

Honours Final Research Seminar

A qualitative investigation into community food banks in South Australia

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Seminar outline

- ✧ Background
- ✧ Aims
- ✧ Project Methods
- ✧ Results
- ✧ Discussion
- ✧ Conclusion
- ✧ Questions



What does the literature say?

- ✧ Limited literature in Australia
- ✧ Dramatic increase in Food banks across the world over the last 30 years
- ✧ Food banks do little to help solve the problem of hunger and food insecurity in the long term



(Booth and Whelan, 2014, Lambie-Mumford, 2013, Riches, 2011, Tarasuk et al., 2014, Tarasuk and Eakin, 2005, Tarasuk and Eakin 2003)

What do those who use food bank in other countries think?

- ✧ Food banks only used when absolutely necessary
- ✧ Some ashamed of food bank use – some view it as a “godsend”
- ✧ Poor food quality and quantity
- ✧ Emotions associated with food bank use
 - Shame, embarrassment, failure, powerlessness



(Derrickson et al. 1999, Tarasuk et al. 1999, Nugent 2000, Hamelin et al. 2002, Nikou 2002, Kratzmann 2003, Verpy et al. 2003, Hicks-Stratton 2004, McPherson 2006, Domkeno 2008, De Marco 2009, McNeill 2011, Loopstra et al. 2012, Lambie-Mumford 2013, Mares 2013, van der Horst et al. 2014, Perry et al. 2014, Garthwaite et al. 2015, Douglas et al. 2013, Zipfel et al. 2015)


Research question

How do users of the Community Food Banks in South Australia perceive the experience?



Project methods: Participant observation

- ✧ Over 50 hours of participant observation conducted at Edwardstown and Bowden Food Hubs
- ✧ Volunteer behaviour and interaction with each other, myself and shoppers
- ✧ Shopper interaction with the space, the volunteers, myself and each other



Project methods: Interviews

- ❖ Nine semi-structured, 35-90 minute, face-to-face interviews
- ❖ Potential participants were approached directly after they completed their shopping
- ❖ Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim



Interview topics

- The process from voucher to community food bank
- Shoppers perceptions of the community food bank
- Shoppers perception on the process required to access food



Demographic data

	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex - Female	6	67
- Male	3	33
Age - < 30	1	11
- 41-50	4	44
- >51	4	44
Food bank use <1 year	4	45
Ethnicity - Caucasian	8	89
- Aboriginal	1	11
Single	5	56
Divorced/separated	4	44
Unemployed	8	89
Income – government benefits	9	100

Theme 1 – The value of Food Bank

“My food never lasted the fortnight... I was down to the nitty gritty crappy stuff... now it does last a fortnight... I'm eating good every day instead of ten days out of the fortnight”

- Harris (53 year old, unemployed male)

Theme 2 – Coming to the Food Bank

“Oh it's usually when I'm really desperate”

- Jan (58 year old, unemployed female)

“That was really hard for me, I'm usually a very strong person, I don't ask for help I just deal with the situation... I mean... you need help so you gotta grin and bear it”

- Grace (29 year old, single mother of three)

Theme 3 – Confusing processes

Field Notes

24th September 2015

A man comes up to the counter with his shopping – it's not much, just some fruit, vegetables, bread, a packet of chips and a huge 2kg sticky date pudding mix. He asks “It is only 25c right?” the manager says no... it's actually \$1.50. He looks disheartened and returns the pudding to the shelves.

Theme 3 – Confusing processes

“Well I'll go and get one or two items and then I just say that's enough... I've got what I really want and, I just leave it at that...”

- Laura (66 year old, retired female)

“If I've got some money left "oh good" ... well that's when I'll hit the treats, and hit the chips and lollies or chocccies”

- Jan (58 year old, unemployed female)

Theme 4 - Staff attitudes and assumptions

“It was nice... I had ladies helping me and.. I didn't feel judged”

- Grace (29 year old, single mother of three)

“Some of the volunteers made you feel like you were [a] second-class citizen... I just wanted to walk out, leave it, stick it up your jumper mate... it was bad enough for me to come anyway”

- Jan (58 year old, unemployed female)

Theme 5 – Choice

Field Note
22nd September 2015

He had two bags of broccoli and the volunteer asked another staff member if two bags of broccoli was ok, they said it was fine. As he was putting up the rest of his fruit and vegetables the other staff member kept interjecting “only one bag of potatoes” one of his two bags of potatoes were taken away, “only one bag of avocados” one of his two bags of avocados were taken away. After they had finished loading up his fruit and vegetables, they asked him if he wanted any more as he was not up to the limit, “you keep taking them away” was his response.

Theme 5 – Choice

“That beggars can't be choosers and that's I suppose... what I feel like the fundamental ethos of food bank is”

- Mary (43 year old, unemployed female)

“I'm not gonna pick and choose, like I needed the help and I got it and I'm not gonna say no you shouldn't have that when you could have this instead, just because that's what I'd prefer”

- Grace (29 year old, single mother of three)

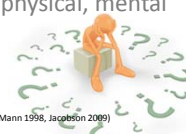
Theme 6 – Shame

“And it's really hard when you come... you're feeling... bit bad sometimes coming, and then you see stuff there that's really probably, well not human consumed-able because... it's starting to rot”

- Jan (58 year old, unemployed female)

Discussion

- ✧ Food bank used as a last resort
- ✧ Reliance on food charity undermines basic human dignity
- ✧ Violations of dignity can impact physical, mental and social well-being



(Douglas et al. 2015, Loopstra et al. 2012, De Marco et al. 2009, Poppendieck 1999, Kent 2005, Mann 1998, Jacobson 2009)

Discussion

- ✧ Food bank processes extremely confusing
- ✧ While food bank aims to provide choice – many operational systems act against this freedom
- ✧ Staff attitudes and behaviours could compound negative feelings



(Mares 2013, Loopstra et al. 2012, Verpy et al. 2003, Douglas et al. 2015, Kratzmann 2003, Nugent 2000, McPherson 2006, McNeill 2011.)

Discussion

Conclusion

- ✧ Community Food Banks are trying to restore dignity and choice
- ✧ Operational p choice and in some staff restrict
- ✧ Need a servic to navigate
- ✧ Need to foste :ance and positivity



Conclusion

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