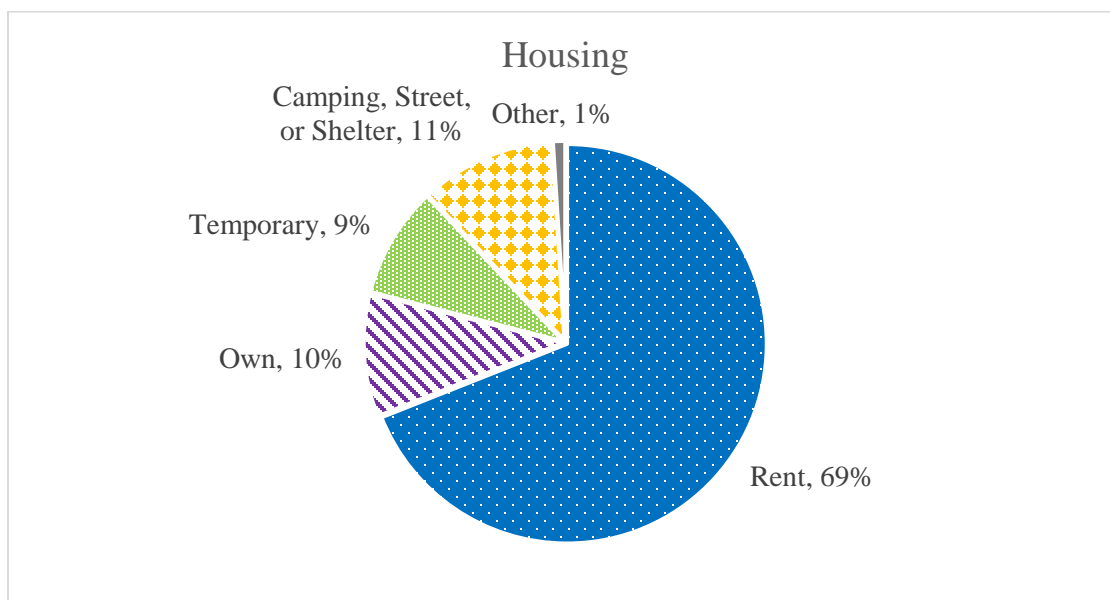


Figure 4, Patron Housing

59% of the Food for People patrons are adults whose age ranges from 18 to 59, 24% are children 17 and under, and 16% are seniors living on fixed Social Security income (Food for People, 2017) (see Figure 5). Household patrons have various needs and factors that contribute to the need for food assistance including, and not limited to, low-wage employment, underemployment, generational poverty, disability, or being a single parent (Food for People, 2017).

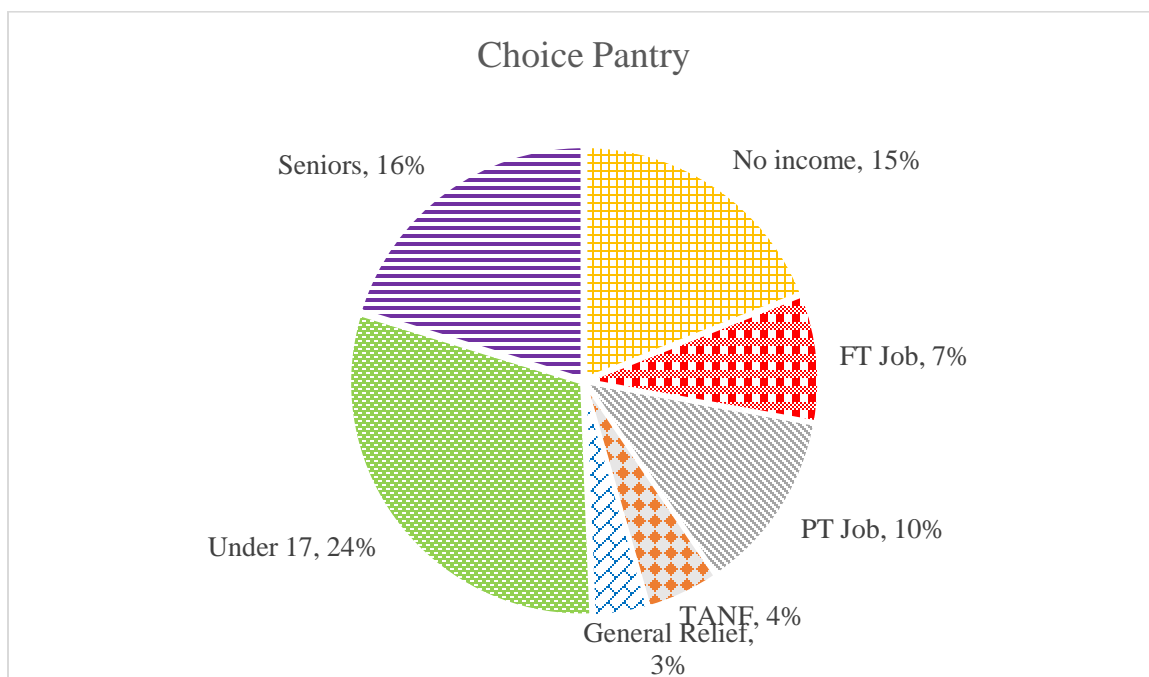


Figure 5, Income Types

The sample population consisted of Food for People patrons. Most patrons were White, middle-aged, and lived in a household of one to four members (see Figure 6). A slight, simple majority of people had transportation that they used to access locations, goods, and services. Most of the people accessing the food bank's pantry live within the Eureka city limits, but many live in nearby towns.

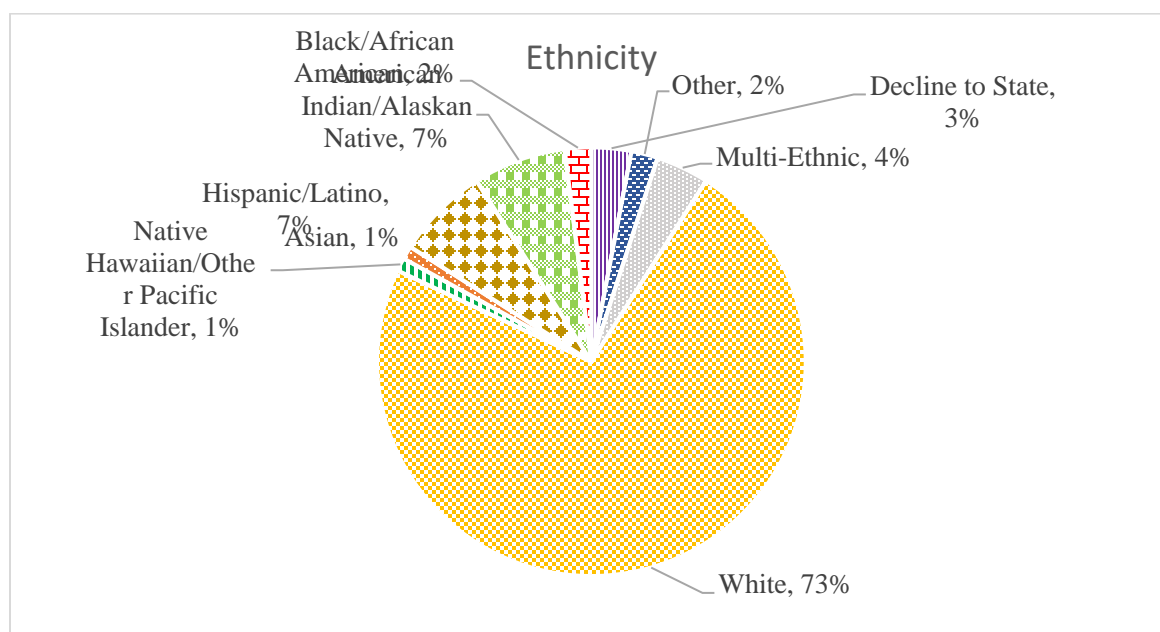


Figure 6, Ethnicity

The pilot survey had 49 participating households and represented the general pantry demographics. A random sample gave patrons equal access to the survey. Every other patron household was asked to participate during a week in April 2017, which helped eliminate duplicate household responses.

The larger survey had 311 participants which amount to 24.4% of the monthly population for August 2017 at the Eureka pantry site. Most participants, about 64%, were female. The majority of the patrons' ages ranged from 26 to 64.

The survey asked various questions that were meant to discover attitudes and perceived attributes towards the stores that clients mostly accessed, and determine perceived food security. The survey only asked for gender and age range to minimize the risk of identifying the participants who could be classified as a vulnerable population. Most of the patrons fell within the federal income guidelines for assistance (Appendix E).

RESULTS AND OBSERVATIONS

The Pilot Study

The first question asked, “Have you completed this survey before?” but no graph was generated for this question because all participants indicated that they had not completed the survey before. The second question, “What is your age?” (see Figure 7) had 48 respondents with one skipping the question. Much of the sample fell within the ages of 25 to 60. 10 (21%) of respondents were age 60 or older, a relatively large sample.

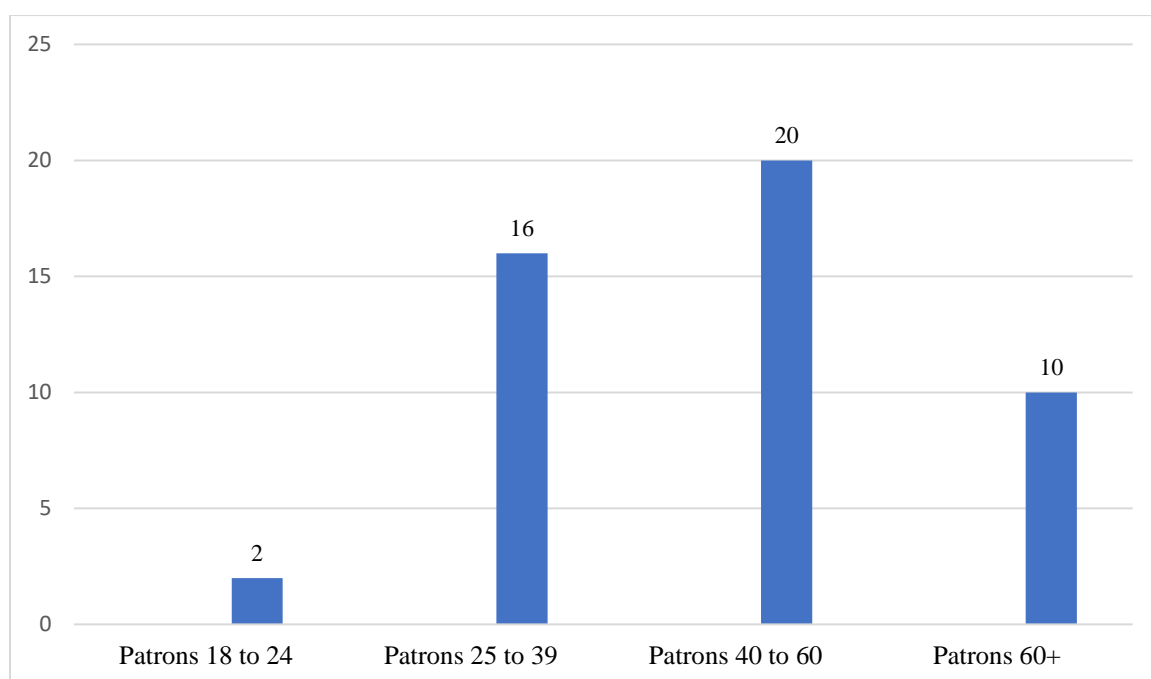


Figure 7, Pilot Study Age

The third question, “What is your gender?” (see Figure 8), had 49 participants. Female was the dominant group with 29 (60%) of responses and males with 20 (40%). Males were hesitant to provide information and accounts for the slight female majority.

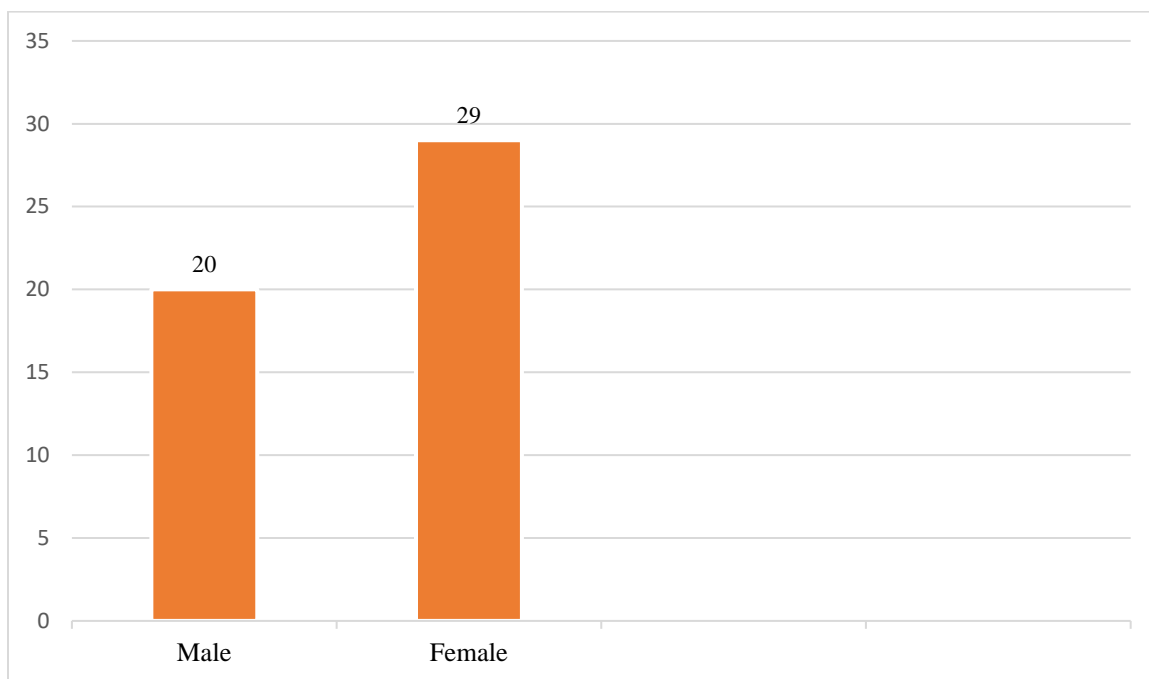


Figure 8, Pilot Study Gender

The fourth question, “How did you get here?” (see Figure 9), had 49 respondents. This question received five popular responses: car, bus, walk, bike, and other. The question asked to specify on “other” responses. 26 participants (53%) responded that they arrived at the food bank using a car. 17 (36%) indicated that they walked, while those who arrived by bus or using a bicycle acquired 1 response each (2%). The 4 (9%) “other” responses were incorporated into the main study, and answers included: carpooling, a combination of walking and bussing, hitchhiking, taxi, and getting a ride from a friend or caretaker.

From personal observation, I noticed that about half of the patrons that accessed the food bank arrived in vehicles, while all others arrived by walking or through a combination of modes of transportation.

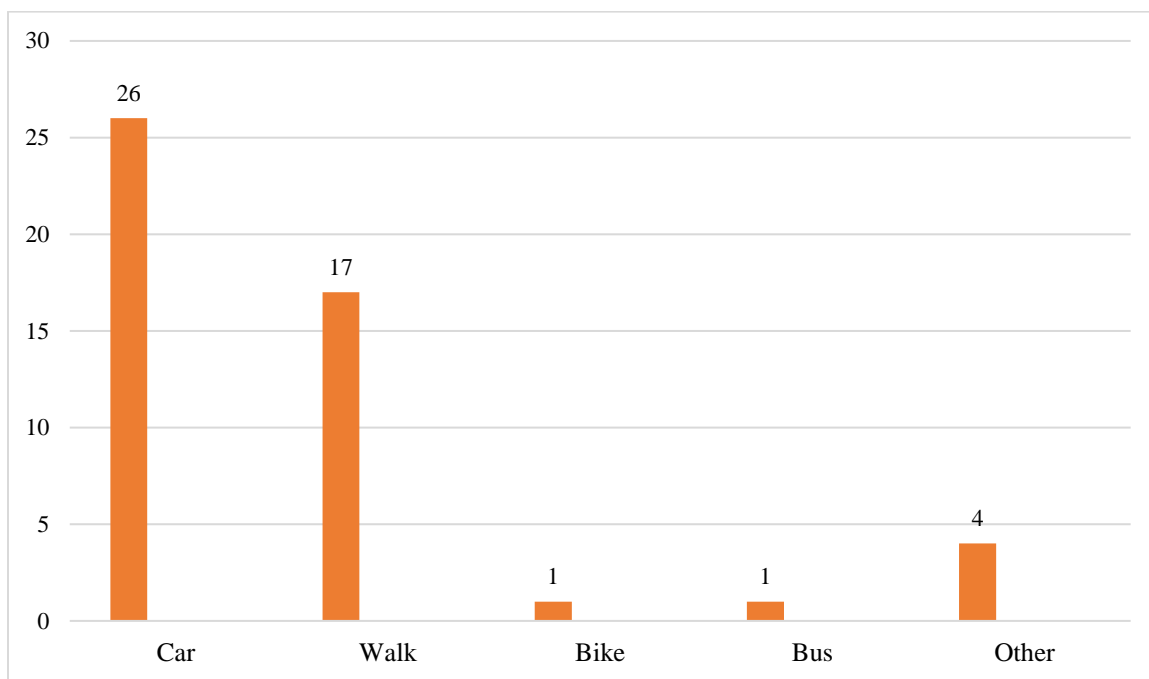


Figure 9, Pilot Study Transportation

The fifth question, “How long did it take you to get here?” (see Figure 10), had 49 participants and acquired several responses that fell within five categories: 10 minutes or less, between 10 to 30 minutes, between 30 to 45 minutes, 1 hour, and 3 hours. A '2 hours' category was included in the graph to show continuity. Most respondents fell within the first two categories. 31 responses (64%) of the sample fell within the 30 minutes or more.

People with access to a vehicle can generally travel from one part of Eureka to another within 10 to 15 minutes. Patrons with vehicles usually arrived a few minutes before their appointment at the food bank. In contrast, patrons that did not arrive in a vehicle usually arrived much earlier than scheduled or were late to their appointments. Patrons who arrived late to their appointment were sometimes rescheduled which meant that they could not acquire food that day.

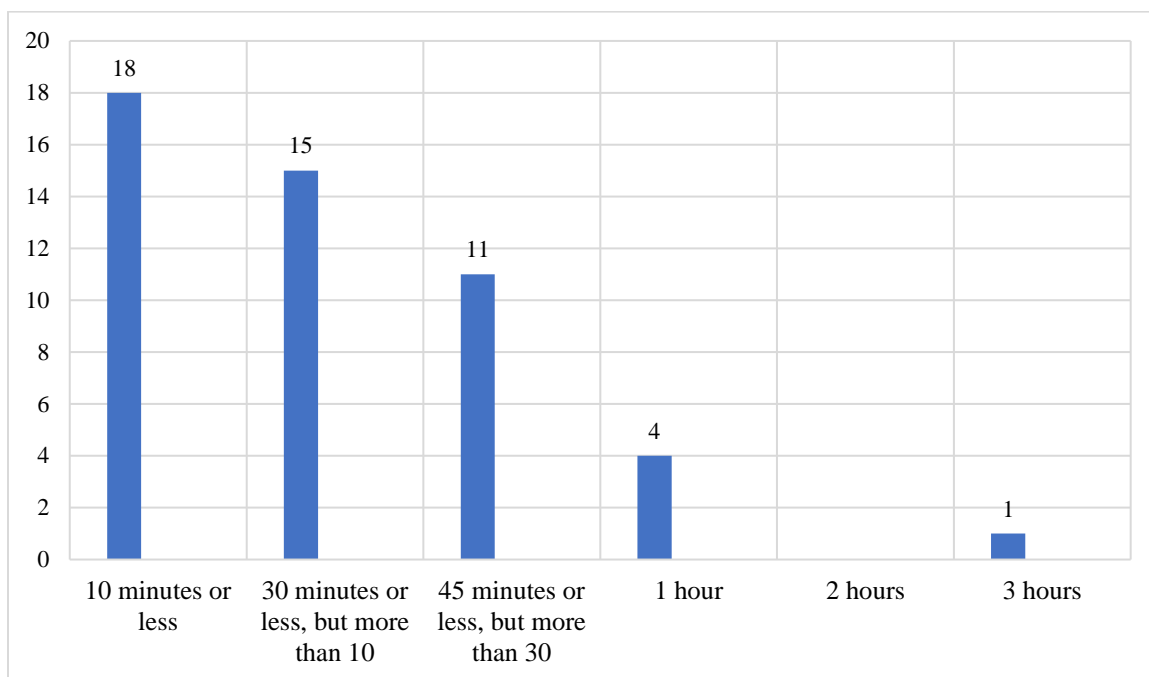


Figure 10, Pilot Study Patron Travel Time

Question number six asked, “What neighborhood, town, or city are you traveling from?” and were asked to specify. The question had 47 responses, two people skipped it and had various responses. The responses are captured in a word cloud to show frequency (see Figure 11). Most respondents indicated that they were traveling from neighborhoods in the city of Eureka and the town of Arcata, California.

Most food bank patrons were locals, but many traveled from rural parts of Humboldt County for their monthly food distribution. Elderly patrons from rural towns indicated that the food provided to them helped them “carry over” or “survive” until the next month, so they did not mind making the journey. Many of these patrons arranged transportation well in advance of their scheduled pantry visit.



Figure 11, Local Neighborhoods Word Cloud

Question number seven asked, “what is your usual transportation method?”, and had 48 respondents with one participant skipping it. This question acquired four categories that were recorded as part of the graph (see Figure 12). The top two responses were “car” which received 21 (44%) and “walk” received 19 responses (40%). The bus and bicycle options had 8 (16%) responses combined.

Results from this question better reflected the distribution of patrons who arrived at the pantry by vehicle and by walking. Patrons who did not arrive by vehicle were limited to the amount of food that they could physically carry—many patrons who participated in this survey related a strong desire for the food bank to provide transportation for them.

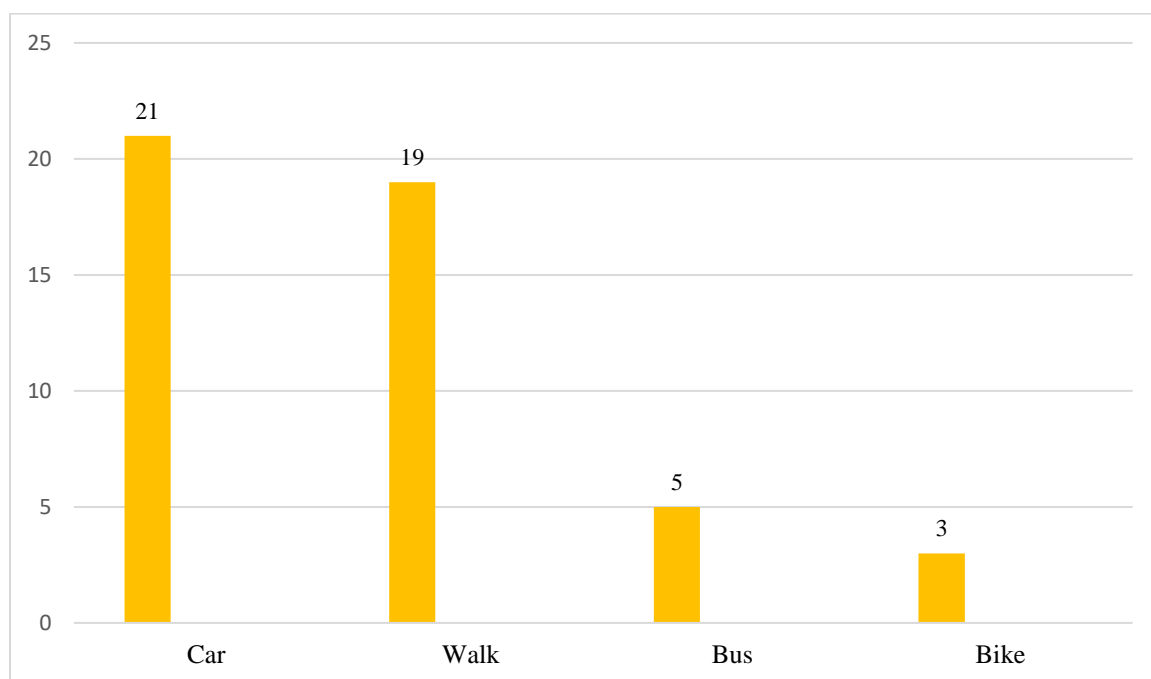


Figure 12, Pilot Study Usual Mode of Transport

Question number eight asked, “Do you find it easy/hard to get here?” acquired 47 respondents while two skipped it. The overwhelming majority of respondents, 39 (83%), indicated that they found it easy to get here (see Figure 13).

Patrons with vehicles found the food bank to be easy to get to. A few elderly patrons I spoke with indicated that it took them several hours for a round-trip from their homes to the pantry, but found it easy to access. Those patrons indicated that they enjoyed the long walk because it provided them with a scenic view of the city, and exercise. However, patrons with health or mobility impairments found it challenging to access the food bank.

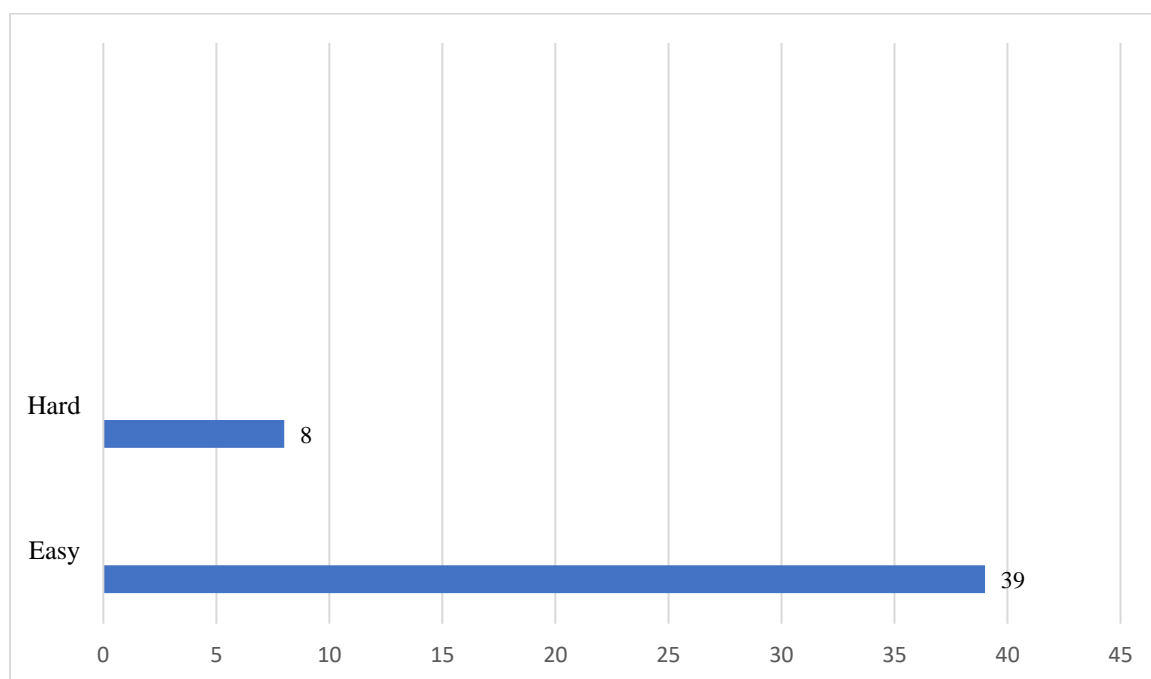


Figure 13, Pilot Study Perceived Accessibility

The ninth question asked participants, “Do you have transportation to reach us (never, sometimes, most of the time, always)?” and had 49 participants with varied responses (see Figure 14). 20 (43%) of participants indicated that they always had transportation and 9 (20%) indicated that they had access to transportation most of the time. The rest of the participants, 20 (about 37%), had limited access to the food bank.

Transportation was a recurring theme that limited access to the food bank. Many patrons relied on friends to give them rides. Some patrons used taxi services that some paid out-of-pocket while others had vouchers. Patrons who did not have transportation would schedule their pantry visit around the times that they could acquire a ride. The patrons who could not reserve an appointment that met their needs would often wait in the lobby from several minutes to hours for a ride.

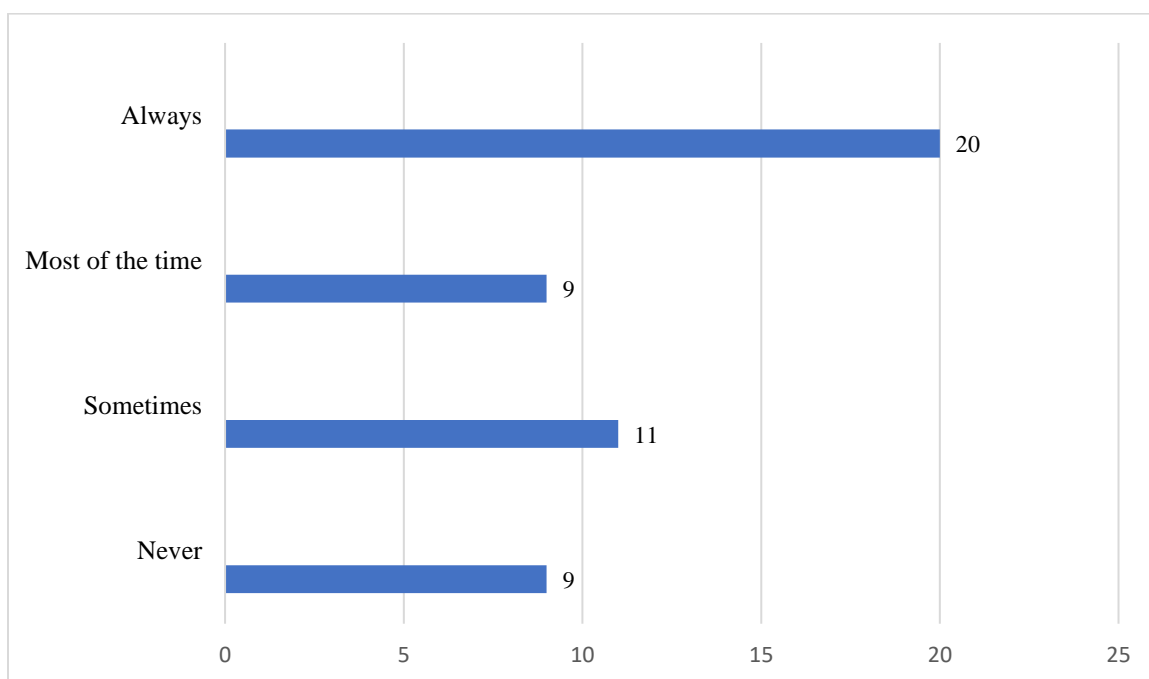


Figure 14, Pilot Study Transportation Availability

The final question, asked, “Do you have access to a car that you can drive?” had 49 responses. The yes-no option had similar distribution with “no” winning by a simple majority of 25 (51%) (see Figure 15). From the results of this question and from observation, about half of the patrons had limited access to the food bank and overall limited access to food.

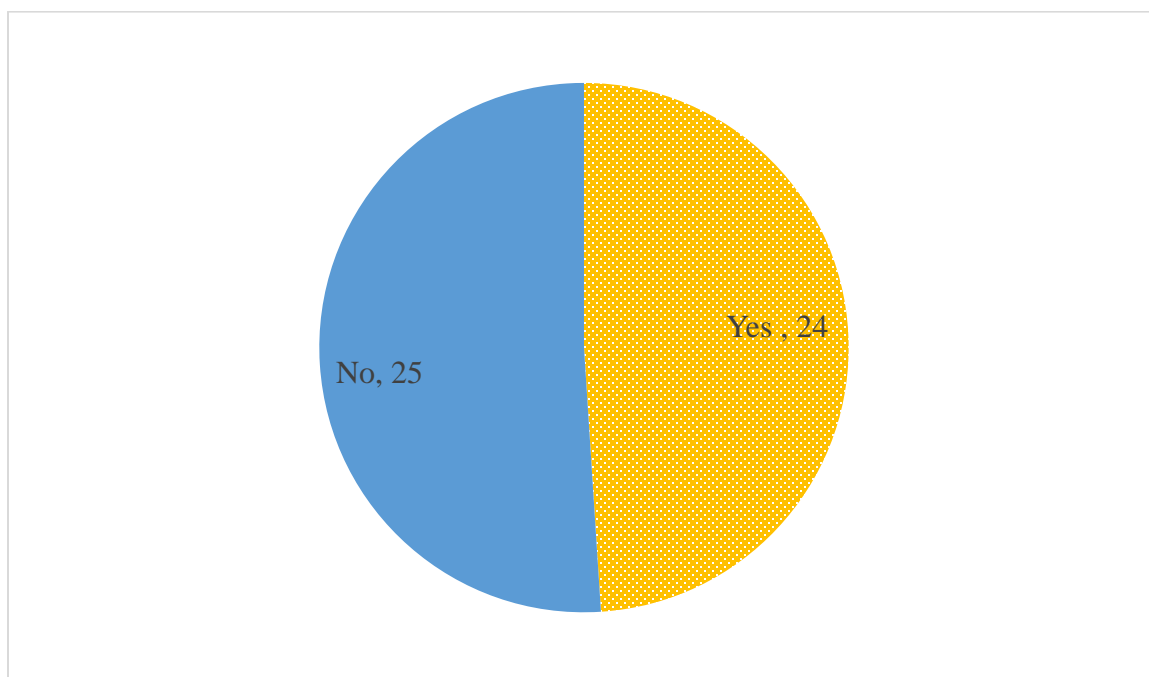


Figure 15, Pilot Study Access to Private Auto

Main Study

Question number one, “What is your gender?” included: Female, Male, and Non-binary (see Figure 16). Out of the 311 participants, only 309 answered the question. 193 or 63.91% were female, 107 or 35.45% were male, and two people or 0.66% identified as non-binary. Like in the pilot survey, male patrons were hesitant to provide information and would decline to sign the informed consent form due to fears of identifying by their signature. Without signing a consent form, patrons could not participate in the survey.

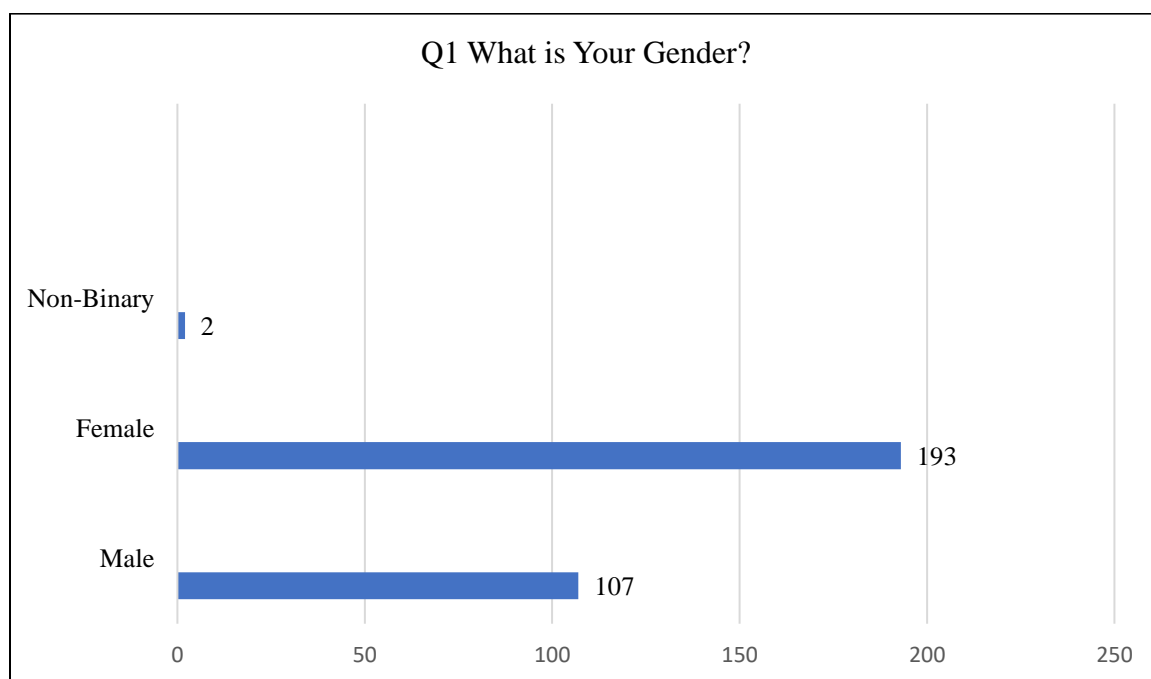


Figure 16, Main Study Gender

Question number two, “What is your age range?” was broken down into six age ranges to minimize the ability for someone to identify the participants (see Figure 17). 306 participants responded to this question, and five skipped it. The first age range included “18 to 25” had 27 (8.82%) responses; “26 to 34” had 44 (14.38%) responses; “35 to 45” had 83 (27.12%) responses; “46 to 54” had 57 (18.63%) responses; “55 to 64” had 57 (18.63%) responses; the final range, “65 or older” had 38 (12.42%) of responses.

Most of the patrons that accessed the pantry were middle-aged. Many of those patrons had children that accompanied them during their pantry trip. Data collected by Food for People indicated that 24% of their pantry patrons are children 17 years and under.

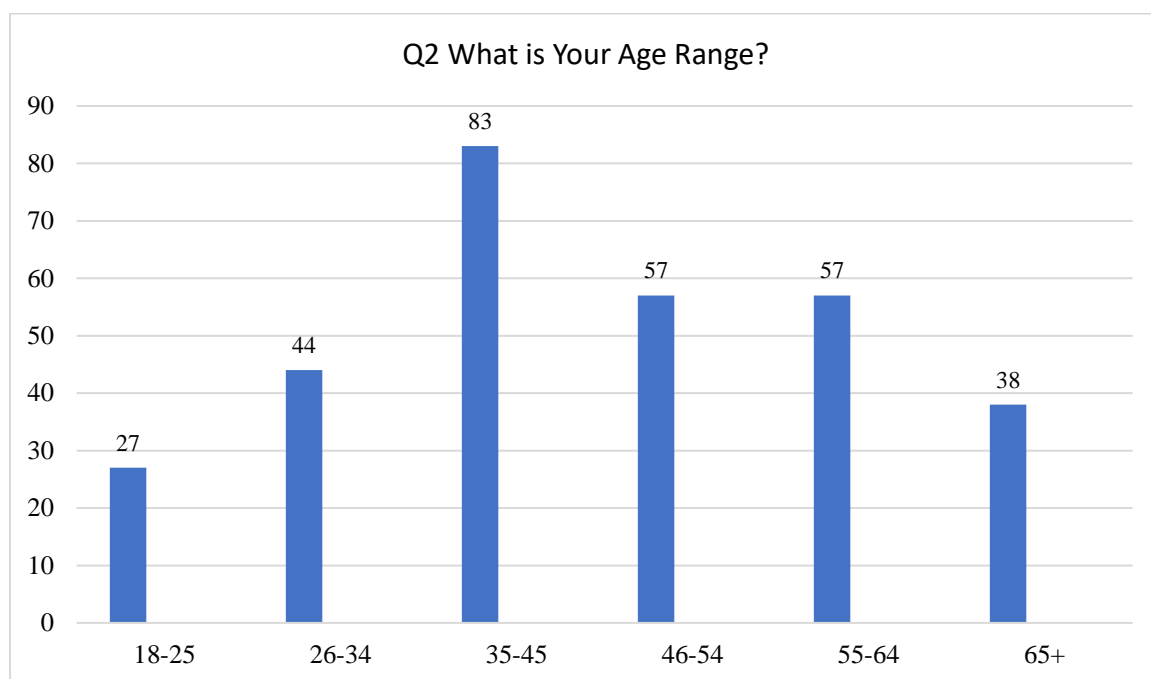


Figure 17, Main Study Age

Question number three, “where do you mostly shop/get your food?” had 299 participants while 12 skipped it (see Figure 18). The question indicated participants to circle applicable answers from a selected list. The options included were: WinCo, Eureka Natural Foods, CVS, Farm-share, Safeway, Walgreens, Walmart, Dollar Tree, Target, Grocery Outlet, Kmart, and the North Coast Co-Op. The top choice was WinCo, with 235 (78.6%), followed by Grocery Outlet at 139 (46.49%), The Dollar Tree with 97 (32.44%), Safeway with 83 (27.76%), Walmart with 72 (24.08%), and Eureka Natural Foods and North Coast Co-Op each had 37 (12.37%) responses. The rest of the options had 15 or less responses. Moreover, the question had an option to write-in a response. Write-in responses are displayed as a word cloud to show frequency (see Figure 19).

The top three stores that most patrons shopped in were some of the most affordable in town. As we will see in the question eight responses, people believe WinCo Foods, a low-price store, to have the best prices, selection, and for-the-price quality. Many people indicated that they “got their money’s worth” or “most bang for their buck” at WinCo. Grocery Outlet, like the name implies, is an outlet store for food. Many patrons indicated that they could only afford to eat healthy because Grocery Outlet provided them with discounted produce. Many stated that although the produce from the store would “rot fast,” they were still “able to eat organic.” Dollar Tree, a store where items cost one dollar, was the third choice selected by patrons. Patrons who shopped here were very conscious about “stretching their dollar.” A few individuals noted on their surveys that they only accessed the Dollar Tree because they knew that ten dollars would get them ten items.

Question number four, “How long have you been shopping at the stores that you circled,” was asked to establish residency and attempt to discern shopping patterns/established behavior. 305 people responded to the question while six skipped it. The options given were; six months or less, six months to a year, one year to two years, two to three years, and four or more years. The majority of the people, 222 (72.79%), responded that they have been shopping at their chosen locations for a period of four years or more. The two to three years had category 28 (9.18%) respondents, six months to a year had 20 (6.56%) respondents, six months or less had 19 (6.23%) respondents, and one to two years had 16 (5.25%) respondents.



Figure 20, Main Study Shopping Patterns

The majority of patrons who participated in the survey have a regular relationship with Food for People. Since the survey was conducted during late summer, we must address transient populations in our study. Transient populations are a seasonal occurrence in Humboldt County due, in part by, the marijuana industry. The transient populations who participate in the pantry's service may skew results at a marginal rate, but since no explicit question asked if the person was transitory, we cannot draw conclude to the extent of their influence on the results. I will infer that the participants that indicated they have shopped in their stores for six months or less may be part of the transitory population in Eureka. Overall, about 11% of the total population that the food bank serves are people suffering homelessness (Food for People, 2017).

Question number five, "what kind of words or phrases describe the stores you shop in?" had 303 responses with eight survey participants skipping the question. The

question prompted participants to circle all the answered that applied from a selected list. The list included: affordable, organic, far, convenient, close-by, expensive, variety, small, large, has deals, friendly, fresh, accessible, reflects my values, and quality. The question had the option for a write-in response which got various answers that have been analyzed to reveal themes. ‘Affordable’ had the most frequency among the participants with 241 (79.54%) of responses, followed by convenient which had 114 (37.62%), has deals with 111 (36.63%), close-by 110 (36.30%), variety had 86 (28.38), and accessible had 81 (26.73%) rounding off the top six choices. In contrast, the bottom three included; small with seven responses (2.31%), far with 12 (3.96%), and expensive with 23 (7.59%).

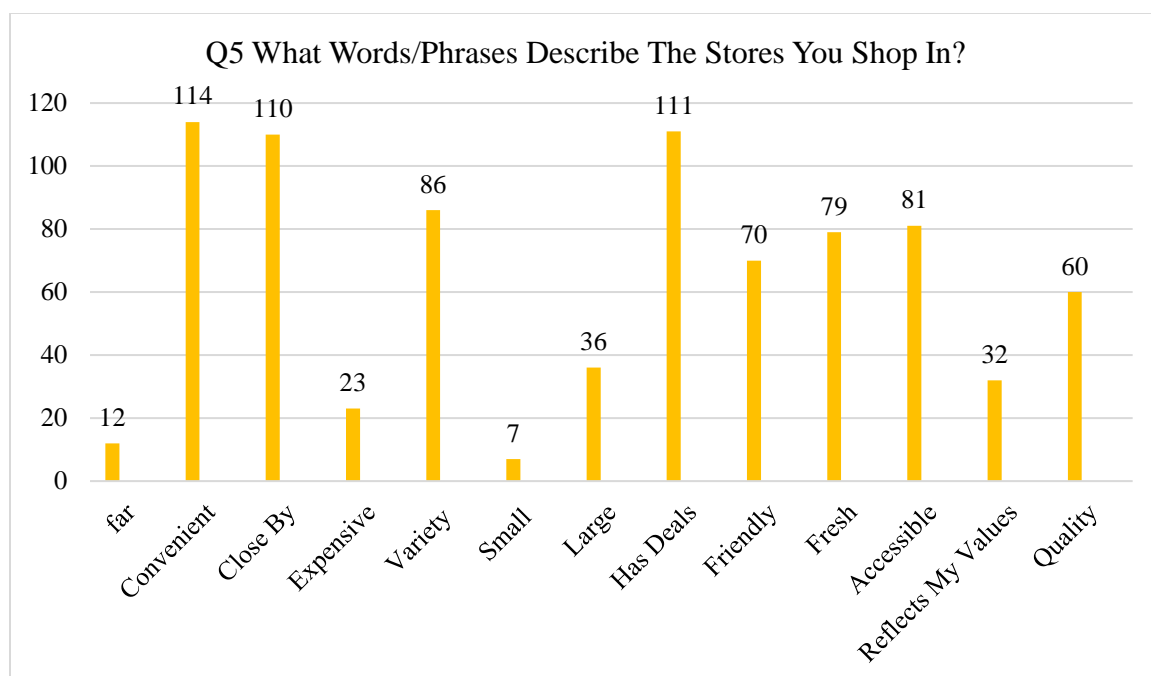


Figure 21, Main Study Store-Word Association

On several occasions, patrons spoke with me about accessing only selected stores because of income burdens. Usually, the stores that were mentioned were WinCo, Grocery Outlet, and the Dollar Tree. The mentioned stores are perceived as affordable.

As we will see in question eight, the quality of a store being affordable, and having variety, are explicitly noted in most of the responses. The patrons I interviewed indicated that convenience was the main reason when deciding where to shop for food.

Convenience meant that the stores were affordable, “along the way home,” or “close-by.”

One of the persons I interviewed indicated that she only purchased food from the locations that were closest to her, even if it meant that those locations were expensive.

Question number six, “how do you usually get to the store where you buy food?”, asked patrons to choose from selected options, as well as gave an ‘other’ option with indication to specify. 305 participants answered the question and six skipped it. The responses were; ‘walk’ which got 100 (32.79%) of responses, ‘bike’ had 28 (9.19%), ‘bus’ had 46 (15.08%), car/truck got most responses with 189 (61.97%), ‘get ride’ had 65 (21.31%), ‘carpool to store’ had 16 (5.25%), and ‘borrow vehicle’ had 12 (3.93%).

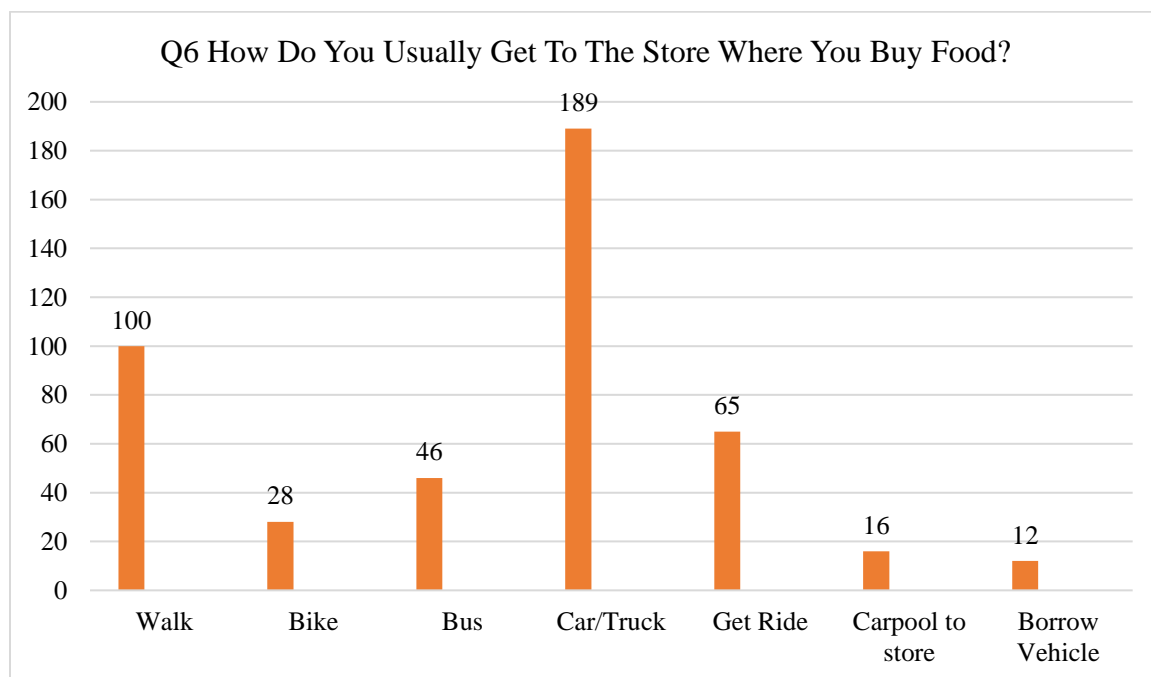


Figure 22, Main Study Usual Transportation

A majority of patrons who accessed the food bank had their own form of transportation allowing them access to locations that offered affordable food. Many patrons who had vehicles, indicated that having transportation allowed them to carry a substantial amount of groceries from the pantry and shop at affordable locations. In contrast, lacking a vehicle limited the amount of food that patrons took from the pantry. Patrons traveling via walking, biking, or bus, were limited to what they could carry in backpacks or by hand. Several patrons indicated that carrying 20 pounds of food was challenging. Carrying food was especially burdensome to older adults who may have had limited mobility issues. Patrons traveling by bus were not only limited by their carrying capacity, but also by the amount of food that they can take aboard.

Question number seven, “Are the store(s) you shop at easy or hard to get to?” had 295 participants with 16 skipping the question. Most participants, 253 (85.76%), indicated that the stores that they shop in are easily accessible.

Most patrons stated that they found it easy to access the places where they shopped in. The ease of accessing specific locations may be due to various factors such as prearranging transportation, physical fitness, adjusting one’s schedule, or the importance of the location. Many Food for People patrons shared that without the help from the food bank, they “would not be able to put food on the table.” Because Food for People offers a needed service to many patrons, it has become a place of great significance.

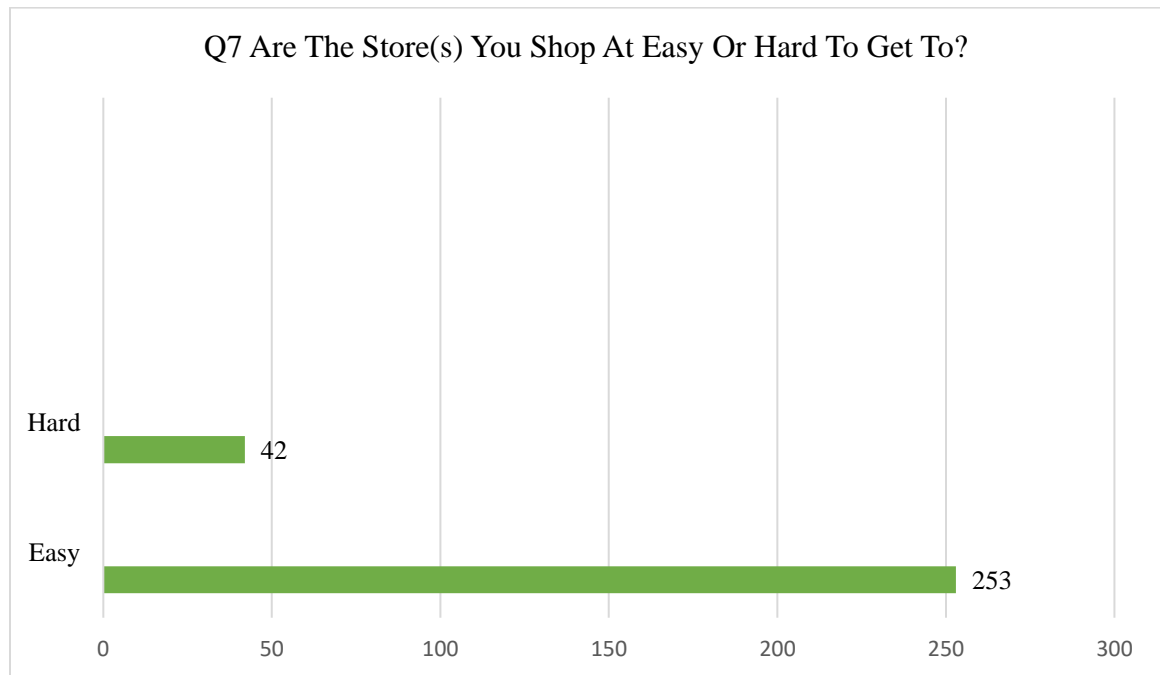


Figure 23, Main Study Store Accessibility

Question number eight asked, “if you only had one store to shop for food, which one would you choose and why?”, had 276 participants with 35 skipping the it. This question was left open-ended to acquire themes associated with stores. The responses have been analyzed to reflect main themes and displayed as a bar graph to show frequency. The clear majority of people, 175 (63.4%), indicated that WinCo foods was their ideal store choice followed by Grocery Outlet with 34 (12.31%) of responses, and Safeway with 26 (9.42%). The main themes associated with the patrons’ choices were ‘affordability’, ‘variety’, and ‘accessibility.’

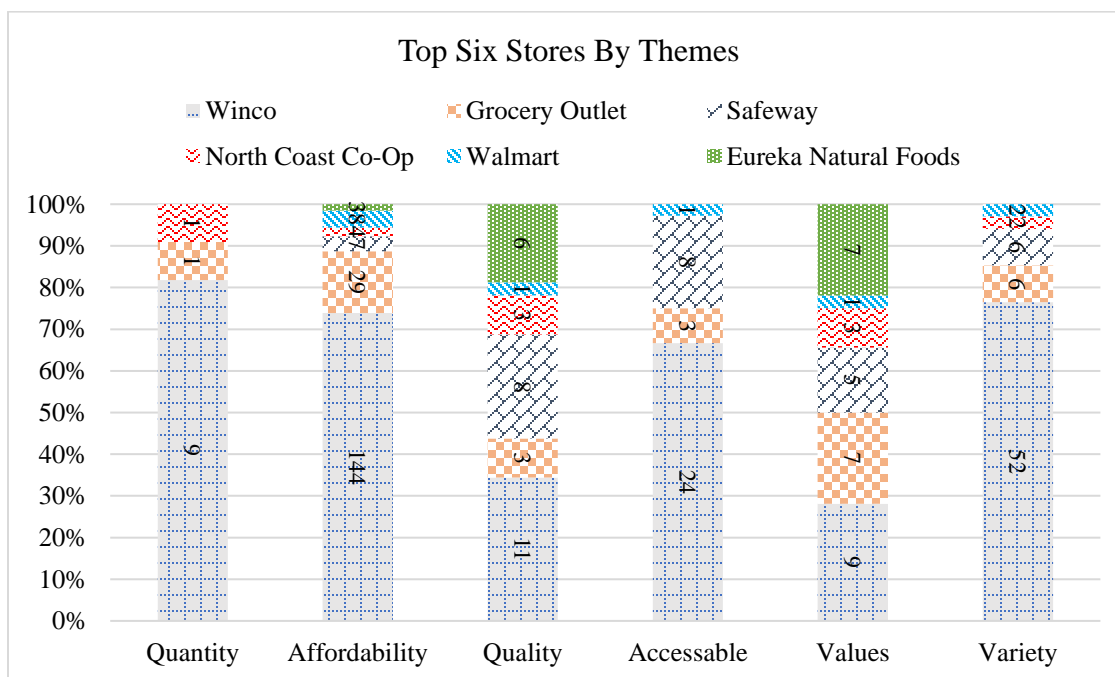


Figure 24, Top Stores by Themes

Many patrons wrote-in that they wished that they could eat healthy or organic, but because of financial limitation they could not. Many indicated that they shopped at multiple locations in search of select items that were on sale to stay within their budget. Affordability was the main deciding factor when selecting where to shop. A small number of people indicated that the food bank was their desired location to shop for food. I found this interesting because the food bank is not a store, yet it was selected as such. Patrons who chose the food bank were mainly on a fixed income or did not have an income at all.

Question number nine asked the participants to circle either yes or no for five different statements. The statements included: when I am hungry I always have something to eat, there is always food at home, I always eat healthy, I am a healthy person, and I exercise regularly (see Figure 25). The question had 301 participants with

ten skipping it. 137 (47.24%) patrons responded that when they are hungry they always had something to eat. 156 (53.79%) responded that they did not always have something to eat when hungry. 154 (52.56%) of patrons indicated that they always have food at home, and 144 (49.15%) indicated that food is not always present in their homes. 112 (38.36%) patrons indicated that they always eat health, as opposed to the 192 (65.75%) that indicated that they don't always eat healthy. 211 (72.01%) patrons indicated that they are healthy persons, while 101 (34.47%) indicated that they are not healthy persons. 197 (66.33%) of patrons indicated that they regularly exercise, and 113 (38.05%) indicated that they did not regularly exercised.

Many of the participants made notes explaining their responses, and many circled both yes and no to indicate that their choice depended on their circumstance. I regarded these answers as indicators of barriers to answering yes to the statements and were tabulated as both yes and no responses. The point that many made was that if they had the *choice*, they would prefer answering yes to all the statements. The questions that asked about food were meant to assess food security. The results indicate that about half of the patrons are food insecure.

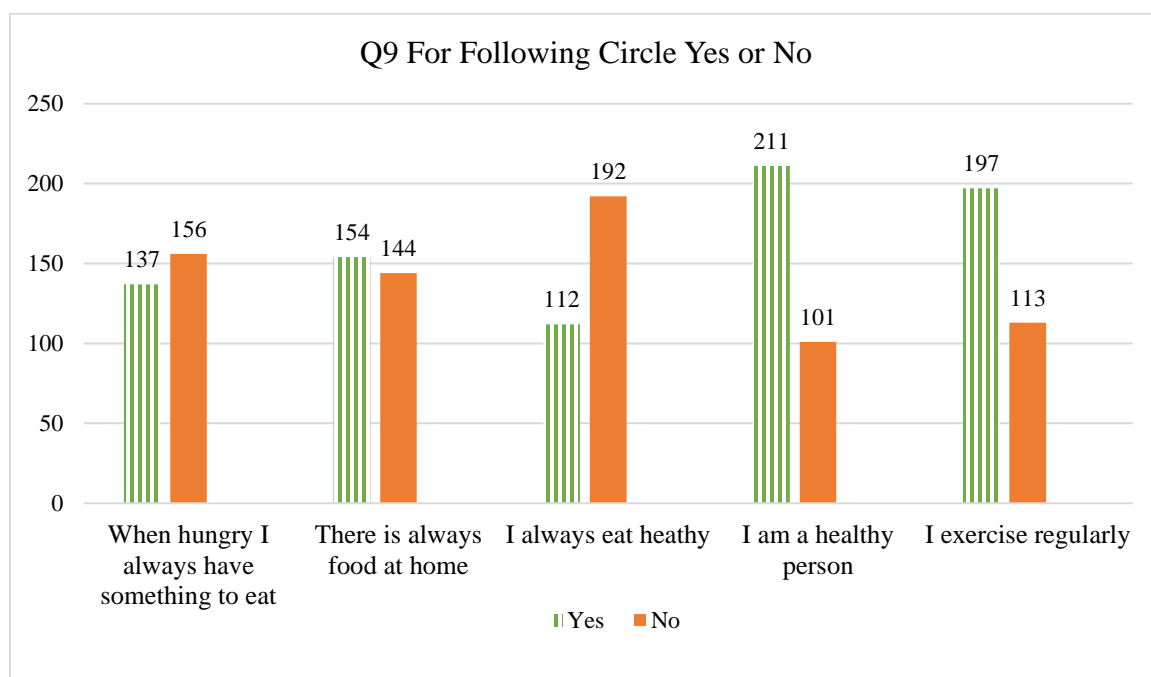


Figure 25, Main Study Perception Assessment

Question number ten asked participants what they thought food prices in Humboldt County to be like (see Figure 26). The choices given were: affordable, average, and expensive. 292 participants responded to the question while 19 skipped the question for being vague or not given something to compare to. 38 (13.01%), of respondents chose affordable, while 140 (47.95%), chose average, and 114 (39.04%) chose expensive. The question was left open to interpretation to gauge what patrons thought of local food prices. Patrons who indicated that food prices in Humboldt County were affordable noted that they could afford to shop at stores because of the help provided by the food bank. Others reported that using coupons and shopping during sales made stores like Safeway affordable.

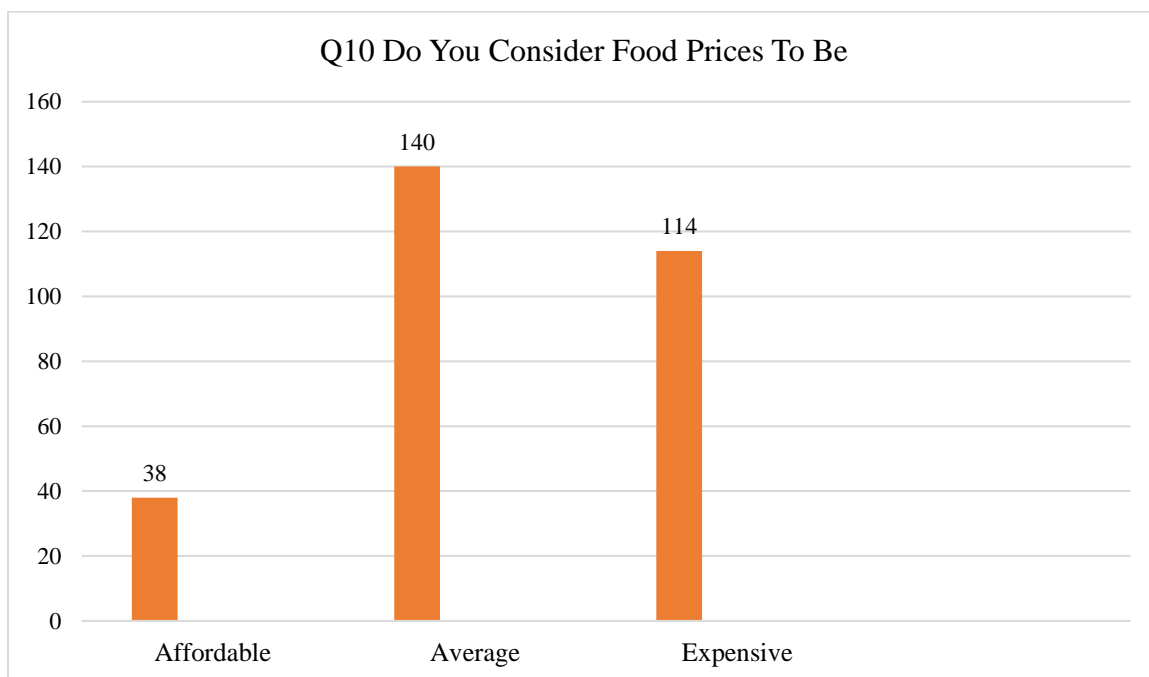


Figure 26, Main Study County Food Prices

Much of the results reveal a portion of a what constitutes perception on accessibility and personal assessment of health. As you will see in the discussion, research findings become contextualized through the integration of observations and interviews.

DISCUSSION

Potential Limitations and Bias

This thesis reports on my personal ethnographic observation and responses from surveys and interviews shared by patrons. Responses do not necessarily reflect the general population. Each survey response reflects the participants' understanding of the question and survey. The survey length and design limited the responses that patrons could give. A longer and more open-ended survey may reveal more information.

Cultural and religious beliefs may affect the eating habits of people and should have been considered to assess the degree of influence. Cultural and religious influences may also affect the way people view their economic circumstance and food security.

Many of the patrons who had initially agreed to be interviewed did not follow through with the interview. The stigma associated with acquiring services from the food bank hindered efforts to collect formal interview data. Due to the small number of interviews, it was not possible to discover all the ways which patrons mitigate hunger and perceive food security. Perception is a complicated subject to extrapolate in a short survey, so a more complex phenomenological survey and interviews are necessary to fully grasp how a person might see their reality.

To fully comprehend the effects and impact of the Food for People's 18 programs, individual program studies are needed. Surveying their other programs can add dimension to the responses generated solely from my two surveys. The mixed methods approach to this thesis attempted to mitigate shortcomings; however, due to time and financial constraints, a follow-up study for correlation was not possible.

My knowledge of food justice, food sovereignty, and equity influenced my view of Food for People and its operations; however, the use of a phenomenological approach was used to help mitigate personal bias.

Findings

Pantry Operations

During my internship at Food for People, I held various position that granted me insight on the patrons, staff, programs, and community. Half of my internship and research was done incognito as a volunteer and later as an official intern with a staff badge. I immediately noticed a change in treatment when I received the badge. Patrons and volunteers were friendlier and more willing to share information or have conversations. The different statuses and positions granted me insight into the overall culture of the food bank and their power dynamics.

I worked as a warehouse worker sorting and stocking products, as a personal shopper guiding patrons through their shopping trip and assisted with bagging their food. I also worked as an intake-person, which intakes the patron and provides instruction to the patrons, enrolls new patrons, and refers patrons to other social services. Outside of the pantry, I worked for the mobile produce pantry, which provides fresh fruits and vegetables to remote locations of the county; the senior distribution and home-bound delivery program, which provides food to senior citizens and people who are home-bound throughout various locations.

As an intake-person, you have more time with clients and ask several questions to determine the assistance amount. During this stage, people will often debrief about their

day, current state of affairs, or similar things if you asked them how they were doing. I sat with many patrons who had lost a loved one, employment, and or something else significant in their life. Having the opportunity to talk about personal loss reaffirmed the food bank's welcoming environment. The food bank has become a place where people can get a helping hand as well as a listening ear. For many, having this interaction inserts the food bank as a place of importance in their life.

On several occasions, while working as a warehouse person and as a personal shopper, I was directed by different intake volunteers to perform cleaning tasks. For safety reasons, I cleaned them. I found it interesting that even if the mess could have been easily cleaned by the directing person, that person chose to delegate the duty to people assisting with the restocking or shopping.

The food bank's volunteer structure perpetuates the Charity Model, which holds that the more affluent community members should provide for the less fortunate through the volunteering of time or through donations -charity. A mainstream food bank cannot truly escape this predicament, but it can try to incorporate Zapatismo to mitigate for the unintended hierarchy.

An important aspect to promoting empowerment lies in the way that organizations implement their services. In the pantry, patrons were required to wait for a volunteer or staff-member to walk them around assisting them with their shopping trip. The volunteer, oftentimes, would physically grab the items for the patron. Half way through my internship a self-shopping model was employed. This allowed patrons to shop by themselves and required minimal volunteer assistance. Patrons liked this model and felt

less restricted or rushed. The self-shopping model confirmed that the way programs are structured impacts the perception of those being served, and by extension, the larger community.

Food Bank Services

As a shopping assistant, I noticed that the patrons who did not have motor vehicle transportation could not take the normal amount of food for their household size. Patrons who arrived on foot only carried what they could manage to fit into thin plastic shopping bags, backpacks, luggage, boxes, or small shopping carts. The lack of private transportation limited the amount that patrons could carry home. Usually, the amount of food given to a family of one-to-four members consisted of about 50 pounds. People without motor transportation would leave about half of the food because they could not carry it all. I witnessed many patrons shop the normal amount allotted, but left half of their items because they could only take a normal-sized backpack worth of food, and had to walk distances considered far by those patrons.

Allcott (2018) indicated that Economic inequality limits access to affordable fresh food. This phenomenon was observed in the Food for People patron community, where people with a vehicle had greater access to the food bank as opposed to those who did not have a vehicle limiting the amount of food and times that they could access the pantry. Among the pantry patrons, people who were better off than others had greater opportunity to access the food bank at times that were convenient for them. In contrast, patrons who relied on other people for transportation did not have equal access to the food bank at times and days that they desired. This inequality created many problems for

the patrons who lacked access to transportation. I often encountered patrons who had missed their appointments on days scheduled and rescheduled based on someone else's schedule, or missed the monthly allotment altogether because they could not find a ride. Suggestions for increasing accessibility will be shared in the recommendations section.

As a member of the mobile produce pantry, I traveled to remote towns in Humboldt County distributing fresh produce. This service granted extra food to patrons who do not have access to transportation and affordable fresh food in those regions. Most of the patrons who used the mobile pantry were low income, per USDA requirements for service. Most of the patrons verbally indicated their satisfaction with the program to the staff and myself. During distribution, patrons would ask for traffic information heading to and out of the main city, talked about their day with the staff, and connected with other patrons. This leads me to believe that the Food for People network has created an atmosphere where patrons feel they are part of a community that links them to the broader community in the main city. Food for People has potential to assist in building community in Humboldt County, seeing that the patrons felt like the mobile produce pantry was a makeshift community center. This will could help the food bank better fulfil their mission of ending hunger. Having direct input from patrons in rural communities could reveal needs not revealed before, or more effective methods of enacting social change.

The mobile produce pantry is a great resource that works most of the time; however, there is a literal disconnection to most rural towns during times of extreme weather, fires, or other natural phenomena. Dependence on the mobile produce pantry,

during these events, can pose a threat to patron's caloric intake and livelihood. For example, during the winter of 2017, Orleans, Weitchpec, and Hoopa were cut off from receiving services from the mobile produce pantry for months due to severe weather conditions. On several occasions, the mobile produce pantry had to cancel their trip while on-route because of road closures. This significantly limited patrons' access to food and other services. I did not collect any formal data, but these events should be considered as a subject for future research studying adaptation techniques and hunger mitigation.

The Department of Health and Human Services sends a mobile outreach bus that joins the mobile pantry to create a centralized location for various services. The idea of having various resources available for patrons is great because it creates an event-like day where people can explore social services and mingle with each other. Community events help build bonds among the community, as observed in the Food for People's pantry.

Accessibility

As the survey results indicated, transportation limits the amount of food that a person can acquire. Almost half of the people who accessed the food bank did not have transportation; however, most of them indicated that they found it easy to get to the food bank. This brought up the question of "Why?". Why is it that people who do not have a private mode of transportation find accessing the food bank easy? Many patrons did not mind traveling an hour or more each way on foot, because the consensus among the patrons revolved around convenience and supplemental aid. Patrons found it convenient to shop at the food bank's pantry because it supplemented, on average, two weeks worth of food.

Having transportation allows for greater mobility and access to goods and services. Five patrons I spoke with indicated that they had no form of transportation, but found it easy to access the locations where they get food emphasizing the health benefits of walking. A further study could consider the psychological factors that contribute to the state of perceiving something as easy to access.

Transportation and lack of financial means played an integral role in patrons' accessibility to affordable fresh food (see Appendix F). From the Food for People phone surveys, I learned that some seniors who had a vehicle could not afford the gas to travel to get food. An elderly person who relied on the services that the food bank provides could not survive without having a car or getting a ride to acquire food. Many elderly people on the senior food bag program did not drive or could not drive due to health issues, which limited their food intake to only what the food bank provided. The vast majority of these patrons relied on the various disability programs, or social security income, as their only source of income limiting them on what they could pay for. The lack of shelter, or the idea of homelessness, does not sit well with community members; so, it is no surprise that paying for things like shelter and transportation are seen as equally or more important than food. As previously stated, Humboldt County does not have adequate forms of public transportation and a car grants greater access to stores that reflect one's values: affordability, quality, or quantity.

The information from the surveys and interviews indicated that the lack of transportation limited access to stores, and limited the amount of food that patrons could take home. I witnessed many patrons go on a routine shopping trip, and during the

bagging process, they would leave up to half of the items because they could not carry everything. Many patrons carried an average-sized backpack that would take them several minutes to pack because they had to choose the most essential items. Usually, patrons who left about half of the food because of carrying limitations also left dairy and frozen meat items due to fears it spoiling during their trip home. On average, the 50 pounds of food that Food for People provides will last a household two weeks, but, households that left half of the items had a difficult time meeting nutritional needs.

This study found the patrons from the Homebound delivery and Senior Box programs have found ways of making their food last longer. As mentioned before, for many seniors, Food for People is the only source of food which usually supplements, on average, about two weeks' worth of food. Several patrons stated that they only eat soup or stew because they can freeze and ration the food to last a month. Some of the seniors informed me that they had established a "sharing-table" where people traded and gifted food items to account for eating preferences and dietary needs. Other seniors started vegetable gardens, began canning food, and shared with others to mitigate for lapses in food deliveries. Unknowingly, some senior communities had begun to incorporate models of food justice and food sovereignty to mitigate for lapses of food. Finding solutions to mitigate lapses in food should be a priority for organizations working towards ending hunger. Solutions that promote a sense of empowerment can aid in creating community and promoting social good; so, incorporating a food justice framework is essential.

Food Security

The main survey's results indicated that about half of Food for People's patrons could be considered food insecure. However, patrons who were food insecure found ways of coping with hunger which affected the perception of their food security. I noticed that one patron would always ask me for pancake batter, so I asked them about it. During our chat, the patron informed me that when they ran out of food they would eat pancakes. At one point, they told me that pancakes were the only food they had eaten for a week. It is possible other patrons facing hunger could be coping through similar methods that could negatively impact their health. If we look at the results from question nine from the main study (see Figure 25), we see that 52.56% of patrons reported that they always have something to eat at home, while 65.75% of patrons indicated that they don't always eat healthy. These numbers indicate, patrons' perceptions of their food security can be affected by their adaptations to hunger. For example, the patron who only ate pancakes to mitigate hunger, always had something to eat when they felt hungry. So, it is possible that even though they may not have been eating their personal perception of an ideal diet, they may have indicated they typically had food to eat at home.

Question nine (see Figure 25), also provided information on patrons' assessment of their health where 72% indicated that they were healthy persons. 66.33% indicated that they exercised regularly, which can be a contributing factor to patrons' belief in being healthy. Many patrons who did not have a vehicle referred to walking to be their form of exercise, but people without transportation were limited to locations and amount of food that they could carry significantly impacting their food security. Exercise is not a sole

indicator of being a healthy person; so, patrons' assessment of their health could be impacted by their levels of physical activity.

Elderly patrons who rely on Social Security are more susceptible to hunger because of their fixed income. The elderly patrons I phone surveyed from the Senior and Home-Bound Delivery program stated that they were grateful for the food provided but wished they could receive more food.

Dependence

Food for People provides a great resource for people in need of food, but this study also found that their services can create levels of dependency among its' patrons. For example, I interviewed a person who mentioned that they used to can their vegetables and other food but stopped canning because they felt that they did not need to because the food bank fulfilled their needs. It is nice to hear that the food bank makes it possible for this person to sustain themselves and their extended family, but it is important to note how this may work against empowering people to become independent of the service.

The notion of dependence hindered possible patrons from accessing the food bank's services due to the stigma associated with people receiving services. For example, in a few instances when I was doing intake, the phrase "receiving handouts" was brought up by males registering for the food service. On one of these instances, I was helping a man who was visibly agitated and a bit hostile towards me. He kept saying things like "I work hard" and "people here just get handouts." Although I stated facts about the people we served, he did not seem to hear them. After I gave him instruction on the shopping procedures, he spent approximately two minutes looking around and left without food.

From personal observations on political rhetoric, “dependency” on safety-net programs is a politically charged issue, where conservative-leaning individuals perceive people using safety-net programs as receiving handouts. These beliefs stem from misinformation, and the Protestant Work Ethic (Furnham, 1990; Hudson, 2005). Part of the problem associated with people believing that Food for People’s patrons are receptive to handouts partly lies in transportation. Patrons with transportation get to leave to their homes after they have shopped at the pantry, but those that do not have readily available transportation remain at the food bank’s lobby waiting for a ride. Usually, these patrons fall well below the poverty line; so, when donors, or people who dropped off donations at the food bank, stopped by to leave a donation, they would mostly see patrons they would consider transient or homeless. Given the Protestant Work Ethic’s central idea of you receive what you input, the poor are viewed as not inputting enough and deserving of their position.

Point of Interest

During the main survey, I received many write-in responses indicating that the patrons shopped at the food bank as one of their primary sources of food. I found this interesting because the food bank is not a store, per se, but patrons regarded it as if it were. The notion that the food bank was a store that patrons frequented leads me to believe that patrons have incorporated this location as part of their routine, or normalcy. Patrons who shop at the pantry indicates that they can only afford to shop at locations that offer low-cost food, such as The Dollar Tree or Grocery Outlet. This indication of

preferring to shop at the food pantry gives way to speculation on cultural adaptation to financial strife.

Dara Chan (2014) states that service sites considered significant by the population that they serve will have greater participation or attendance because of the access to social services and social interaction. Patrons have transformed the food bank from a place where people simply acquire food to a place that they can debrief with staff and others. This establishes the food bank as a point of interest among community members. During my internship, I observed conversation and familiarity among patrons. Not all patrons talked to each other, but about 20% showed familiarity with other patrons. Patrons would discuss their personal life and “catch-up” with people that they had befriended while waiting in the lobby. Because of the help and informal meeting location, the food bank has become an essential part of peoples’ lives. Food for People has become more than a place for monthly food, it has become a civic center.

Since Food for People supplements household income, by the food it provides, it has become a means to reduce the cost of living. The general feeling among the patrons was that of thankfulness. Most of the patrons surveyed and interviewed expressed their thankfulness towards the various programs that Food for People offers. The food bank offers a welcoming environment, and because of this, it has become a hub where many patrons find financial assistance and debrief about their personal lives.

CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATIONS

The observations made during my research indicated that community is built in locations that have significance to those who are part of it. Researching how community-building can be a vessel for social change may open the doors to new techniques to promote and do social good.

Food for People offers its' patrons free food which includes canned goods, dairy, fresh produce, and some frozen meats. The work that Food for People does helps members of the community provide for their families. Food for People stands in a liminal state between the food justice/sovereignty movement and the non-profit industrial complex; so, the decisions that the organization makes will significantly affect their community.

Food for People is creating a stronger community through the food it provides and through their network of partners. Food for People implements modes of food justice and sovereignty through the integration of local farmers, by promoting healthy eating habits and advocating for their patrons. Food justice is about empowering people, and Food for People has the potential to not just empower its' patrons, but the whole community. If an organization can promote a greater good, then it should. The food bank can further promote food justice by teaching its patrons to grow their food, advocate for their community, and learn that they have agency.

Although the work of non-profit organization is greatly beneficial to their local community, there are some areas where non-profit organization can create or perpetuate

stigma and stereotypes of the population that they serve through their marketing or program structure. Here, I give accounts of some of the things that Food for People can improve on, and provide ideas on how to resolve them to further their capacity and better reflect a food justice/sovereignty model. Although transportation is not necessarily Food for People's realm of operations, I provide ideas on how to increase overall accessibility to food.

Notions of Dependence

Reliance on the food bank was a constant theme during the interviews.

Dependency is a tricky subject to study because it begs the question of: has the patron adapted to live with the subsistence the food bank provides or is the patron unable to eliminate the assistance from the food bank due to financial limitations? This needs to be further explored, but perception can be changed through marketing.

Using precise language can be key to transforming the way patrons at the food bank are perceived. Using words or slogans that empower the patrons will also create an empowering image, so-to-speak, from the general community. Phrases such as 'let's build a stronger community together', connote community, not dependence. Community, or emphasis on being a community, can generate a more positive perception of the food bank and its' patrons without perpetuating stereotypes.

Creating Empowerment

Food justice is about empowerment. Since culture can affect the way it's' members see themselves, it is something to address to promote empowerment. Power structures must be redesigned to better suit the food justice framework.

An aspect of empowering patrons, is changing how they view themselves within the organization. Patrons should view themselves as more than recipients, but as contributing members of Food for People. I noticed that many of Food for People's volunteers were patrons and some donated money when they could. I realized that this was a form of them giving back. Including patrons and volunteers in decision making processes can give them a sense of belonging.

One example of changing the perception among patrons occurred during the implementation of the self-shopping model. A common theme during patrons' pantry visits was that of policing. Patrons stated that they disliked someone watching over their shoulder during their shopping trip. The self-shopping model allowed patrons to shop without the need of an assistant. Having a shopping assistant could have been seen as having patrons who were untrustworthy to shop by themselves, perpetuating stereotypes associated with poor people. This finding indicates organizations need to be cognizant of the larger implications of their programs and the way they execute them.

One method for the food bank to further cultivate an environment of empowerment, is changing the charity model culture by adopting Zapatismo ideals and practices. When patrons have an active role in Food for People, findings from this study indicate this may grant them a voice to effect change in the established power dynamics. In Zapatismo, power is shared amongst the community (Hooker, 2005; Reyes and Kaufman, 2011), so to better serve Food for People's community integration of power needs to occur. A revolving patron council may provide direct input to the food banks' operation, and have empowering qualities to its members. Having revolving positions or

term-limits, like in Zapatismo, will grant access to the council and create a more empowered community.

Increasing Accessibility

Transportation was a major obstacle and concern among patrons. While surveying my pilot study, I asked patrons about their usual modes of transportation and while doing so, many exclaimed the desire for Food for People to provide transportation services. Transportation, especially in a rural community, is a major factor in accessing locations of importance as well as locations of economic convenience. Food for People could increase the level of accessibility to affordable fresh food that patrons have by providing private transportation. A shuttle or partnerships with the city can form a reliable system of transportation to sites that offer affordable fresh food for patrons.

Road closures impact the ability for patrons to acquire food from Food for People. This is something that seems unavoidable in Humboldt County due to its terrain. When natural phenomena closes major highways and roadways that connect outlying regions to the main city centers, the rural parts of the county become isolated from services and resources and puts the entire county at risk for isolation from the state. One way to mitigate the loss of services would be creating stronger partnerships with local farms to mitigate a loss of food during the periods where roads tend to close due to weather and other natural phenomena. Another option that would be highly beneficial to the procurement of fresh food would be purchasing or leasing a plot of land. Having dedicated land, for year-round produce, would mitigate the lapses in fresh food and create a new venue to promote food justice and food sovereignty through the creation of new

programs. The programs could be catered to empowering people to seize the means of production, grow their own food, establish their own gardens, and create community among city residents.

Final Words

Free-food services around the nation help mitigate the hunger felt by millions of hard-working Americans. The work that the individuals, who make up these organizations, do is greatly appreciated. This thesis is meant to be taken as a case study for this location, but the suggestions derived from my research can be tailored to fit distinct needs. Always be mindful of how programs are being approached, the language that people use, and who implements them because perpetuation of negative stereotypes could be a byproduct of your success.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

The information collected through this questionnaire will be used to find reasons why clients shop in certain stores and see how beliefs of stores being affordable or expensive affect the number of times a client shops at those stores. The information collected will be published as part of a Masters level thesis regarding affordable food and the access to it.

There is little to no risk of harm, and no compensation associated with this study. However, this study can help better serve the people who use this location by exploring ways for other stores to increase access to affordable food.

The survey does not ask for personal information that could be used to identify you.

The investigator will answer any questions you have about this study. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time.

If you have any concerns with this study or questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at irb@humboldt.edu or (707) 826-5165.

You may also contact:

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Primary Researcher
Edward Fernandez
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(323) 614-6067.

No direct quotations will be used or published in future work.

The questionnaire will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

Signature

Date

Appendix B: Pilot Study Survey

Food for People Questionnaire

1. Have you completed this questionnaire before? (Yes/No)
2. Age:
 - a. 18-24
 - b. 25-39
 - c. 40-60
 - d. 60+
3. Sex: (M/F)
4. How did you get here? (Specify) (Example: Walking, Biking, by bus, by car, etc.)
5. How long did it take you to get here? (Specify)
6. What neighborhood, town, or city are you traveling from? (specify.
Example: old town/Myrtle town/ Fortuna/etc.)
7. What is your usual transportation method?
8. Do you find it easy/hard to get here? Why?
9. Do you have transportation available to reach us (never, sometimes, most of times, always)?
10. Do you have access to a car that you can drive? (Yes/No)

Appendix C: Main Study Survey

Site:

Shopping Preference Survey

1. What is your gender? (circle one)

Male Female Nonbinary

2. What is your age group? (circle one)

18 – 25 26 – 35 36 – 45 46-59 60+

3. Where do you mostly shop for food? (circle all that apply)

WinCo Eureka Natural Foods CVS Food for People

Safeway Walgreens Walmart Dollar Tree

Target Grocery Outlet Kmart North Coast Co-Op

Other (specify) _____

4. How long have you been shopping at the stores that you circled? (Circle one)

6 Months or less 6 months - 1 year 1 - 2 years 2 - 3 years 4+ years

5. What words/phrases describe the stores you shop in? (circle all that apply)

Affordable Organic Far Convenient Close by

Expensive Variety Small Large Has deals

Friendly Fresh Accessible reflects my values Quality

Other: _____

6. How do you usually get to the store where you buy food?
(circle all that apply)

Walk Bike Bus Car/Truck Get ride Carpool to store Borrow vehicle

Other (specify): _____

7. Are the store you shop at easy or hard to get to? (circle one)

Site: Shopping Preference Survey

Site:

Shopping Preference Survey

8. If you only had one store to shop for food, which one would you choose and why?

9. (For following questions circle 'yes' or 'no')

When I am hungry I always have something to eat.

Yes No

There is always food at home?

Yes No

I always eat healthy.

Yes No

I am a healthy person.

Yes No

10. Do you consider food prices in Humboldt County to be: (circle one)

Affordable Average Expensive

Appendix D: Interview Consent Form

Consent to Interview

The information collected through this interview will be used to find reasons why clients shop in certain stores and see how beliefs of stores being affordable or expensive affect the number of times a client shops at those stores. The information collected will be published as part of a Masters level thesis regarding affordable food and the access to it.

There is little to no risk of harm, and no compensation associated with this interview. However, this interview can shed light on possible barriers to accessing healthy food that may contribute to future solutions.

The investigator will answer any questions you have about this interview. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time.

If you have any concerns with this interview or study, or questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at irb@humboldt.edu or (707) 826-5165. You may also contact my Academic Advisor Rebecca Robertson at rer3@humboldt.edu or (707) 826-4342; Shao Jing at js36@humboldt.edu or +86 13770944801 (China); or the principal researcher, Edward Fernandez, at ef374@humboldt.edu or (323) 614-6067.

I give permission to be recorded by an audio or video-recording device.

I have the option to choose to be recorded using an audio-only or video-recording device. (Circle one)

Audio-only

Video-recording

Print Name

Signature

Date

Appendix E: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Note: the questions on here serve as a guide and will need to be tailored to the individual so the interview flows like a normal conversation. Before beginning the interview, state the purpose of the interview and ask for consent. Then using a recording device, begin recording, introduce myself, state the purpose of this recording, ask the participant to state their name and for their consent to be recorded and use the recording for future work.

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. How does a regular shopping trip look like? Explain the journey.
3. Have you changed your lifestyle to meet your food needs?
4. Do you think there are challenges or obstacles to eating healthy?
5. What stores do you shop in, and why?
6. Why don't you shop in (the other stores)?
7. Tell me why you use the food bank.
8. What is your opinion of the food bank? Has it changed?
9. What do you think you need to be a healthy person?
10. Do you think the (city/town) provides adequate resources for you and your family to be healthy and happy?

Appendix F: Food Assistance Income Guidelines

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EFAP) 2016 INCOME GUIDELINES

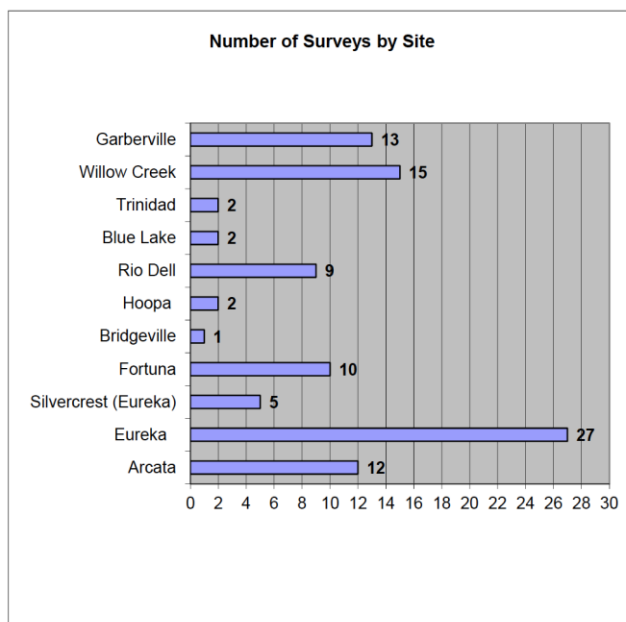
MAXIMUM INCOME		
HOUSEHOLD SIZE	MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME	ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME
1	\$1,485.00	\$17,820
2	\$2,002.50	\$24,030
3	\$2,520.00	\$30,240
4	\$3,037.50	\$36,450
5	\$3,555.00	\$42,660
6	\$4,072.50	\$48,870
7	\$4,591.25	\$55,095
8	\$5,111.25	\$61,335
9	\$5,631.25	\$67,575
10	\$6,151.25	\$73,815
Over 10	add \$520.00 each	add \$6,240 each

REVISED 4/16

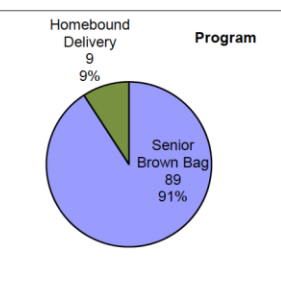
[illegible]

Appendix H: Selected Phone Survey Graphs

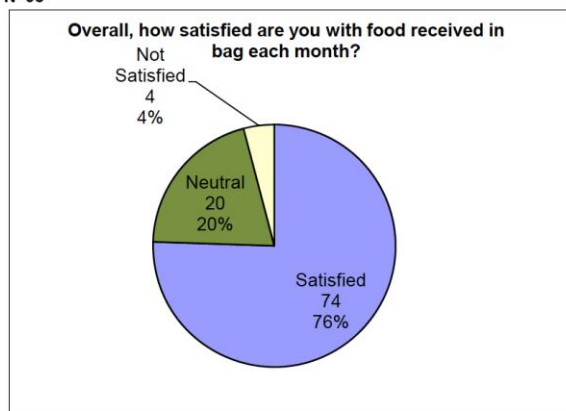
2017 Senior Brown Bag / Homebound Delivery Phone Survey

Senior Brown Bag / Homebound
Phone Survey (Spring 2017)

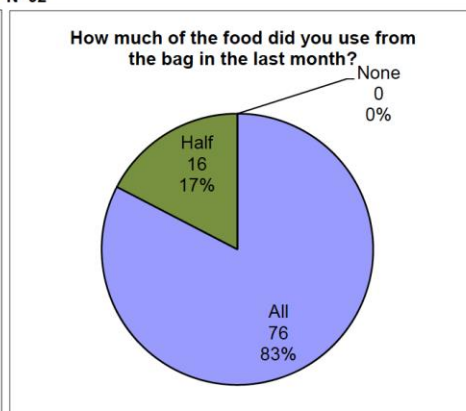
Total Number of Surveys: N=98

91% SBB
9% HBD

N=98

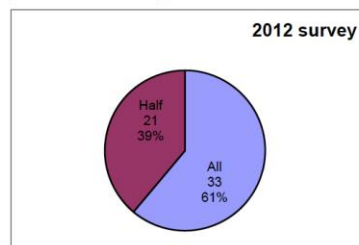
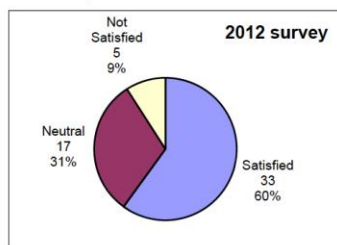


N=92



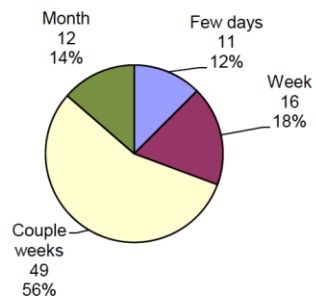
Note: Satisfaction level lines up with how much of the food was used from the bag.

Change from 2012 survey: Satisfaction level increased from 60% to 76%. % using all the food in bag increased from 61% to 83%.



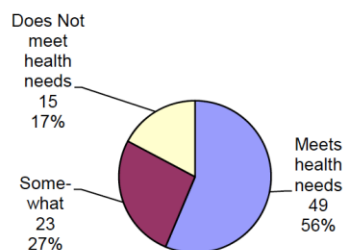
N=88

How long does the food we provide last?



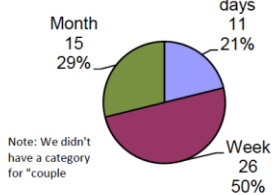
N=87

How well does the food in the bag fit your dietary needs for good health (manage medical issue, Dr. recommendation)?

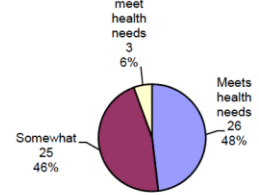


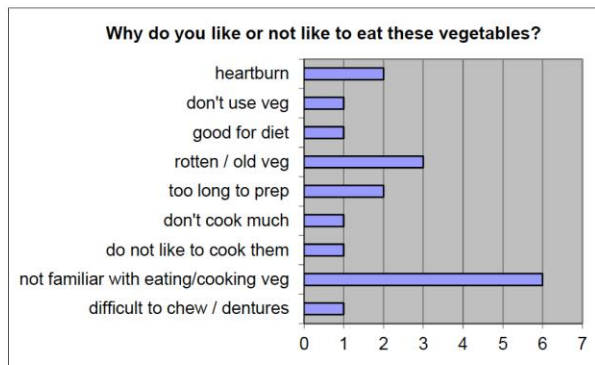
Note: In comparing to 2012, it's clear in 2017 that the "couple weeks" category was a good thing to add. It also appears that we may be doing a better job meeting health needs (increased from 48% to 56%). The differences on our end were that we had a lot more fresh, local produce through Locally Delicious; purchased proteins/dairy at different points in time; had local meat at times.

2012 survey

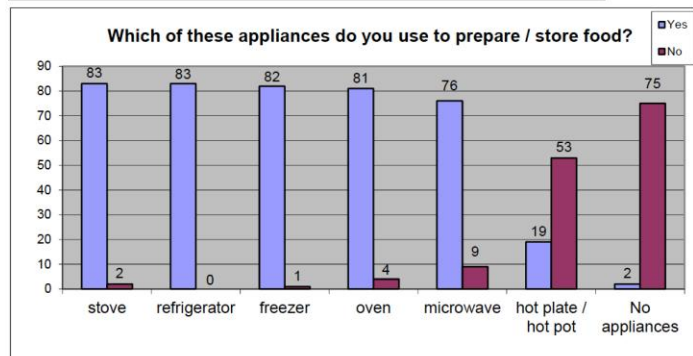


2012 survey





N=23

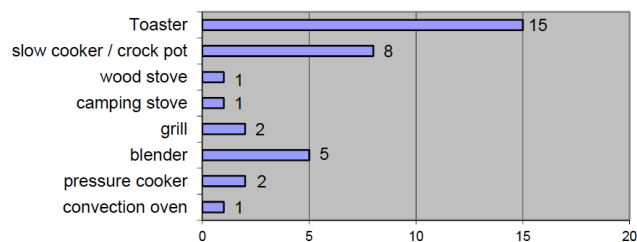
Heartburn: bell peppers, onions**Too long to prep:** beets, greens**Not familiar with eating/cooking:**Root vegetables, greens, herbs, winter squash
(we could provide more nutrition education / demos)**Requests:** Mustard greens, okra, asparagus
avocado

N=87

Note:

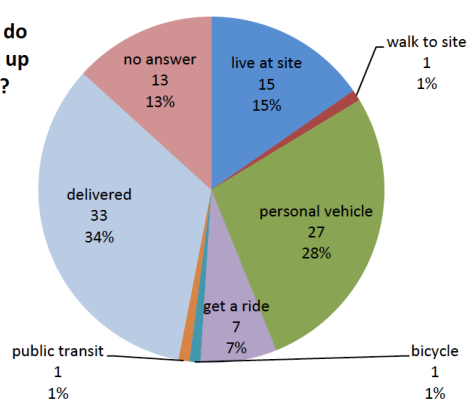
Since this was a phone survey,
we only reached those with a phone.
It is possible that those without a
phone (and/or live in motel) live in
circumstances that lack one or more of
these appliances.

What other appliances do you use?



N=35

What transportation do you use to pick up food from us?

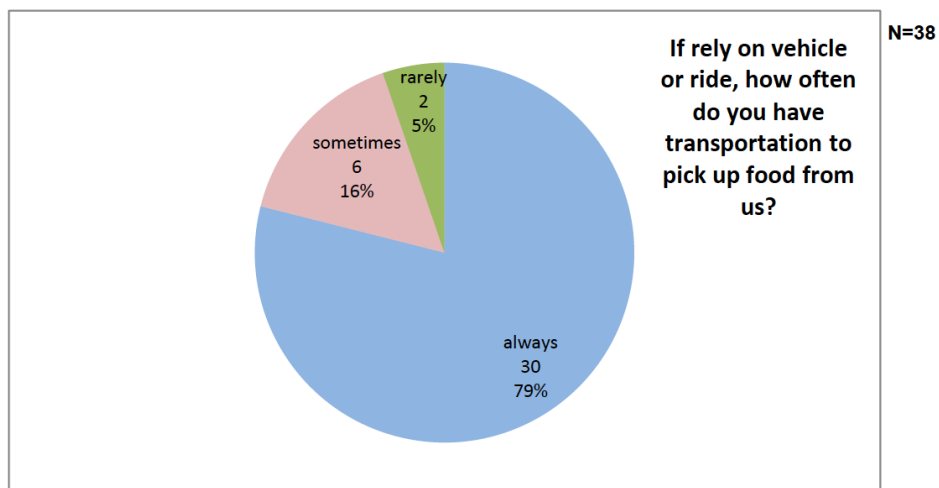


The following transportation questions are new in the 2017 survey.

N=84

Live at site: This means that the distribution is at the senior apartments in which the respondent lives.

Delivered: bag delivered by our volunteer delivery drivers to the client's residence.



Details on those who responded "sometimes" or "rarely":

- 3 said it depends on if have/can afford gas
- 2 said their vehicle is unreliable
- 1 said it's physically difficult to get in/out of car
- 1 said it depends on whether neighbor is available to drive