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## A Qualitative Study Of How Communities Think About And Act Upon Hunger In The Presence Of A Food Banking System

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A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF HOW COMMUNITIES THINK ABOUT  
AND ACT UPON HUNGER IN THE PRESENCE OF A FOOD BANKING  
SYSTEM

by

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Bachelor of Arts  
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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## ABSTRACT

Hunger is often addressed by providing food directly to those experiencing symptoms of food insecurity and hunger. Even with the availability of government food assistance programs, food insecurity and hunger rates continue to rise. Many local community organizations (e.g., small food banks, faith-based organizations, schools) across the country have come together to create and implement a variety of non-government food programs. Although there is no evidence these programs lower food insecurity and hunger rates, community organizations appear to be strongly committed to sustaining these programs. Little is known about the basis for this commitment, i.e., “the will to act and to keep acting until the job is done” (Heaver, 2005). Many of these non-government food programs are implemented through the school system, and the effects of such programs on the educational setting are unknown. To understand commitment and the effects of non-government food programs, we conducted qualitative interviews with key actors at community organizations. Specifically we articulated 1) how decisions are made by community organizations to sustain commitment to non-government food programs to hunger; and 2) the effects of one non-government food program, backpack programs, on guidance counselors. In our first manuscript, we described how key actors at community organizations think about hunger, what they want, what they assume, how they identify themselves using tenants of Clark’s social policy theory; and what about non-government food programs engenders their commitment. We learned that all organizations want to be involved in the well-being of the community, and non-

government food programs provide a variety of ways in which community members can be involved. Faith-based organizations want to provide outreach programs that serve a perceived need in the community, and are interesting to their congregants. Many school participants reported that because of their commitment to students, they see themselves as little more than a mechanism through which food programs are provided, and believe they have little power to make suggestions to influence the food programs. Food bank participants identified that their role is to provide best practices and financial and logistical support for food programs. In our second manuscript, we described what types of non-government food programs are implemented through schools, how the daily routines of professional school counselors have changed to accommodate such programs, and positive and negative effects of these programs on staff and their teaching responsibilities. We learned that backpack programs provide professional school counselors with additional opportunities to engage with students and families and bring awareness of hunger to the local community. They can detract from professional school counselors' other responsibilities in schools (e.g., one-on-one meetings with students, staff meetings). From both manuscripts, we learned that providing food to others is a powerful act, and through these programs, food banks and faith-based organizations can provide a highly positive experience to their volunteers. Many of these programs are systematized and packaged by local food banks, making it accessible and easy for faith-based and other organizations to adopt. Seeking to improve the well-being of the community by ending hunger is not the primary value on which organizations focus; instead, it is the process of fulfilling other values (i.e., forming or maintaining relationships within the community), maintaining identity, and appealing to their

participants that strengthens their commitment to non-government food programs.

Similar to other non-government food programs, backpack programs obscure a discussion about poverty and provide an illusion of a solution to hunger.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NSLP.....	National School Lunch Program
SNAP .....	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
USC.....	University of South Carolina
WIC.....	Women, Infants, and Children

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Despite the existence of government-supported food-assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), there are still unmet food needs as evidenced by over twenty percent of U.S. families experiencing food insecurity and hunger (Nord, Andrews, & Carlson, 2005). As a response to an increased demand for food assistance, large independent food banks that collect, systematize, and deliver food to non-profit organizations have grown in number and size since the early 1980s (Janet Poppendieck, 1999; Warshawsky, 2010). With the partnership of community organizations (e.g., local food banks, faith-based organizations, and schools), the food-banking-centered model of emergency food assistance has become one of the largest and most influential food-delivery systems in the U.S (Warshawsky, 2010).

The development of large food banks was a response to decreased government funding to food assistance programs post the Reagan administration and the economic downturn of the early 1980s. Several events occurred which helped spur the rapid growth of food banks and food donations. This included the implementation of federal tax incentives for corporate donations that influenced the growth of food banks between 1970 and 1985, including the Tax Reform Act of 1976, and the Good Samaritan Food

Donation Act of 1996 (Tarasuk & Eakin, 2005; Warshawsky, 2010; Wilson, 2004). Both acts provided incentives to donate food and funding for big businesses, while legally absolving corporate donors of criminal and civil liability for food donations. The further consolidation and growth of the grocery and agricultural businesses streamlined the process of donating food. This prompted fewer, but larger, corporations to become involved in the food banking system.

One of these corporations, Feeding America, is now one of the ten largest charitable organizations in the country (America, 2014; Warshawsky, 2010). Feeding America owes much of its wide acceptance to its large geographic footprint and four-step food-banking model. First, food is donated from government organizations, private donors, and the food industry. Second, food is then transported to larger, regional food banks. Third, food donations are warehoused in these regional food banks until they are transferred to local community food banks. Fourth, food is then transferred to community organizations (e.g., schools, faith-based organizations), which provide non-government food programs (e.g., local pantries, senior feeding) (Feeding America, 2016b). Non-government food programs provide supplemental food and meals to families. The federal government does not support or regulate these programs. Instead, private national organizations (e.g., Feeding America, Salvation Army), and community organizations (e.g., churches, local food banks) provide food programs through their own financial and logistical support. Local food banks often pay a user fee to purchase food, programming details, and ability to be affiliated with Feeding America. There have been many studies examining the rise of food banks and their influence at the community level (Paulhamus & Cotugna, 1998; Riches, 2002; Tarasuk & Eakin, 2003; Warshawsky, 2010). While

these studies articulate, for example, how the Feeding America model functions at a corporate level, they do little to explain how it is that providing food through their programs has become a favorable solution to hunger in many communities (Warshawsky, 2010).

Sustaining non-government food programs requires significant support from communities. For example, local food banks often work with Feeding America to provide faith-based organizations and schools logistical assistance with various non-government food programs (Cotugna & Forbes, 2008; Y. E. Rodgers & Milewska, 2005; Warshawsky, 2010). Additionally, faith-based organizations (through the work of their ministries and volunteer programs) provide logistical support, finances, and other resources for the implementation of their non-government food programs (Feeding America, 2016b; Park & Smith, 2000; Warshawsky, 2010). Schools provide ready access to families and children for food distribution (Fram, Frongillo, Fishbein, & Burke, 2014)f. The effort put forth by all of these different types of organizations working together to provide non-government food programs suggests they are strongly committed to providing these programs, with little known about the basis for this commitment, i.e., “the will to act and to keep acting until the job is done” (Heaver, 2005). Commitment can further foster common interests, camaraderie, and trust between organizations, but may also limit organizational growth and political involvement in addressing hunger for the sake of maintaining status quo (Brown, 1996; Lok & Crawford, 1999).

Non-government food programs are frequently provided through the school system (Ecker, 2012; Feeding America, 2016b). The literature provides varied results in assessing benefits for students and their families, with limited literature illuminating the

effects that implementation of non-government food programs has on the schools internal structure. The provision of non-government food programs through schools may have unknown benefits and consequences for staff members and students.

Fourteen percent of American households reported they have experienced food insecurity in the last six months. Feeding America, only one food bank, serves over twenty-five million Americans annually through over fifteen programs.. We must posit then, that perhaps the interest in providing non-government food programs is not to actually address hunger, but for something else. Because the factors that contribute to effectiveness are complex, lack of complete effectiveness of existing programs does not necessarily mean that these programs serve other purposes (although it may well be that these programs also serve other purposes). This has implications for how communities think about and act upon hunger, and how hunger is discussed in communities.

This research was conducted by studying a local food bank, various faith-based organizations, and elementary and middle schools in central South Carolina. The research objectives were to articulate: a) how and why communities are committed to providing non-government food programs, b) how non-government food programs affect the setting in which they are provided, and c) how hunger is discussed and acted upon in a southern metropolitan area with a high prevalence of food insecurity.

## **1.2 PRELIMINARY STUDIES**

Previous work and coursework completed in the student's anthropology undergraduate program at Arizona State University in the School for Human Evolution and Social Change added to her experience for this dissertation. There, she focused on the

indigenous women's rights of native peoples in Colombia and Egypt. She was able to apply her communication, research, and advocacy skills. After graduation, she volunteered in women and children's health clinics in India, Morocco, and Peru for nine months exposing her to the system of international food aid. The student used this time to refine her interviewing and observational skills.

While studying towards her Ph.D. at the University of South Carolina (USC), the student took coursework that gave her the skills necessary to complete this dissertation. As a graduate student researcher, the student aided in the development of the only measure which has been shown to be valid and reliable for assessing child-level food security status. During the 2012-2013 academic school year, the student was the project manager for "Food for Thought" project, which aimed to develop a protocol to systematically identify children experiencing food insecurity through the school system. This dissertation is built upon questions and themes from both of these work experiences.

Additionally, the student convened a multidisciplinary committee with expertise in the social work and public health fields. Dr. Cheri Shapiro holds dual associate professor positions in the College of Social Work and at the Institute for Families in Society at USC specializing in stakeholder engagement and parenting research. Dr. Ruth Saunders is a Professor Emerita in the Arnold School of Public Health specializing in health promotion programs in organizational settings. Dr. Christine Blake is an associate professor in the Arnold School of Public Health. Her work focuses on child and family nutrition through the use of qualitative methods. Dr. Edward Frongillo is the department chair of Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior in the Arnold School of Public

Health, and chair of the student's dissertation committee. He has expertise in research with food-insecure populations and nutrition policy analysis.

### **1.3 STUDY AIMS**

This study used a qualitative approach to understand how communities come to sustain non-government food programs. The study addressed the following specific aims:

**SA1: To articulate how decisions are made by community organizations to sustain commitment to non-government food programs.**

**RQ1:** What is the problem community organizations are aiming to address through the sustaining non-government food programs?

**RQ2:** How do community organizations identify themselves?

**RQ3:** What do community organizations want from their non-government food programs?

**RQ4:** What are their assumptions about their non-government food programs?

**SA2: To articulate the effects of backpack programs on professional school counselors in schools.**

**RQ5:** How do professional school counselors incorporate backpack programs into their schools?

**RQ6:** How has the implementation of backpack programs influenced the relationships inside and outside of the school setting?

**RQ7:** What do professional school counselors need to implement the backpack program?

**RQ8:** What activities have changed to incorporate the backpack program?

The dissertation is organized as follows: a review of the literature (Chapter 2), a discussion of the theoretical framework and research methodology (Chapter 3), research study results in the form of two manuscripts (Chapter 4), and discussion and recommendations for future research (Chapter 5). Manuscripts are formatted in accordance with the specifications of target journals.

## CHAPTER 2

### BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

#### 2.1 THE SHIFTING POWER OF FOOD BANKS

Prior to the early 1980's, food pantries were localized and community supported often located in churches, outside of nearby schools, attached to grocery stores, or were held in community centers (Biggerstaff, Morris, & Nichols-Casebolt, 2002; Daponte, 2000; Landers, 2007). Although the government may have donated some surplus food in select locations, food pantries were thought of as “neighbors helping neighbors” rather than large conglomerate corporations feeding the hungry (Lee & Frongillo, 2001; Warshawsky, 2014). When President Reagan cut a majority of government funding to SNAP, hunger rates rose in the early 1980's (Leitner, Peck, & Sheppard, 2007; Wilson, 2004). Larger, more organized initiatives slowly took the place of community food pantries in response to the unmet need. For example, Feeding America collected, systematized, and delivered food to low- income communities, often utilizing the infrastructure of the existing food pantries (Janet Poppendieck, 1995; Warshawsky, 2010).

Feeding America's business model allows for enough autonomy for the local food banks and pantries to remain quasi-independent in decisions they make about heir food distributions. Local food banks and pantries have the ability to seek out other food donations and community support, but rely on Feeding America to secure food from large

corporate manufactures and retailers through nationwide initiatives and facilitate the acquisition of government supplied food (Warshawsky, 2010). Additionally, Feeding America often provides internal grants and “seed money” for special local projects (Feeding America, 2016b). Any organization that chooses to work with Feeding America also has the ability to use the Feeding America brand and logo to command attention and respect (Feeding America, 2016a, 2016b). Some literature has reported that Feeding America is fully autonomous, as it has reached institutional stability, and has the potential to influence national discourse on poverty and hunger (Janet Poppendieck, 1999; Warshawsky, 2010).

Poppendieck raises concerns about the institutionalization of the food banking system. The development, implementation, and perpetuation of the system allows for a shift in the focus from the social inequality drivers behind hunger, to a focus on charity and support for the social service mechanisms. By allowing the public through their supported organizations to reconcile their personal guilt through participating in non-government food programs, the food banking system encourages the continuation of giving food masked as effective action (Jan Poppendieck, 1994; Janet Poppendieck, 1999).

Support for the food banking system comes from various corporate and private organizations, and the media. With this support, the system is accepted as a legitimate symbol for fighting hunger and improving communities (Tarasuk & Eakin, 2003, 2005). To be part of this system, local food banks and other support organizations may be limited politically to freely discuss hunger, and other possible solutions to addressing hunger, to maintain their role in the community (Warshawsky, 2010). These

organizations are choosing their affiliation with the larger system, over their ability to advocate for addressing hunger differently. In this scenario, hunger can be easily depoliticized and frequently disconnected from a broader discussion surrounding the social determinants of poverty (Janet Poppendieck, 1995; Riches, 2002; Warshawsky, 2010).

The food banking system has been thoroughly studied in the Chicago area. Food banks there have grown in size and financial robustness, but also have imposed their institutional control over smaller food pantries, schools, and other community organizations (Warshawsky, 2010). By promoting public-private partnerships and third-party involvement in hunger, Chicago's food banks play an important role by influencing the conceptualization of hunger, the management and approaches to poverty, and how the organizations of food distribution is determined.

## **2.2 THE CHURCH AS A SETTING FOR NON-GOVERNMENT FOOD PROGRAMS**

Given the rising rates of food insecurity and hunger in the southern U.S., there has been a rise in church-supported programs aimed at alleviating this problem. Churches have been considered an influential and important presence in communities across the southeast, with many of their missions extending to social, economic, and political issues affecting their congregants and communities (A. Ammerman et al., 2002). As an integral part of the food banking system in Columbia, South Carolina, most non-government food programs are provided through churches with the support of a food bank (Feeding America, 2016b). Little is known about these partnerships beyond understanding the

churches' proactive stance on giving to the needy, and local food banks' interests in providing food to the local community.

When non-government food programs become a permanent fixture in a community, "Wenceslas syndrome" can occur. Wenceslas syndrome is the process by which the joys and demands of personal and organizational charity divert organizations from the more fundamental solutions to the deepening poverty and growing inequality (Janet Poppendieck, 1999). This creates a corresponding process in which this diversion of efforts leaves the door open to those who want more inequality, not less. Seeing someone eat at the hands of another is extremely powerful, and creates a "charitable high", increasing the likelihood of attachment to the act of giving (Kaplan, Pamuk, Lynch, Cohen, & Balfour, 1996; Janet Poppendieck, 1999; Tarasuk & Dachner, 2009). Organizations engaging in non-government food programs, which elicit this type of response, are likely to continue to provide opportunities that satisfy the individual in this way. Organizations may become distracted by the logistical challenges of acquiring food and administering it, while the community as a whole has ignored the increasing gap between themselves and those they are serving (Jan Poppendieck, 1994; Janet Poppendieck, 1999; Silverman, 1996; Tarasuk & Dachner, 2009; Tarasuk & Eakin, 2005).

It is possible that as churches are the main mechanism in the southern United States through which non-government food programs are provided have become more occupied with concerns over the process of their programs and less focused on the solutions' intended outcomes. Churches in this way, are able to satisfy their members' attachment to donating food, by justifying it through the national agenda set by the food

banking system (Anderson & Moore, 1978; Clary et al., 1998). Additionally, proximity to the community in which one lives has been shown to increase volunteer efforts and enthusiasm. Serving the immediate community may further incentivize churches to provide non-government food programs (Anderson & Moore, 1978; Becker & Dhingra, 2001; Clary et al., 1998; Janoski, Musick, & Wilson, 1998).

There are two approaches used to frame, at an organizational level, how churches obtain fulfillment from providing non-government food programs: (1) the symbolic nature of a sociological approach, where motivation is part of a larger cultural understanding or as an expression of certain values and beliefs; and (2) the functional psychological approach, where motivation is an expression of pre-existing needs and dispositions, and volunteering provides a match between the individuals' psychological needs and that of the organization (Brown, 1996; Cnaan & Amroffell, 1994). Churches encourage serving the needy, allowing for their volunteers to fulfill a larger cultural understanding of belonging to a community and giving back with religious fulfillment. Simultaneously, volunteers may have had personal experiences with hunger, or may enjoy the social aspect of volunteering, and are able to fill their own personal psychological needs through non-government food programs.

Efforts through the church attract both volunteers and activists. These terms are often used interchangeably, but have significantly different meanings because they attract different types of people. Activists are concerned with social change, while volunteers are concerned with improving individual problems (Allen, 2008; N. T. Ammerman, 1997; Brown, 1996; Caputo, 1997). Church members self-identify as volunteers, not activists (Park & Smith, 2000; Wymer, 1998). Non-government food programs are often focused

on the individual, and the immediate relief of hunger. These initiatives do little to bring focus to the greater socio-political issues that contribute to poverty.

### **2.3 FOOD ASSISTANCE AS POLITICAL PRIORITY**

The food banking system is a collective action initiative, and presents itself as a means to pursue both social and political change (America, 2014). Of central concern with collective action initiatives is the role of power: the power of organizations who are connected to the food banking system; the power of ideas used to define and describe hunger; the power of the political contexts to inhibit or enhance political support; and the power of some characteristics of hunger (e.g., statistics on hungry children in the U.S.) (Clary et al., 1998; D. Pelletier, Kraak, McCullum, Uusitalo, & Rich, 1999; D. L. Pelletier, Kraak, McCullum, & Uusitalo, 2000; Shiffman & Smith, 2007).

The power of the organizations involved in addressing hunger directly dictates how influential the national food banking system is in the community (Shiffman & Smith, 2007). Initiatives for planning and addressing hunger are reliant upon the actors who have the control to make decisions, often forming community advocates championed by prominent leaders of food banks and churches. Feeding America and the local food banks agree on basic issues (e.g., that hunger should be addressed through non-government food programs), and are more likely to acquire political support if they are united on how to solve hunger. Feeding America, local food banks, churches, and schools may have different interests and values that are expressed and acted upon, but they all agree that addressing hunger in communities is of importance. For example, all of these institutions

value-maintaining relationships within the community to provide programs they believe will address hunger– but their interest to maintain those relationships may differ.

Hunger has been ideologically framed as a public health concern, a child development problem, and humanitarian crisis. Internal framing used between large food banks and community organizations ensures that food insecurity and hunger are issues that are tangible, and can be remedied by their volunteerism and donation of food (Bronfenbrenner, 1997; Shiffman & Smith, 2007). External framing is meant to resonate with the public often used to gather funding and further support. Hunger, and in particular, child hunger, has the potential to generate public support as it can draw on emotions of the public. Framing the issue of hunger has been crucial in the development and support of non-government food programs.

Policy windows are important for understanding moments in time when national or global conditions align favorably for an issue, presenting with the opportunity for advocates to influence decision makers(Shiffman & Smith, 2007). Policy windows are open after major events, disasters, discoveries, or international forums. Although there has not been a single “event” that has brought food insecurity and hunger into the forefront of the U.S., many factors have contributed to the policy window that exists for addressing hunger. For example, food insecurity and hunger are mentioned in the Millennium Development Goals receiving global recognition. The continuing rising rates of food insecurity and hunger have sparked interest across the country, creating a need for altruism, which has helped the development of non-government food programs. President Obama campaigned on a platform in the first election that included ending childhood hunger; this is still in play even in the second term. Food insecurity and hunger

have also been part of the national conversation due to other issues surrounding food quality in the NSLP and after school snack programs.

Hunger triggers strong emotions with the public. The food banking system and non-government food programs provide a way in which average Americans can partake in addressing an issue important to them. Food insecurity and hunger rates are able to be measured, lending findings to gaining more political support since policymakers and advocates have information to confirm the severity and the progress in addressing the issue (Shiffman & Smith, 2007). Additionally, giving food to those who are hungry is a tangible, simple solution (Fram et al., 2014; Kendall, Olson, & Frongillo Jr, 1996; Nord & Parker, 2010). Policymakers and advocates are able to devote resources to alleviating hunger they think can be addressed effectively and less expensively than other options while obtaining public support. The food banking system appeals to the emotional nature of the policy, while capitalizing on a participating action plan that has helped generate public attention.

The food banking system has capitalized on the use of power for ensuring hunger will receive political priority and support (Shiffman & Smith, 2007). Each of these concepts enhances the likelihood the issue of food insecurity and hunger will receive priority, and will be addressed through the food banking system. The U.S. has generated political support for the food banking system because the movement is cohesive, well led, guided by a strong institution (Feeding America, 2016), and is backed by local systems (Shiffman & Smith, 2007). Taking advantage of the political support system provided by the U.S., Feeding America is able to present itself as an optimal solution to address food

insecurity and hunger, and has since developed a framework that resonates with the general public.

## **2.4 COMMITMENT TO NON-GOVERNMENT FOOD PROGRAMS**

Sustaining non-government food programs requires significant support from communities (Tarasuk & Eakin, 2005). Local food banks work through Feeding America to provide faith-based organizations and schools logistical support for non-government food programs (Warshawsky, 2010). Faith-based organizations, through the work of their ministries and volunteers, provide logistical support, finances, and other resources for solutions they support. Schools provide ready access to families and children for food distribution. Sustaining non-government food programs by these organizations suggests they are strongly committed to providing these programs, although little is known about the basis for this commitment, i.e., “the will to act and to keep acting until the job is done” (Heaver, 2005; Lintelo & Lakshman, 2015). Commitment is a binding pledge, with the obligation that organizations are dedicated and will push through setbacks and follow through with their commitment until they feel their job is completed. This commitment is often the backbone of an organization, giving its members strength and a common interest through which to direct their efforts (Brown, 1996; Hunt & Morgan, 1994; Lok & Crawford, 1999). The literature suggests that organizations cooperate at a higher level when they share a commitment, and doing so can help to foster camaraderie, trust, and caring (Brown, 1996; Lok & Crawford, 1999; te Lintelo & Lakshman, 2015). In the context of non-government food programs, the greater basis there is for commitment, the greater the momentum that can be generated to provide these programs.

Sustained non-government food programs are marketed to help “end hunger” (Feeding America, 2016b; Janet Poppendieck, 1999; Tarasuk & Eakin, 2003; Warshawsky, 2010). They are becoming increasingly common across communities, but food insecurity rates continue to rise throughout the country (“USDA Economic Research Service - Key Statistics & Graphics,” n.d.; Warshawsky, 2010). This seems counter-intuitive, as it would be expected that food insecurity rates would decrease with an abundance of additional food available in communities. Organizational commitment to non-government food programs is perhaps not about “ending hunger,” but rather about pursuing particular programs. This is consistent with literature documenting a commitment to nutrition programs. For example, governments sometimes claim they are improving child nutrition, even though the solutions they are committed to, have little effect on the nutritional intake of children (Heaver, 2005). In this instance, the commitment to particular programs may cause organizations to miss opportunities to embrace new innovations to improve child nutrition.

Similarly, literature suggests that SNAP and WIC are helpful to those experiencing very low levels of food security, but is unclear about the long term benefits of providing food to families experiencing low and marginal food security (Wilde & Nord, 2005). Although the literature suggests that providing food to these families may not help their overall food security, the solution of giving food is continued. Commitment to a particular solution to address hunger is consistent with many food security initiatives worldwide (Curtis & McClellan, 1995; Heaver, 2005; Sridhar, 2007).

Organizations that are committed to a particular non-government food programs also position themselves to influence others in the community (Clary et al., 1998; Lok &

Crawford, 1999). For example, if a particular ministry group acts with dedicated commitment towards a non-government food program, other organizations not originally involved may pay attention and get involved, or pioneer their own solution. Commitment to non-government food programs can influence involvement, and how the community discusses and thinks about those utilizing their programs (Anderson & Moore, 1978; Becker & Dhingra, 2001; Cnaan & Amroffell, 1994; Janoski et al., 1998). This inherently influences whether decisions about how to address hunger and food insecurity are made locally, nationally, or globally, and also how to think about those who are utilizing these services.

## **2.5 EFFECTS OF FOOD INSECURITY AND HUNGER ON CHILDREN**

Many non-government food programs target arguably the most vulnerable population in the U.S.: children. Children living in food insecure homes are less likely to have access to foods that are healthy, and nutrient dense, and are therefore more likely to consume foods that have a high-fat, high-calorie content (Dunifon & Kowaleski-Jones, 2003; Figlio & Winicki, 2005; Winicki & Jemison, 2003). Due to limited access to nutrient-rich foods, these children are often at risk for obesity, cardiovascular risk, and diabetes (Dinour, Bergen, & Yeh, 2007; Drewnowski & Specter, 2004; Finney Rutten, Yaroch, Colón-Ramos, Johnson-Askew, & Story, 2010; Lozoff, Jimenez, Hagen, Mollen, & Wolf, 2000). The literature further suggests that children who experience limited access to healthy foods are at risk for delays in both mental and social development (Ashabi & O'Neal, 2008; Campbell & Ramey, 1994; Fram, Frongillo, Draper, & Fishbein, 2013).

Children who live in a food insecure household may be at risk for academic and behavioral problems. Children from food insecure homes were found to be more likely to have a repeated grade, and more likely to have seen a psychologist as compared with children from food secure homes (Alaimo, Olson, & Frongillo, 2001; Murphy et al., 1998). Likewise, Nord and Parker found significantly higher rates of repeating a grade among children ages 6-11 from food insecure homes (Nord & Parker, 2010). Additionally, food insecure children make fewer academic gains throughout the school year than their food secure counterparts (Winicki & Jemison, 2003).

When compared with children from food secure homes, children experiencing food insecurity are more likely to experience behavioral and emotional distress (Slopen, Fitzmaurice, Williams, & Gilman, 2010). Children from food insecure homes may display aggressive behavior, such as conduct issues (e.g. fighting, disobedience, drug abuse, lack of attention) (Carr, 2006). These children also may experience emotional behaviors including crying, worrying, and withdrawal more frequently (Carr, 2006; Fram et al., 2013; Slack & Yoo, 2005). The United State Department of Agriculture reported higher rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidal symptoms among school-aged children experiencing food insecurity (USDA, 2010).

Fram et al. reported that children are cognitively aware of and have their own experiences with food insecurity, regardless of their caregivers attempts to shield them from hardship (Fram et al., 2013). Several studies have found a strong association between parental depression and food insecurity (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2008; Bronte-Tinkew, Zaslow, Capps, Horowitz, & McNamara, 2007; Slopen et al., 2010; Wehler et

al., 2004). These studies suggest that parental depression may strain positive parenting behaviors, and may have negative effects on child-well being.

The literature provides many example of the importance of proper nutrition and food security. Children living in food insecure homes are at risk for physical, mental, and developmental problems. In an effort to combat food insecurity and shield children from the harms of food insecurity, many families rely on government food assistance programs.

## **2.6 GOVERNMENT FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

In an effort to assist families, the U.S. government provides a variety of federally funded programs that provide nutritious food. SNAP and WIC are targeted to alleviate food insecure families (USDA, 2010). The literature suggests these two federally funded programs are effective in improving several areas of intellectual and psychosocial functioning for participating children and adults. In a follow-up study comparing nineteen pairs of siblings whose parents had enrolled in WIC, younger siblings who began the program at an early age had significantly higher IQ scores when compared with their older siblings(Hicks et. al., 1988) Additionally, children whose families are enrolled in SNAP were reported to have greater increased in reading and math scores when compared with children in households that discontinued the use of SNAP (Frongillo et.al., 2006; Hicks et. al., 1988).

As many children who experience food insecurity at home attend public schools, the government also funds the NSLP which aims to provide low-income students with two nutritious meals at no, or a reduced cost to their families. The NSLP has been reported as improving participating students' academic and behavior performance during

the school day(Bro, Shank, Williams, & McLaughlin, 1994; Bryant, 1913; Dunifon & Kowaleski-Jones, 2003). Additionally, in many places throughout the country, the NSLP has expanded to also include a breakfast component(Bro et al., 1994; Bryant, 1913).

Despite some studies' results, others have reported that participation in the NSLP was not associated with improvement in child well-being (e.g. worrying, fighting, reading achievement, and math scores). One study found that participation in the NSLP was associated with higher rates of worrying, and lower scores in mathematics (Dunifon & Kowaleski-Jones, 2003). Additionally, Connell et al. reported on children's psychological perceptions of food insecurity results in feelings of worry, anxiety, and sadness about their home food situations(Connell, Lofton, Yadrick, & Rehner, 2005; Connell, Nord, Lofton, & Yadrick, 2004). Although their cohort of children had access to the NSLP and school breakfast, children from food insecure homes still worried about meals over the weekend and for dinner (Dunifon & Kowaleski-Jones, 2003). The additional stress of finding food for times when they were not in school in addition to other characteristics of experiencing poverty could explain why children did not show improvement through NSLP participation.

## **2.7 SCHOOLS AND HUNGER**

Beyond providing the NSLP and school breakfast programs, schools have a history of responding to the needs of children and families. During the great depression, schools became an epicenter for health related services including primary care, dentistry, and providing surplus food to children and their families(Bryant, 1913; Gunderson, 1971). Although limited, the literature suggests that teachers are actively recognizing and

responding to the needs of students and their families. In a recent national survey, 53% of teachers reported purchasing extra food for students who did not have enough to eat (Share our Strength, 2012). Many schools regularly organize holiday food baskets to distribute to families, provide additional snacks to students throughout the day, or establish onsite food pantries that are available to parents (Fram et al., 2014). Fram et al suggests that schools are well poised to address and respond to child hunger, but without addressing both the physical and psychological contributors to food insecurity, the perpetuation of hunger through non-government food programs is inevitable (Fram et al., 2014).

## **2.8 THE BACKPACK PROGRAM**

Federally funded government food programs require that participating families demonstrate financial need (Ecker, 2012). For many families, the federally funded supplement is not enough; or, families may sit just above the financial cut off, experience a temporary hardship, or any other number of scenarios where a family needs food assistance (Ecker, 2012). Feeding America and other large food banks typically do not require financial information for a family to receive assistance (Ecker, 2012). Likewise, with privatized non-government food programs, organization may set whatever parameters they choose to select families to participate (Feeding America, 2016a; Y. E. Rodgers & Milewska, 2005).

Feeding America's backpack program serves over 450,000 students weekly across 38 states, and is one of the largest non-government food programs provided through schools across the country (Feeding America, 2016a). If communities do not have access

to a food bank, that affiliates with Feeding America, many communities have in place developed their own “replica” backpack programs, which replicate the principals created and implemented by Feeding America(Cotugna & Forbes, 2008; Ecker, 2012; Shanks & Harden, 2015). Most backpack programs target families where children participate in the NSLP.

The backpack program is designed to be a supplement for students experiencing weekend hunger due to their dependence on the NSLP and school breakfast programs. The goal of Feeding America’s backpack program is to reduce childhood weekend hunger through the distribution of easy-to-prepare food given in separate backpacks every Friday or the last day of school prior to a weekend(Feeding America, 2016a). For extended breaks, the food is typically dropped off to families or held at a specific food pantry for families to come and collect (Ecker, 2012). There is enough food in the backpacks for the child to have breakfast, lunch and a snack throughout the time they are not in school. The food is meant to be child- friendly, single serving, non- perishable items that a child can prepare. Feeding America has worked closely with registered dieticians to develop a menu full of balanced meals and snacks(Feeding America, 2016a).

The literature available on backpack programs in schools is inconclusive on their efficacy. A study conducted in Minnesota reported that students participating in a backpack program did not self-report a significant decrease in their hunger, nor did their on-task behavior in the classroom increase significantly after receiving a backpack(Ecker, 2012). A study conducted by Cotunga et al., reported that participating backpack students displayed positive psychological effects(Cotugna & Forbes, 2008). This is supported by two other studies completed by Rodgers et al., and Shanks et al. which reported on

teacher and staff perceptions of students participating in backpack programs(Y. V. Rodgers & Milewska, 2007; Shanks & Harden, 2015). In both, students, teachers and staff reported participating students appeared to exhibit better overall classroom behavior, and improved academic performance and focus(Cotugna & Forbes, 2008; Y. E. Rodgers & Milewska, 2005; Shanks & Harden, 2015).

Some food insecure children experienced social consequences (e.g., shame) with others knowing they took home a backpack of food, suggesting care must be exercised when addressing food insecurity(Bernal, Frongillo, & Jaffe, 2016). The current literature does not explore social consequences of other non-government food programs in schools for students, nor provide concrete evidence that these programs reduce food insecurity and hunger amongst students.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

#### 3.1 SIGNIFICANCE

*“Among households in South Carolina, 90,000 adults and children have reported skipping meals, going without food for a whole day, and cutting the quality of their food because they did not have enough money for food. Household food insecurity has detrimental effects on children, including adverse physical and mental health outcomes.”* (South Carolina Nutrition Center, 2012)

Nationally and internationally, hunger is addressed by providing food. In the U.S., the act of giving food is packaged and marketed to end hunger, and is supported by community efforts. These non-government food programs require a great deal of organizational commitment (e.g., time, funding, volunteers). Given the rising rates of food insecurity and hunger in an abundance of food programs, these programs may not be most effective to address the complex issue of hunger. As community organizations continue to sustain such programs, perhaps their commitment is to something other than hunger. This is consistent with literature documenting commitment to nutrition programs. For example, governments sometimes claim they are improving child nutrition, while solutions to which they are committed have little effect on the nutritional intake of children (Heaver, 2005). Sustaining commitment to ineffective programs may

overshadow new innovations to improving child nutrition. Similarly, literature suggests that SNAP and WIC are helpful to those experiencing very low food security, but is unclear about the long term benefits of providing food to families experiencing low and marginal food security (Wilde & Nord, 2005). Although the literature suggests that providing food to these families may not help their overall food security, the solution of giving food is continued. Organizations that are committed to a particular cause or program also position themselves to influence outsiders in the community (Clary et al., 1998; Lok & Crawford, 1999). (Anderson & Moore, 1978; Becker & Dhingra, 2001; Cnaan & Amroffell, 1994; Janoski et al., 1998). This inherently influences how locally, nationally, and globally decisions are made about how to address hunger and food insecurity, and how to think about those who are utilizing these services.

Many non-government food programs are provided through schools. Fram et al. suggests that schools are well poised to address and respond to child hunger, but without professionals in schools to use a holistic approach in addressing both physical and psychological contributors to food insecurity, the perpetuation of hunger through such programming is inevitable(Fram et al., 2014). The literature available provides some insight into the backpack program effects (e.g., long-term outcomes, results, or consequences) on participating students, but they do little to illuminate the effects of the backpack program on the providing organization, schools (Tarasuk, 1996).

This dissertation makes a significant contribution to the literature, in that it articulates how non-government food programs engender sustained commitment from community organizations. It also explores the effects of non-government food programs on schools, and reports on the implications for school staff and draws conclusions from

existing literature on the possible effects on participating students. In addition, the dissertation adds to the conceptual framework for thinking about non-government food programs in schools by recognizing new practices made to support these programs. The results of this study can assist the continued efforts to address hunger in the U.S. by providing a lens through which researchers can understand the provision of non-government food programs being continued.

### **3.2 INNOVATION**

This study provides a insight on what about non-government food programs engender commitment, and the implications of this commitment. It explores how a shared interest shapes the ways in which local communities think about and respond to hunger in their community. The research articulates the relationships surrounding local food assistance systems, and adding to the literature a greater understanding of how communities are thinking about hunger, and how their perspectives translate into action.

A qualitative approach permitted an interpretation of the thought processes of community organizations within the context of their geographic and social setting. Specifically, this allowed for an in-depth look into how perspectives become translated into local, non-government food programs and policies. This study provided insight into how a local food bank functions within the presence of non-government food programs, and how this presence has influenced the ways in which communities think about and respond to hunger. Additionally, it provided important insight into relationships between community organizations, how they work together (e.g. reconcile their wants and needs), reach decisions, and accept trade-offs made to sustain their programs. To date, no study

to our knowledge has assessed how local food banks and community organizations function within this context.

### **3.3 STUDY APPROACH**

The study had two specific aims: SA1) to understand what about non-government food programs engenders commitment from community organizations, and SA2) to understand how non-government food programs affect the responsibilities of professional school counselors in schools through which they are provided. These specific aims were accomplished by conducting qualitative, in-depth interviews with key actors at faith based organizations, schools, and a food bank about their orientations to hunger, the basis for their commitment to non-government food programs, and the implications of their actions to provide non-government food programs.

The study was guided by the ecological perspective, Shiffman and Smith's collective action theory, Clark's social policy theory, and Hawe's systems-theory, (Bronfenbrenner, 1997; Clark, 2002; Shiffman & Smith, 2007) and is supported by a constructivist qualitative approach.

### **3.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This research study used several theories and concepts. The socioecological perspective (McLeroy et al., Bibeau, Steckler & Glanz, 1988), social determinants of health (Marmont, 2008), the food banking system (Warshawsky, 2010), and the policy process (Clark, 2002) guided the conceptual framework for the sampling, interview guide, and first manuscript. Additionally, systems-theory (Hawe, 1998) was used to guide the data analysis for the second manuscript.

Socioecological perspective describes how multiple levels of society influences health behavior (McLeroy et al., 1988) and captures the structural factors influencing the policy and systems environment of global food assistance. For example, the socioecological perspective can inform how food assistance is delivered and available in a local community, as well as how large food banks and the government can impact food assistance accessibility.

The food banking system explains how non-government food programs are delivered to participants through various organizations (Warshawsky, 2010). Large food banks, which utilize their power, funding, and reach, recruit smaller food banks. Small food banks must pay a monetary “user fee” to the larger food bank to acquire food, seed money for small projects, and instructional materials. These small food banks are geographically diverse, but almost all have access to a variety of supporting community organizations (e.g., faith-based organizations, schools, banks, hospital systems). Through these community organizations and their volunteer base, the smaller food bank is able to provide non-government food programs (e.g., small food pantries at a church, senior feeding programs). Smaller food banks have enough autonomy to make their own decisions about their non-government food programs, and are able to affiliate with the larger food bank.

Social determinants of health are the complex, overlapping social and economic structures, including physical and social environmental factors that are responsible for most health inequities (Marmot et al., 2008). Examples of physical environmental factors of the food banking system include the availability and accessibility of food, and the sustainability of non-government food programs (Martinez, 2012). An example of a

social environmental factor of the food system is organizational commitment or interest in providing non-government food programs, or how community organizations interact with non-government food programs to address hunger. Although social determinants of health were not used explicitly in the development of our conceptual models, tenets of social determinants of health helped guide our development of the interview guide and probes. The first conceptual model is influenced by the socioecological perspective (McLeroy et al., Bibeau, Steckler & Glanz, 1988) and the food banking system (Warshawsky, 2010). “Food banking in the five sources of influence observed in South Carolina” depicts the food banking system present in the Columbia, South Carolina community (Figure 3.1, below):

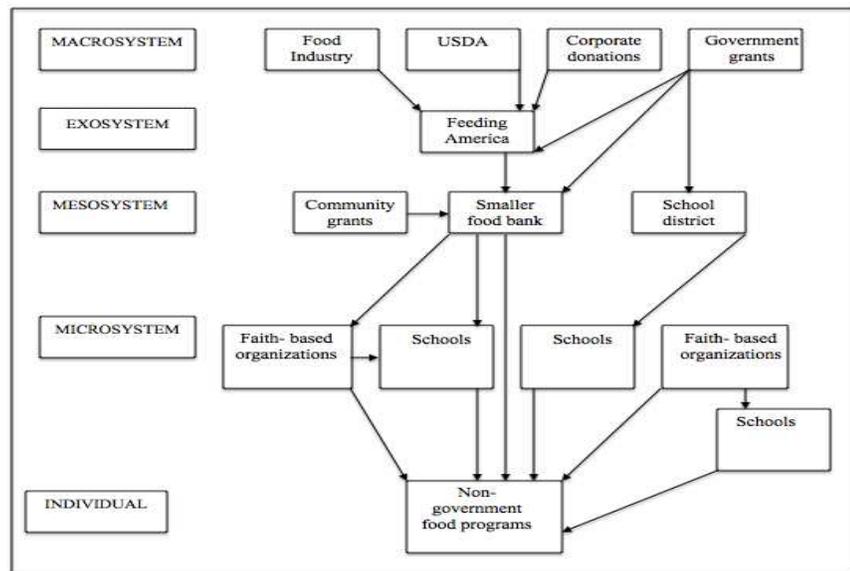


Figure 3.1. Food banking in the five sources of influence observed in South Carolina

To further explore how organizations interact within the food banking system, Clark’s policy process framework was utilized. We used this framework to develop the interview guide, and direct coding concepts for the first manuscript. The policy process

frameworks was useful for articulating how community organizations in the food banking system come to a consensus about, or choose a non-government food program, and how they implement that solution. The framework aided in the understanding of what engenders commitment to non-government food programs (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. Policy framework

<b>Category</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Orientation to hunger	How organizations think about hunger in their communities
Orientation to a solution	How organizations think hunger should be addressed in their communities
Identity	How organizations see themselves in relation to others in the community
Wants	What organizations require out of providing a non-government food program
Assumptions	What organizations believe will happen because of their commitment to non-government food programs
Values	Assets or resources used to assume any of the above categories

Community organizations are likely to view hunger in their community in different ways. It is therefore important to understand their orientation to hunger and their solution to hunger as baseline for learning what engenders their commitment. Clark’s policy process framework states that in addition to orientation to hunger and proposed solution, one must also understand: 1) identity, or how an organization describes their personality, role, or behavior; 2) assumptions, or what the expectations are of their non-government food programs and those who use them in the past and in the future; and 3) wants, or what the organization and participants want in terms of values.

Values, as noted in Figure 3.1, are assets and resources that can be used by organizations to help their organization acquire benefits. Values can be used to help

support their identities, wants and assumptions. They can also be used as a “currency” to attain more or different values. For example, if a large church prioritizes creating relationships (value of affection) as part of their non-government food programs, they may use their position (value of power) in the community to negotiate meetings with other influential community organizations:

Table 3.2 Policy Values

<b>Values</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Power	Make out and carry decisions
Enlightenment	To have knowledge
Wealth	To have money or its equivalent
Well-being	To have health, physical and psychic
Skill	Special abilities
Affection	To have family, friends, and warm community relationships
Respect	Show and receive deference
Rectitude	Ethical standards

Hawe’s systems- theory guided the understanding and studying of the effects of non-government food programs on professional school counselors in the second manuscript. The analysis for the second manuscript draws attention to the networks of social relationships that make up schools, activities, and materials – all relating to how they are affected by introducing a backpack program. Four concepts of inquiry were suggested to map the effects of the backpack program on school settings, and its implications:

(i) Embedding: The sustainability of the backpack program in schools yields insights into how the procedures around the program become part of the school’s organizational routine. There are two dimensions that signify the extent to which the

backpack program may become embedded in organizational school practices; the reach, or how far across the system the backpack program is evident (e.g., orientation packets to the entire school, mentioned in regular staff meetings), and the intensiveness of the backpack program's integration into routine practice (e.g., time and space dedicated to the backpack program). How the backpack program becomes embedded, or part of the school's regular routine, is indicative of the institutionalization and acceptance of the program. Understanding how the backpack program is embedded is important in the context of what else is occurring simultaneously at the school, and what support is available to aid with implementation.

(ii) Relationships: Relationships within the school setting (e.g., teachers and guidance counselors) and outside partnerships (e.g., professional school counselors and contacts at faith-based organizations) tying the school to outside support organizations (e.g., churches, food banks) may influence how the backpack program functions, and why the backpack program is sustained. We aimed to understand how the backpack program affects the nature of relationships related to the backpack program.

(iii) Materials: Both raw and cultural materials are resources that are used in the implementation of the backpack program (Haw et. al., Clark 2002). Raw materials may be people (e.g., manpower required to pack backpacks), places (e.g., rooms in schools storing the backpacks), money (e.g., funds to buy food), or other materials (e.g., backpacks, flyers about the program). Cultural materials may be ideas, beliefs, or social norms (e.g., behavior, customs, traditions). The backpack program has the potential to transform people, events, and places changing the setting (the school) that link all three in the process.

(iv) Displaced activities: Intervention research has traditionally focused on the new activity introduced, and the effects on the recipients of the new activity. As schools have had to make changes to accommodate and incorporate them into their daily routine, the actions that are displaced that might more truly account for changes in what outcomes at the school setting level we observe. This is useful for articulating what activities are dropped to accommodate the backpack program, and is vital for monitoring what roles and services are compromised for staff to provide the backpack program.

Additionally, during our analysis process through the use of Hawe's systems-theory, new concepts related to effects were present throughout our interviews. We chose to incorporate these concepts into our research questions as we purposefully coded for them. The concepts include: additional non-government food programs provided in schools besides backpack programs; benefits to school staff and students from the perspective of our interviewees (e.g., more opportunities for interactions); consequences for school staff and students from the perspectives of our interviewees (e.g., less attention paid to behavioral issues by professional school counselors); and new activities created to ease implementation of the backpack program (e.g., the inclusion of special education students to aid with the implementation of the backpack program).

Below, we incorporate both Clark's policy process model and Hawe's systems approach theory to create a new framework:

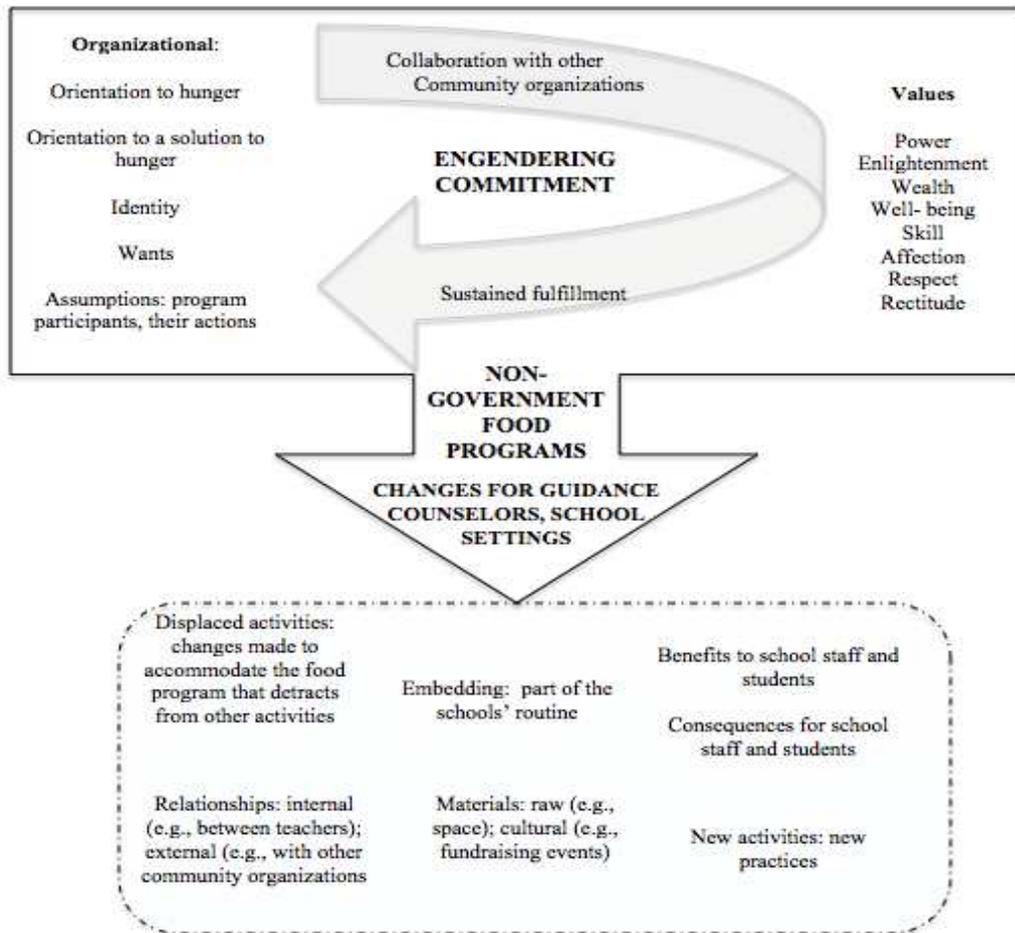


Figure 3.2. Commitment to non-government food programs and school context

As part of preparing the second manuscript, a combination framework of the policy process and organizational changes was created to help future researchers understand how communities sustain non-government food programs, particularly in the school system. Community organizations have their own orientations to hunger, what they believe will address hunger in their communities, their organizational identities, what they want out of providing non-government food programs, and their assumptions about their non-government food programs and those that utilize them. These are tenets from Clark's policy processes framework. Community organizations seek out

collaboration with other organizations that allow them to utilize values of importance to maintaining their identities, wants, and assumptions about hunger and non-government food programs. Seeking to collaborate with other organizations through the use of values allows community organizations to maintain their identities, wants, and assumptions which what engenders their sustained commitment to non-government food programs. In our study, this cycle occurred in all three types of organizations we interviewed: the food bank, faith-based organizations, and schools. As the food bank and faith-based organizations expanded their non-government food programs, the use of the school system was an obvious choice for its access to students and their families. This included (from Hawe's theory) the schools' external and internal relationships, the day-to-day activities involving non-government food programs (embedding), resources and materials that are used within the schools, and activities that have been displaced or changed to accommodate the implementation of non-government food programs. Additionally, through this dissertation study, new concepts related to effects were included: additional non-government food programs provided in schools besides backpack programs; benefits to school staff and students from the perspective of our interviewees; consequences for school staff and students from the perspectives of our interviewees; and new activities created to ease implementation of the backpack program.

### *Qualitative Approach*

Most qualitative studies are focused on meaning-making and how it can use perspectives from individuals or groups to further the understanding of a studied phenomenon (J W Creswell, 2012; Fossey, Harvey, Mcdermott, & Davidson, 2002; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Using a qualitative approach in this study allowed for a

focus on the importance of the context of organizational actions and their influences by historical, ecological, socio-economic, political, cultural and temporal conditions, as well as subsequent interpretations of those interactions (Kelly, Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 1999; M Q Patton, 2002). In contrast to the rigid attributes of quantitative scientific research using controlled experimentation, many qualitative approaches are able to be more flexible, maintain validity, and emphasize the understanding of human experience, all this being a vital aspect of this approach (Fossey et al., 2002; Greene, 1994).

The student explored the experiences of the community organization key actors, and specifically inquired about their non-government food programs, and their interactions with other community organizations. Through qualitative research methods, including qualitative interviews with open-ended questions, the study captured what the key actors perceive and/or believe to be about their non-government food programs, and why they continue to be committed to them (Maxwell, 2012; M Q Patton, 2002). Key actors provided “their reported perceptions, “truths,” explanations, beliefs, and worldview” (M Q Patton, 2002) regarding hunger in their community (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### *Study Rationale*

Given the inability to escape researcher subjectivity (e.g., bringing past experiences, thoughts and perspectives to the study), a purely emic approach of the study would not be easily attained. In contrast, a purely etic approach to the study would potentially eliminate unique meanings, ideas and key concepts of key actors’ responses (Morris, Ames, & Lickel, 1999; Olive, 2014; M. F. Peterson & Pike, 2002). Valuing the

key actors' beliefs and the context within which they operate allowed the student to include an emic perspective. Valuing the perceived beliefs and utilizing explicatory terms and nuances provided by the key actors is referred to as emic (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Olive, 2014; M Q Patton, 2002; M. F. Peterson & Pike, 2002). The ecological framework, policy process framework, and qualitative approach allowed the student to tell the story from the key actors' perspectives, while at the same time addressing concepts reflective of the ecological framework and policy process framework, both existing theories.

### *Self in the Study and reflexivity*

As the principal investigator of this study, the student was responsible for primary data collection. In contrast to quantitative data collection, the data interacted directly through the human research instrument, rather than a questionnaire or digitized survey (Merriam, 2002). This direct interaction allowed the student to inform the interpretation of the data, restricting the claims to be subjective to the student's view of interpretation. (Bryman & Cassell, 2006; Merriam, 2002; Roulston et al., 2008). Advantages to this concept of 'researcher as instrument' are that it creates an opportunity to process data immediately, clarifies and summarizes as the study evolves, and adapts necessary research techniques to the circumstances and context of the study (Greene, 1994; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Merriam, 2002).

Throughout the research process, the student kept a reflexivity journal where she made regular entries and recorded my methodological decisions and reasons, the logistics of the study, and reflections upon what is happening in terms of her own values and

interests. To further foster reflexivity, she included multiple investigators (her committee members) that helped lead her to divergent and complementary understandings of the data.

### *Positionality*

As a doctoral student, the student may be different than the interviewees in educational training and career choice. Though different, their similar interests overlapped given our interest in community efforts and interests surrounding food in the Columbia, South Carolina area. The student's religion, upbringing, and academic status may have created an unequal level of perceived social status, educational power, and intellectual gain. However, her hope and desire to learn from the participants and her current student status played a role in easing participant's worries of power and knowledge related to educational or social hierarchy. The participants from this study differed in age, sex, and race. This information was not known until the time of the interviews. She intended to make participants feel comfortable when responding to the questions and disregard any age, sex, or race difference they may have had during the interview session. In the process of scheduling interviews, she visited the organizations if possible, to build adequate rapport with the participants by letting them know she was excited to learn about their organization's outlook and influence within the community so they were comfortable with her during the interview. She did not discuss upbringing or economic status with participants, and she was able to create an open space for them to have meaningful conversation. Furthermore, to relieve any uncomfortable thoughts or feelings of participants she assured the participants that the interview was for the sole

purpose of gaining knowledge on their perspectives as actors in their organization related to non-government food programs.

### *Epistemic orientation*

As an academic scholar the student uses literature searchers, course work, and experts in the field (e.g., mentors, professors) to acquire her knowledge about food security, hunger, and public health. Acquiring knowledge is subjective, in that is not apparent and may be implicit, and obtained through many different avenues and circumstances. Through the students' experiences, she has observed a need for expanded scientific research in regards to how poverty and hunger are discussed and handled both national and local settings. Through her experience working with the food bank and schools through *Food for Thought*, the student engaged in advocating for understanding the underlying causes of food insecurity. Additionally, in an effort to advocate her community, she has actively engaged with the local food bank through volunteering and working with leadership to understand how and why they choose to frame hunger. The student has immersed herself in the national discussion of poverty and hunger through her participation and observations at national conferences including Experimental Biology and the American Public Health Association; in addition to the National Academy of Sciences meetings she attended. There is no complete criterion the student used to acquire new knowledge; she gained knowledge from her lived experiences, formal practice and discussion in the community, classroom practice through course work and assignments, published literature, and interacting with her professors and mentors. She values each experience and opportunity within the context of their contribution to her knowledge base. Her previous lived experiences have consistently prepared the student

for this dissertation's study initiatives, allowing for her knowledge base to grow through both subjective and objectively learned means.

### **3.5 SETTING AND SAMPLE DESCRIPTION**

Children and families in southern states have consistently poorer outcomes for most indicators of health and well-being, and experience higher rates of food insecurity (Alaimo, Olson, & Frongillo, 2001; Fram et al., 2013). Columbia, South Carolina has a continuing increase in food insecurity status (USDA, 2012). In South Carolina, Feeding America utilizes smaller food banks to provide non-government food programs. One smaller food bank is responsible for the Midlands of South Carolina, and partners with over 270 community organizations. Richland and Lexington counties are the most saturated by the smaller food bank, with over a third of their services provided in this region. The programs offered in these two counties are comparable to the variety of programs provided throughout the state. Identifying community organizations who did not work with smaller food bank was challenging. These community organizations were identified by cold-calling organizations in the community, and by snowball sampling.

A full, detailed listing of each organization sampled and interviewees from that organization can be found in Appendix F. The term "volunteer leader" is used to describe any faith-based organization interviewee who was responsible for the non-government food program efforts at their organization. Eleven faith-based organization volunteer leaders, and eight faith-based organization leaders (e.g., Pastors) were interviewed across seventeen organizations. One school district lead social worker, and a representative from the Department of Social Services were also interviewed. The director, food pantry

leader, and school-based program leader from the local food bank were interviewed for this study.

Across nine elementary schools and four middle schools, twelve professional school counselors and two principal were interviewed. Although the official terminology used by the American School Counselor Association is to call counselors in elementary and middle schools, “professional school counselors”, in this dissertation document and manuscripts the terminology “guidance counselor” will be used to describe such professionals.(American Society for Counselors Association, n.d.) This terminology is consistent with the data reported by the interviewees.

In total for this study, thirty-seven qualitative interviews were completed.

### **3.6 RECRUITMENT**

One to three key actors from the food bank, faith-based organizations, and schools were interviewed at each community organization for this research (Appendix F). Purposeful maximum variation sampling was used to determine which organizations would be contacted for interview. As there are many variations between the type of partnering organization and the type of food program offered, this type of sampling allowed for capturing and describing central themes that cut across variation between partnering organizations. There is much heterogeneity between each partnering organization illustrated by: demographics, size, religious affiliation, and non-government food programs offered. This variation became a strong feature of the research, as common patterns that emerged from great variation across community organizations and their relationships with other organizations captured the core of experiences and impacts

of functioning within a community that provides many non-government food programs (Patton, 1990).

Data collection and analysis yielded two kinds of findings: 1) detailed descriptions of each case, which is useful for documenting uniqueness; and 2) important shared patterns that cut across cases and derive significance by having emerged from heterogeneity that exists (Patton, 1990). As each organization was different, it was important to recognize information that draws variation and significant common patterns (Patton, 1990). Appendix F provides a detailed listing of the types of community organizations interviewed for this study. The organizations vary in geographic location, type of organization, demographic makeup of those served, and the types of non-government food programs offered.

#### *Inclusion criteria*

All participants were required to be actively involved in a non-government food program(s) provided through their community organization for no less than three years. All participants were required to speak English and be over the age of 18 years.

### **3.7 DATA ACQUISITION AND PROCEDURES**

#### *Data Acquisition*

Over the course of the student's graduate work, she has worked collaboratively with the smaller food bank on prior research projects. The director of the smaller food bank was her primary contact and agreed to support her request to participate in an interview, and to allow her staff to also participate if they consented. Via a phone call, the

director received a brief overview of the dissertation research, and understood how her contributions were crucial to the study. The smaller food bank staff put the student into contact with some of the faith-based organizations they work with, which made the recruitment process easier as there was a mutual contact through the food bank. In addition to qualitative interviews, where available for contextual purposes and a deeper understanding into particular emergency food programs and philosophies, the student retrieved data from flyers, emails, and other media material.

Key actors were identified through brief, informal interviews prior to scheduling a longer interview time with those involved with their non-government food programs. Via phone, email, and in person – all participants were made aware of the dissertation’s focus, and how their contributions were vital to the study (Appendix D, E).

Following participant’s verbal agreement to participate in the interview, the student set up a time and location that was convenient to the participant (e.g. local coffee shops, libraries, community organization offices). Prior to meeting in person for the interview, she also sent a follow up email for further confirmation. Before beginning the interview, she provided a consent form to be signed by the participant, and answered any questions before beginning.

Interviews lasted approximately 60- 120 minutes and were audio recorded for transcription purposes. When consent was not given to audio- record, additional field notes were taken during and immediately after the interview. The data were collected using face- to- face (85%), or phone (15%) methods.

### *Researcher as Instrument*

In qualitative research, the researcher as instrument is an accepted method for data collection . The student had close interaction with the data and key actors through the facilitation of the interviews, transcriptions, and coding. Interviews were conducted in an appropriate manner, as the student used a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions to capture responses and allow for variability within the interviews. The interview guide was developed using Clark’s policy framework as a guide, and allowed for careful probing on emergent concepts and dimensions as needed to gain further insight. As the student facilitated the interview, she sought to place the participant at ease by engaging in the dialogue and identifying verbal and non-verbal cues from the participant.

### **3.8 DATA MANAGEMENT**

#### *Management and Analysis Software*

Qualitative interviews were analyzed using MAXQDAplus®, a qualitative software analytic program (“MAXQDA, software for qualitative analysis), and, also served as an organizational management tool for codes, categories, and themes derived from transcripts of the interviews. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and underwent a formal coding process where concepts were revealed through analytic procedures. The student also coded interviews by hand.

### **3.9 SPECIFIC AIMS: METHODOLOGY**

#### *Qualitative interviews*

In an effort to answer the research questions associated with the specific aim, qualitative interviews were conducted. The research questions were focused on the thoughts, perceptions, experiences, and knowledge of key actors involved with non-government food programs at their community organizations. Qualitative interviews provided the student with the ability to ask probing questions and gain more detailed information on concepts that emerged during the interviews. The number of interviews was determined based on reaching a point of saturation. The student conducted thirty-three qualitative interviews to elicit key actors' at community organizations experienced with non-government food programs.

Key actors were informed of the student's doctoral candidate status, and the purpose of the study. Following the participant's agreement to engage in an interview, a date and time were decided at the convenience of the participant. Although this study was exempt from the Institutional Review Board, the student decided to provide a consent form to participants to ensure their confidentiality in the interview and gain their trust. The student used a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions to fully capture the responses of the key actors. The interview guide was developed to ensure that all research questions were addressed within the interview, but allowed the student to probe on concepts that emerged during the interview (Appendix X). This guide was based on the research study goals, research questions, and the policy process theory. The student took field notes before, during, and after each interviews to complement the audio recordings.

### *Analysis*

Analysis of the data were guided by the research questions and study aims. The student utilized a “structure- before” qualitative approach to coding, analysis, and interpretation of the data. The student imposed categories and some anticipated concepts as codes from the existing theories (Clark’s social process theory for the first manuscript, and Hawe’s systems-theory for the second manuscript). A common criticism of pre-structured data is that it may not permit the full lived- experiences of interviewees to be represented in the analysis (Punch, 2009). While this may be true of the decision to use predetermined categories and anticipated concepts, structure-before allows for systematic comparisons, requires that the same terms and concepts be used across different respondents, and the analysis is standardized (Punch, 2009). As a way to incorporate aspects of a “structure- after” qualitative approach (i.e., reporting the data as completely emergent themes and codes), the student ensured that new any new categories, concepts, and dimensions within the imposed categories from the theories were included in the reporting and analysis of the data. Although this approach does not allow for comparisons of concepts across the entirety of the data, it does allow concepts to be emergent and compared across that specific data source (e.g., comparing various school understanding of identity; comparing the identities of schools and churches).

Several theories guided the thinking, interviewing, and coding process of this study. Therefore, this approach allowed the student to use principles of an open- coding process for concepts that fit the theoretical framework categories developed from the theories. Analytic techniques included grounded theory analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1965) and constant comparative coding within each category. Data were triangulated through multiple tools (e.g., interviews, observations, multiple coders), and through positioning

participant interviews with other “representative comparative” and “extreme non-comparative” participants (Clark, 2002; Ulin, Robinson, & Tolley, 2004a; Warshawsky, 2010). This included comparing data from varying community organizations to one another (e.g., interviews from schools compared to those of faith-based organizations).

The initial analytic technique was in-depth, repeated, independent readings of the data. Following the independent readings, three interviews (one food bank interview, one faith-based organization interview, and one school staff interview) were coded by a team of five experienced qualitative researchers, accompanied by follow-up in-depth discussions to ensure the interpretations were robust and empirically grounded. From these discussions, a code list was created from categories and anticipated concepts from the two guiding theories, and was used by the student for the remaining data. Additional categories, concepts, and dimensions were added, and data were recoded when required. To further ensure data quality, the student participated in peer debriefing with members of the committee throughout the coding process. The active participation of the researcher responsible for coding in discussion of the data further ensured that interpretations remained grounded within the focus of the data reported. The analytic process was repeated twice: the first for the coding for specific aim one using categories, concepts, and dimensions related to Clark’s policy process theory; the second time related to Hawe’s systems-theory.

These analytic steps were followed for each manuscript: 1) the development of a preliminary code book of anticipated categories, concepts, and dimensions; 2) five experienced qualitative researchers independently coded three interviews; 3) codes and new concepts were discussed from all independent codings of the data; 4) new codes

(categories, concepts, dimensions) added to preliminary code book; 5) page-by-page comparisons of the codes and differences in the application or new code development was discussed until a consensus was reached between the chair and student; 6) final code book with agreed upon anticipated categories, concepts, and dimensions; 7) student used this codebook to code all interviews while allowing for additional categories, concepts, and dimensions to emerge; and, 8) codes were compared within categories across differing types of organization in order to group similar meanings. The student compared data interpretations and secured an agreement of the elements of the coding with her committee chair. This process included the initial identification and anticipation of major categories, concepts, and dimensions of concepts, and later, an understanding of the relationships between new categories, concepts, and dimensions from the data which in turn furthered an understanding of the content related to the conceptual framework.

### **3.10 DATA QUALITY**

To ensure data quality within the study, the student conducted peer debriefing, advisor consultations, and a triangulation approach (J W Creswell, 2012; M Q Patton, 2002; Ulin, Robinson, & Tolley, 2004b). The student conducted weekly peer debriefing meetings with her primary advisor and committee chair, Dr. Edward Frongillo to gain continual feedback throughout the research process. Dr. Frongillo participated in the coding and interpretation process, and provided ongoing and timely feedback from his expertise in qualitative research.

Dr. Christine Blake aided the research methodology by providing feedback to the student throughout the research and analysis process by thoroughly examining the

interview guide, initial coding, review of transcripts, discussing themes, and providing additional insight into this process as necessary. Dr. Ruth Saunders provided guidance into organizational structure, particularly regarding the second manuscript, guidance for the conceptual models, and discussed major themes throughout the analysis process. Dr. Cheri Shapiro assisted in the review of the quality of the student's reported data, the conceptual framework, and analyses, in addition to providing further insights for interpreting results.

No single data source can address multiple research aims, and two or more methods of data collection makes for an ideal, trustworthy study (John W. Creswell, 2013; Michael Quinn Patton, 1990; Ulin et al., 2004a). This student used memoing journals for further clarification, field notes, and qualitative interviews to achieve data triangulation (John W. Creswell, 2013; Michael Quinn Patton, 1990; Ulin et al., 2004a). Triangulation allows for the use of multiple data collection methods to enhance the trustworthy quality of the data collection and analysis (John W. Creswell, 2013; Michael Quinn Patton, 1990; Ulin et al., 2004a).

To ensure that interviewees did not responded with their lived experiences and to minimize social desirability, the student worked to build rapport and trust with interviewees. The student would often reach out to the individuals multiple times prior to their scheduled interview date, often stopping by their organization first to drop off the consent form a week before the schedule interview. Two days before the interview, she called the interviewees to confirm, and ask if they had any questions about the consent form or the interview process. On the day of, she explained thoroughly the interview process, the meaning of their contribution, and how their responses would be kept

completely confidential. After this explanation, if she then asked for the signed consent form, and asked again if recording the interview was acceptable to the interviewee. In times that it was not, she then asked if the interviewee was comfortable with her taking notes during the interview.

### **3.11 DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS**

The student prepared a brief report on the findings of the dissertation to distribute to participating community organizations. Additionally, the student has presented her findings at a national conference, Experimental Biology. She plans to send each manuscript to peer-reviewed journals and to continue to report on the findings at national conferences. This dissertation was presented to USC faculty, staff, and students to fulfill the doctoral program requirements.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

The results of this dissertation are presented in the form of two separate, publishable manuscripts. The first manuscript was titled *Understanding commitment of local food banks, faith-based organizations, and schools to provide sustained non-government food programs*. This manuscript used data from the qualitative interviews with faith-based organization leaders, professional school counselors, and food bank employees to better understand how community organizations commit to providing non-government food assistance programs (specific aim 1). This manuscript was prepared with *American Journal of Public Health* in mind; this journal is focused on public health issues across the country. The journal's target audience includes health professionals, physicians, professors, psychologists, students, consumers, and non-profit companies.

The second manuscript, *The effects of non-government food programs on implementing Professional School Counselors at elementary and middle schools*, was prepared with the goal of submission to *Children and Schools*, an interdisciplinary journal dedicated to the scientific study of the school system and child well-being. In this manuscript, professional school counselors' perceptions of non-government food programs and the effects of these programs is discussed (specific aims 2). The target audience for *Children and Schools* includes researchers and practitioners in the fields of psychology, sociology, education, psychiatry, communication, and community health.

## CHAPTER 4.1

### UNDERSTANDING COMMITMENT OF LOCAL FOOD BANKS, FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS, AND SCHOOLS TO PROVIDE SUSTAINED NON-GOVERNMENT FOOD PROGRAMS<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fishbein, E.M., Frongillo, E.A., Blake, C.B., Saunders, R.P., Shapiro, C. To be submitted to the American Journal of Public Health

**Abstract:** INTRODUCTION: Despite the availability of governmental and non-governmental non-government food programs, the prevalence of household food insecurity in the U.S. remains high. Non-governmental food assistance is typically provided to families in communities by faith-based organizations, schools, and food banks, often working together to deliver programs like backpacks, holiday boxes, pantries, and school snacks. Community organizations appear to be strongly committed to these programs, but little is known about the basis for this commitment, i.e., “the will to act and to keep on acting until the job is done” (Heaver, 2005). The aim of this study was to examine the values and identities of community organizations to understand the reasons for their commitment to providing non-governmental food assistance.

METHODS: Thirty-three qualitative, in-depth interviews were conducted with leaders at faith-based organizations (n=16), schools (n=10), and a local food bank (n=1) in South Carolina. Observations were made over multiple days, and informational documents (e.g., flyers and pamphlets) were reviewed. Analysis was guided in part by the concepts of organizational values (i.e., what they use and want to achieve their goals) and identities (i.e., how they see their roles) from Lasswell’s policy-science framework. All notes and transcripts were analyzed using MAXQDA qualitative analysis software.

RESULTS: All organizations stated they want to be involved in the well-being of the community by ending hunger. Participants representing faith-based organizations and a food bank reported their non-government food programs provided a variety of ways for volunteers to become involved. Being involved strengthened relationships among volunteers, which in turn furthered financial support for the continuation of non-government food programs. Participants at schools reported they value student well-being

and want to continue to provide students with as many resources as possible. Many school participants reported that because of their commitment to students, they see themselves as little more than a mechanism through which food programs are provided, and believe they have little power to make suggestions to influence the food programs. Food bank participants identified that their role is to provide best practices, and financial and logistical support for food programs. DISCUSSION: Providing food to others is a powerful act, and through these programs, food banks and faith-based organizations can provide a highly positive experience to their volunteers. Many of these programs are systematized and packaged by local food banks, making it accessible and easy for faith-based and other organizations to adopt. Seeking to improve the well-being of the community by ending hunger is not the primary value on which organizations focus; instead, it is the process of fulfilling other values (i.e., forming or maintaining relationships within the community), maintaining identity, and appealing to their participants that strengthens their commitment to non-government food programs. A consequence of commitment to the particular food program, derived from fulfilling these other values, is that the roots of hunger in a community become obscured and alternative solutions are ignored or rejected.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The post-Reagan era ushered in a shift in how food assistance is handled in the U.S. (Jones & Ward, 2002; Leitner et al., 2007; Warshawsky, 2014; Wilson, 2004). As a response to dwindling funding for national programs such as Women, Infants, Children (WIC), the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), collaborations between multi-sector public, private, and

civil society institutions began to occur to address hunger in local settings (Warshawsky, 2014). States began to emphasize regional competitiveness and delegate responsibility for social services to local governments and non-profit organizations. Although SNAP, NSLP, and WIC were all readily available, due to limitations in federal funding, there was continued pressure and encouragement from government organizations and large private organizations for the private sector to take the initiative in food assistance (Jones & Ward, 2002; Tarasuk & Eakin, 2005; Warshawsky, 2010).

Private sector organizations interested in combatting hunger developed large food warehouses known as food banks. Food banks collected, systematized, and delivered food to communities through the continued use of the existing food pantries often found in faith-based organizations (Riches, 2002; Tarasuk & Eakin, 2005).

In this environment, Feeding America (originally called American Harvest) quickly became a prominent figure in the food-banking world, due to its large geographic foot print, through the utilization of small, local non-profits (Warshawsky, 2010, 2014). When Feeding America was originally established, the distribution of food resources from food banks through faith-based organizations into the community was regarded as a temporary means to address hunger (Janet Poppendieck, 1999; Tarasuk & Eakin, 2005; Warshawsky, 2010). Today, Feeding America has extended its reach into over 500 communities nationwide by partnering with smaller, locally funded food banks, faith-based organizations, and schools (Feeding America, 2016b; Warshawsky, 2010). In addition to providing programs that target acute hunger, Feeding America, through its partnering organizations, provides sustained, non-government food programs (e.g., weekly backpack programs delivered to students through schools).

Sustaining these non-government food programs requires significant support from communities (Tarasuk & Eakin, 2005). Local food banks work through Feeding America to provide faith-based organizations and schools logistical support for non-government food programs (Warshawsky, 2010). Faith-based organizations, through the work of their ministries and volunteers, provide logistical support, finances, and other resources for solutions they support. Schools provide ready access to families and children for food distribution. Sustaining non-government food programs by these organizations suggests they are strongly committed to providing these solutions, although little is known about the basis for this commitment, i.e., “the will to act and to keep acting until the job is done” (Heaver, 2005; te Lintelo & Lakshman, 2015). Commitment is a binding pledge, with the obligation that organizations are dedicated and will push through setbacks and follow through with their commitment until they feel their job is completed. This commitment is often the backbone of an organization, giving its members strength and a common interest through which to direct their efforts (Brown, 1996). The literature suggests that organizations cooperate at a higher level when they share a commitment, as doing so can help to foster camaraderie, trust, and caring (Brown, 1996; Lok & Crawford, 1999; te Lintelo & Lakshman, 2015). In the context of non-government food programs, the greater basis there is for commitment, the greater the momentum that can be generated to provide non-emergency food programs.

Sustained non-government food programs are marketed to help “end hunger” (Feeding America, 2016b; Janet Poppendieck, 1999; Tarasuk & Eakin, 2003; Warshawsky, 2010). They are becoming increasingly common across communities, but food insecurity prevalence continues to rise throughout the country (“USDA Economic

Research Service - Key Statistics & Graphics,” n.d.; Warshawsky, 2010). This seems counter-intuitive, as we would expect that food insecurity prevalence would decrease with an abundance of additional food available in communities. It may be that the provision of such solutions to hunger offers additional benefits to committed organizations other than addressing a need in their communities..This is consistent with literature documenting a commitment to nutrition programs. For example, governments sometimes claim they are improving child nutrition, even though the solutions they are committed to have little effect on the nutritional intake of children (Heaver, 2005). In this instance, the commitment to particular solutions may cause organizations to miss opportunities to embrace new innovations in improving child nutrition.

Similarly, literature suggests that SNAP and WIC are helpful to those experiencing very low levels of food security, but is unclear about the long-term benefits of providing food to families experiencing low and marginal food security (Wilde & Nord, 2005). Although the literature suggests that providing food to these families may not help their overall food security, the solution of giving food is continued. Commitment to a particular solution to address hunger is consistent with many food-security initiatives worldwide (Curtis & McClellan, 1995; Heaver, 2005; Sridhar, 2007).

Organizations committed to particular non-government food programs also position themselves to influence others in the community (Clary et al., 1998; Lok & Crawford, 1999). For example, if a particular ministry group acts with dedicated commitment towards a non-government food programs to hunger, other organizations not originally involved may pay attention and get involved, or pioneer their own solution. Commitment to non-government food programs can influence involvement, and also how

the community discusses and thinks about those utilizing their programs (Anderson & Moore, 1978; Becker & Dhingra, 2001; Cnaan & Amroffell, 1994; Janoski et al., 1998). This inherently influences whether decisions about how to address hunger and food insecurity are made locally, nationally, or globally, and also how to think about those who are utilizing these services. Commitment to solutions that do not address hunger mask the true urgency of hunger and food insecurity in our communities (Becker & Dhingra, 2001; Janet Poppendieck, 1999; Warshawsky, 2010).

The present paper will articulate which aspects of non-government food programs engender commitment from community organizations. It is evident, given the rising prevalence of food insecurity in the context of a plethora of food programs available, that the combination of government-supported and privatized, sustained non-government food programs in the U.S. has failed to end hunger and food insecurity. The results from this study will be useful for future research and policy makers in understanding how decisions are made about the intent of such solutions, and the implications of such decisions. Four research questions were posed in this study. First, what is the problem these organizations are aiming to address through their non-government food programs? Second, how do they identify themselves? Third, what do organizations want from their programs? Fourth, what are their assumptions about non-government food programs? These questions were investigated via qualitative interviews with key actors at a food bank, faith-based organizations, and schools.

## METHODS

### *Conceptual Framework*

Some studies have demonstrated that organizational commitment may be linked by organizations' orientation to the problem, and their organizational perspectives (i.e., their identities, what they want out of their commitment, and what they assume will happen because of their commitment) (Allen, 2008; Brown, 1996; Clark, 2002; Clary et al., 1998; Lok & Crawford, 1999; D. Pelletier et al., 1999; D. L. Pelletier et al., 2000; Mark F. Peterson & Pike, 2002). Clark's work in the policy sciences provided us with a useful framework for articulating how it is that organizations come to a consensus about, or decide on an action, and how they will implement that intent as an instrument. This was our guide in understanding what about non-government food programs engender commitment from organizations. Below, key conceptual categories are defined that are important from the framework to understand commitment:

Table 4.1 Clark's categories for commitment

<b>Category</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Orientation to hunger	How organizations think about hunger in their communities
Orientation to a solution	How organizations think hunger should be addressed in their communities
Identity	How organizations see themselves in relation to others in the community
Wants	What organizations require out of providing a non-government food programs
Assumptions	What organizations believe will happen because of their commitment to non-government food programs
Values	Assets or resources used to attain any of the above categories

Values, as noted in the above table, are assets and resources that can be used by organizations to help their organization acquire benefits. Values can be used to help support identities, wants, and assumptions. They can also be used as a “currency” to attain more or different values. For example, if an organization prioritizes creating relationships (value of affection) as part of their non-government food programs, they may use their position (value of power) in the community to negotiate meetings with other organizations. Below is a table with each value from the framework, and its definition:

Table 4.2 Values to be used to acquire benefits

<b>Values</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Power	Make out and carry decisions
Enlightenment	To have knowledge
Wealth	To have money or its equivalent
Well-being	To have health, physical and psychic
Skill	Special abilities
Affection	To have family, friends, and warm community relationships
Respect	Show and receive deference
Rectitude	Ethical standards

Our results and discussion report on the importance of identity, wants, and assumptions in relation to commitment. The use of Clark’s framework guided our methods and analysis to understand how problems in the community are defined and addressed – and what about the fulfillment of identities, wants, and assumptions engenders commitment.

*Study design*

Our study consisted of the collection and analysis of observational and interview data (n=33) on the day-to-day operations of one food bank, 15 faith-based organizations, and 11 elementary and middle schools that shared in the responsibility of providing non-government food programs in South Carolina. The study protocol was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of South Carolina. Data collection was conducted over five months from March to July 2015. Faith-based organizations and schools were selected via purposeful maximum variation sampling and snowball techniques. Criteria included variation in the demographics of the organization, religious affiliation, location, size of organization, and types of programs provided by the organization. This sampling design allowed us to capture and describe central themes that cut across variation between organizations, and we recognize that common patterns found to emerge are thereby representative of the core experience within the community (Michael Quinn Patton, 1990). Data collection and analysis yielded two kinds of findings: 1) detailed descriptions of each individual organizations, which are useful for documenting uniqueness, and 2) important themes that cut across cases which derive significance (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2002; Michael Quinn Patton, 1990).

#### *Data collection*

All participants were required to be English-speaking and were over the age of 18 years. No compensation was provided for participation. Interviews were conducted in organizations' offices, public libraries, local coffee shops, a food bank, food pantries, school offices, and via telephone. We developed a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions to capture participant responses (Michael Quinn Patton, 1990). In interviews lasting 1-2 hours, participants were asked to talk about how they understood

hunger in their community, how food-assistance programs addressed issues in their communities, what was important to them about food-assistance programs, and their organization's role and function in their communities.

### *Analysis*

Verbatim transcripts, field notes, and any informational documents available (e.g., pamphlets, flyers) were analyzed with the assistance of computer software for qualitative data (MAXDA plus 2015). Our analysis was guided by Clark's policy process theory. Our primary initial analytic technique was in-depth, repeated, independent readings of the data. Following the independent readings, three experienced qualitative researchers coded three interviews separately, which was followed by in-depth discussions to ensure the interpretations were robust and empirically grounded. From these discussions, a code list was created and used by the lead coder for the remaining data based on the categories and concepts from the theory and by our research questions. Additional categories, concepts, and dimensions were added, and data were recoded when required. Findings were emergent within each concept, not across all data. To further ensure the quality of the data, the researcher responsible for coding participated in peer debriefing. Data were triangulated through multiple tools (e.g., interviews, observations, multiple coders).

## **RESULTS**

The experiences described by key actors were represented by four categories: 1) hunger in the community, 2) organizational identity, 3) organizational wants, and 4) organizational assumptions about non-government food programs. Major concepts within each category are reported below.

## **Hunger in the community**

### *The cycle of poverty*

Interviewees at food banks, faith-based organizations, and schools understood hunger as an easily noticeable indicator of poverty in their communities. When asked to describe hunger, most referenced a “cycle of poverty”, or, as a food-bank employee explained:

*“Well, a lack of unemployment creates a lack of transportation, inability to afford medicine and medical care...and to have food. They can’t afford their dwelling any longer, can’t afford their utilities, or are disabled. It’s hard to get out of all that”.*

Although interviewees recognized many families are affected by life circumstances out of their control, they also stated that parents often made poor decisions that negatively affected their families. These choices (e.g., lack of involvement with their children, drug use, and selfishness) were reasons interviewees used to explain why participants in food-assistance programs were reliant on their services. Most interviewees at faith-based organizations described specific families that were “truly needy” and were sympathetic to their situations, *“I know that Mom works three jobs, the Dad just up and left her, that has got to be difficult”.*

### *Skepticism of need*

Most guidance counselors expressed feelings of skepticism towards families participating in their non-government food programs. These interviewees reported they saw families utilizing multiple mechanisms through which they could acquire food (e.g.,

families enrolled in their non-government food programs while also using WIC or SNAP), while also enjoying amenities. This prompted these interviewees to label them as “system abusers” or “not really needy”. A guidance counselor explained:

*“We have a few families who work very hard, but then we have most who don’t. They come with their hands out. Every time you turn around, can you help me with this, can you help me with that? I get annoyed because the kids who are on free lunch come with a dollar for snacks – or the backpack kids have on new Nikes. It’s unfair that people take advantage of the programs we have. Our Moms could write a book on how to use the system. They go around and use everything they can to get what they want. Every program I bet. They aren’t truly needy. Really needy kids don’t have on fresh kicks, you know?”*

To help alleviate feelings of skepticism about families participating in food-assistance programs, faith-based organizations purposefully created programs that focused on children. As explained by interviewees from faith-based organizations, children are not to blame for their living or financial situations, rendering it easier for their congregations to support without hesitation or questions:

*“The child is hungry, and we can feed that one child. I think when you get to the other populations in our community, like parents or the homeless who are adults, its hard because they [the congregation] start feeling like ‘why aren’t you working?’ to, ‘why aren’t you taking better care of your family?’. Because you know, you can smell the alcohol on them or see their Mercedes. It comes more difficult to get over that. Kids are just kids. Blameless.”*

### *Identification of hunger*

The food bank assesses and evaluates community hunger by using self-collected statistical data, and their own internal surveillance system. Schools reported that they rely on the free and reduced lunch rates to assess hunger, in addition to relying on the observations of teachers and guidance counselors: *“We just rely on our teachers, rely a lot on our staff, you know, they have their, they put their eyes on their students every single day and so they have a real good gauge of it”*. Faith-based organizations reported the majority of their information about community needs comes from the food bank, and their contacts at schools through which they are providing their food-assistance programs. Most faith-based organizations reported that without this information from these sources, they would not be able to determine the actual needs of the community *“We don’t have poor people in this neighborhood, I mean it’s just not an issue in our congregation”*. A church pastor further explained:

*“Well, we get a lot of stories from the school about Moms who come with their hair done and their kids have nice clothes but they are on food stamps. Well, doesn’t it ever occur to them that maybe if they didn’t get that hair-do that they could buy food instead? I don’t get it. And we don’t get that kind of insight here in our church because we don’t have poor people”*.

In summary, organizations understand hunger as part of a larger issue of poverty in their communities. Some interviewees expressed empathy and understanding for participants in food-assistance programs, but the majority of interviewees expressed skepticism towards them, especially when participants utilized more than one method of

obtaining food for their families. The food bank and schools have their own methods for identifying hunger and understanding poverty, while most faith-based organizations rely on colloquialisms from the food bank and schools to shape their understanding of hunger. The majority of the faith-based organizations interviewed reported that they believed their congregations were not experiencing poverty. These faith-based organizations reported they relied on information from the food bank and schools to describe poverty to them as they do not regularly see or experience it themselves. Their reliance on this information further contributed to their skepticism about need.

### **Organizational identity**

#### *Food bank: identity*

Interviewees at the food bank described their organizational identity in two ways: (i) a member of the Feeding America food-banking network, and (ii) experts on food in their community. To maintain their identity as members of Feeding America, interviewees reported they assumed roles focused on maintaining ethical standards, providing food to the community, and meeting regulated standards for food distribution. As one food bank interviewee explained, *“As a member of Feeding America, we have a responsibility to uphold that brand – we need to do things the right way. So I, as a worker here am responsible to that, too. We need to do this to be part of the national movement to fight hunger. We have to be so conscientious about food safety and distribution”*.

#### *Food bank: commanding expertise*

Interviewees frequently discussed how the use of symbols, like the Feeding America logos, legitimized their identification and inherent expertise in food distribution as Feeding America members:

*“With all of our programs we run, we try to incorporate the logos. It goes on the flyers we pass out to families. We used to put it on the backpacks. We follow the guidelines for some programs so that we can use that logo. It shows that our programs are legitimate and backed by facts”.*

In addition to using the Feeding America symbol, food-bank interviewees described that providing stable food and logistical assistance to individuals and to other community organizations helped them to be viewed as food experts in their community. Their continued innovative programs created using their specific skills and knowledge about food distribution helped them to convey this to other community organizations:

*“We want to be the experts. We want to be the people you can come to and say ‘hey, how do we do this?’, and we have an answer that’s backed by facts. It’s back by that logo, and everything we do is to fulfill that logo. We do so much more than provide food, we also employ many people, we have the ability to refer people to extra services they need...in return in a way for upholding regulations we get to be this little epicenter for the community.”*

#### *Faith-based organizations: identity*

Faith-based organization interviewees identified as practicing members of their faiths. All faith-based organization interviewees reported it was important to provide a program that fulfilled a need within their community. As one Rabbi explained, *“We are*

*Jews, and as Jews and through our synagogue, we must uphold our end and help our neighbors. It's what is expected from us as individuals, and as affiliates of Conservative Judaism”.*

*Faith-based organizations: fulfillment and feeling good*

Most interviewees from faith-based organizations explained that beyond fulfilling a need in their community, their programs must fulfill a spiritual “calling”. Responding to a need in the community that represented their “calling” provided interviewees with a “feel good” feeling, “...and as a Muslim, we are urged to do good. We as individuals must come together and be a group who does well for others. This makes us feel good”.

One church pastor explained how he felt “blessed” to know there is a need for food in their community, and that through their community food-assistance program they are able to fulfill their obligation to God, the community, and to themselves: “I just see it as a, you know, a glimpse of the power of God at work in the world through us. This is our blessing; this is how we can be useful. And um, I thank God for that opportunity”. A church minister further explained:

*“We, as Christians are leaders of good morality. We teach, we help those who need help. We can help our neighbors by providing food, if you can help them or someone else out there, you can help yourself, too by fulfilling what God wants. And what he wants is for us to provide food. Christ said to feed the hungry...we want to do that good.”*

*Schools: identity as teachers and caregivers*

School interviewees described themselves as teachers and as members of a large safety net to help the children they work with and their families. As described by interviewees, being a teacher required that they “...provide as many opportunities as I can for my kids”. Recognizing how their students and families experience poverty, interviewees explained it was important to them that they provided as many opportunities for their students to be nurtured and cared for in a school setting as they may not have opportunities to thrive at home. Most interviewees were able to separate their personal feelings from their professional beliefs. This understanding justified providing food-assistance programs for students, regardless of how interviewees felt personally about the use of the programs:

*“I mean, my opinion about the Moms and all doesn’t really impact what I think should be done and what I can do. It’s like, like I can be skeptical about them but when it comes down to it I am going to give these kids as much as I can regardless about how I personally feel about it.”*

*“I am a teacher, and that means that while the child is at school, I am responsible for them. If they are worried about food at that moment in time, that is my responsibility. I want for my students to have access to as many programs that may help them as possible. That is my job. If I do that, I can really be what I said I am – a teacher. And I love my students.”*

*Schools: opening lines of communication*

Some teachers identified as being liaisons between students, parents, and community resources. These interviewees explained they feel a responsibility beyond the time their students are in their classrooms:

*“My job goes beyond 9-5 you know? These kids, they are mine. I feel a sense of responsibility to them. Yes, I am their teacher and I take that seriously. They need me. I can take care of them. I can help their parents understand what they need, sometimes that may be food. I can be that in-between from what they need to getting it and I can do that through programs and getting things from the church for that child”.*

In conclusion, organizations understand their identities by associating with larger overarching groups they feel are important. The food bank relies heavily on symbols to express their place in the community as food experts and members of Feeding America. Faith-based organizations identify themselves as members of their faith, which requires they fulfill obligations to serve the community. School interviewees identify as teachers, which requires them to care and serve their students with as many resources as possible. By using symbols and acting in ways that are typically associated with those of the larger group, organizations are able to convey their identities to the community.

### **What organizations want out of non-government food programs**

#### *Fulfilling a perceived need*

All organizations want any program they provide to meet a necessary need in the community; these needs can be understood using values (See Table 1). Hunger, explained by all organizations, is a tangible piece of poverty they can address. One church volunteer

explained, *“I would hate it if I was hungry. Doing this, I can really help someone who needs it. I think we all just want to help out those who are less fortunate than us. I wouldn’t do a program if I didn’t think it was helping”*. Ensuring the emotional and physical health of children was of particular interest to organizations, as a food bank interviewee explained,

*“Here with the food bank and other programs – it’s all about health. And I mean, you know, both mental and physical. We want our people who are using the programs to not really be worrying about it and to also be nourishing their bodies the best they can”*.

#### *Faith-based organizations: congregation engagement and benefits*

Faith-based organizations wanted to provide a meaningful program that supports well-being for participants in food-assistance programs, and one that is attractive and interesting to their congregations. Faith-based organizations wanted an active and community-oriented mission to provide charity experience to their congregations, external affection opportunities by providing interaction with outsiders from their congregations, and internal affection opportunities by providing a social opportunity for their members: *“But our goal is to get people in need back up on the ridge, find out what they need and help them to it. But we also need our main goal, if we succeed is having people get here on Sunday, and it’s how we’re helping people have a mindset to invest in the community, invest in friendships, and using their skills and gifts to do that”*.

Some faith-based organizations described that providing these benefits was more important than the program’s mission. Food-assistance programs provide an opportunity

for congregants to become enlightened about their community by learning responsibility, compassion, and a greater understanding of the community outside of their organization. They also provide a variety of ways in which members can participate in charity by providing various skills and resources (e.g., they can donate money, help in a pantry, or deliver backpacks).

*“The programs provide just the experience of caring for our members.”*

*“It is very important in a ministry that if you are taking their money, their time, that the people feel like they are doing a good thing. They like to get together to see each other every week. The backpack program provides us with the opportunity to satisfy a reach of different types of congregants. If people don’t want to pack, they can pay for it.”*

#### *Faith-based organizations: trusting other community organizations*

Faith-based organizations working with the food bank explained they did not have the skills to create and implement non-government food programs on their own. Often, these faith-based organizations reported they did not understand the reasons for regulations or requirements put in to place by the food bank to work together, but they were willing to relinquish some of their control over design decision for the programs for the assurance of rectitude i.e., ethical standards:

*“Well some of their regulations seem a little wonky if you ask me... I don’t have to understand it all, only that it’s the right way of doing it, I guess.”*

*“We’ve got the brawn – they’ve got the brains. It’s best not to ask questions!”*

*Faith-based organizations: independence*

Faith-based organizations that choose to provide food-assistance programs without the partnership of the food bank realize acting alone is more difficult and requires extra dedication to details. For these faith-based organizations, the benefits of working alone outweigh any logistical or creative inconveniences:

*“We have actively and purposefully decided to not work with [food bank]. For us, we’ve decided it’s important that we pick the food, we pick how it gets delivered, and we get to decide how we do things. They have too much say in what we would do for all the money we pay them, we can figure it out ourselves. Our congregants need to feel the responsibility of doing it themselves. I don’t want to deal with their regulations and rules, so I don’t.”*

*“It took a little while to start up but I think that was to be expected because we kind of had to re-invent the wheel by ourselves. Logistically and timewise working without them is harder. But I’m willing to come in early or leave late on Sundays so that when it comes down to it, I can make decisions for our church without having to run to someone else. It feels good to do it our way.”*

Overall, faith-based organizations reported that providing food-assistance programs that coincide with their calling allow them to fulfill their responsibilities to their congregants and to the community. They want food-assistance programs to help them foster community relationships, create excitement in their congregations, and provide a needed service in the community. For some faith-based organizations, sacrificing power over the details of their programs was worth the notoriety of affiliating

with the food bank, furthering their community relationships. For others, they preferred to work alone and to have control over their food-assistance programs.

*Food bank: creating a sense of community*

Like the faith-based organizations, the food bank wanted to ensure that through their food-assistance programs they create a sense of affection from within the community. Interviewees reported that providing food-assistance programs, their organization gained attention and recognition in the community. The food bank believed that as other organizations begin to realize the overarching role the food bank has in alleviating hunger in the community, they will come to respect their authority, and the food bank will become attractive for volunteers and donations. As a food bank interviewee explained,

*“We want to help the hungry. That’s our first mission. But a close second is really tapping into the interests of the community and gathering support for our anti-hunger campaign. That’s our mission. If we can create programs that you know, um, entrap people into caring about hunger that is a good thing. Then they will care about their neighbor. We are happy to facilitate that. Without donations and community support we wouldn’t be able to feed those that need it. So it’s a delicate balance, you know? Having to have a program that addresses needs and is something that the average person can get invested in.”*

*Food bank: ethics and standards*

Wanting to remain credible in the community while fulfilling the requirements set by Feeding America, the food bank had to establish rectitude in how they provide food.

By following Feeding America's strict regulations, they are able to fulfill ethical standards required to properly house and distribute food, while commanding power through their affiliation with Feeding America. They are also able to provide knowledge about hunger to other organizations:

*“Being part of Feeding America does a lot for us. We get our guidelines from them on how to store food, acquire food, all that stuff. And by following that, I think builds our reputation in the community. Doing those things in that way that is approved by such a big company kind of, proves that we know what we are doing. You know? We also get a ton of information about hunger and nutrition from Feeding America and our own hunger study that we can give to our churches and schools.”*

Food-bank interviewees revealed they rarely compromised on large issues with any faith-based organizations or school to provide food-assistance programs. They want to uphold the strict Feeding America regulations, and are unwilling to waiver in any major way. Interviewees explained that compromising could jeopardize their relationship with Feeding America. If faith-based organizations and schools were unwilling to adhere to their requirements, then they did not work with them in that capacity:

*“We don't have a lot of wiggle room. We follow orders and regulations by what's right through Feeding America and the food industry in South Carolina. So if that means we can't work with a particular church to have them have a pantry because they don't have the proper spaces, then we try to work with them in another way, like a food drive where they would bring food here. It's not that we*

*don't want to – it's that we can't and still have our affiliations which are more important to our overall goal of being part of Feeding America, and of fighting hunger.”*

One food-bank interviewee reported that it was important the programs they provide resonate with the community while adhering to Feeding America's standards. According to this interviewee, the food bank is responsible for the well-being of the community and of its employees:

*“I'm not just concerned about those who need, I've got a whole bunch of employees here and their families and so forth. So in a sense, the community needs to support these programs so that we can support ourselves. We need volunteers and interest to survive.”*

In conclusion, food-bank interviewees explained that by providing food-assistance programs that adhere to the standards of Feeding America and the food industry helps them portray a positive image and facilitates collaboration with other community organizations. The food bank prioritizes their desire to be affiliated with Feeding America and commands a sense of power and respect in the community. This can take precedence over forming relationships with other faith-based organizations that do not meet their standards. Overall, through their food-assistance programs, the food bank wants to foster community relationships, create opportunities for the community to become invested in ending hunger, and establish themselves as reliable experts in the community.

*Schools: awareness and communication about poverty and hunger*

Interviewees at schools reported they wanted to provide enlightenment and insight about poverty and hunger to the faith-based organizations they work with by sharing stories about food-program participants. Interviewees believed sharing their experiences would help faith-based organizations make the best decisions when choosing to commit to supporting a non-government food programs:

*“We have a great relationship with our church, and I always try to be honest with them. I tell them ‘hey – half the kids are being dropped off in fancy cars we might want to rethink some things’ to ‘hey, this family ate because of y’all’. I just want them to know the whole picture so they can make the decisions based on that.”*

Creating honest and open communication with faith-based organizations helped schools establish affection in the community and possibly create future opportunities for faith-based organizations to help their students and families:

*“You never know what is going to touch an individual. It’s my hope that the church will see the kids and their families and take pity, and want to help them again and again. Maybe with food, maybe with something else, that’s what I want.”*

*Schools: putting students first*

All school interviewees explained that providing food-assistance programs added responsibilities to their jobs:

*“We want the kids to have access to help and resources if they need it. That is what I want out of this program. I think that’s the whole point for us and for me –*

*to give students what they need. If that means that I have to do extra on Fridays then so be it. I don't know if it helps and it's not about that. Access and the hope that it would help is the point. ”*

*“It's annoying, these programs they push on me to do. But it's not for me. It's for the kids and that's why I do it.”*

School interviewees reported they frequently put aside their personal well-being, knowledge (about program participants and the best way to administer non-government food programs), and opinions about their food-assistance programs to provide them to students. Some interviewees explained when they did speak up about their grievances their contacts at their faith-based organizations or food bank met them with apprehension and unwillingness to listen. To foster relationships and for the future of food-assistance programs, most interviewees did not offer suggestions for fear of the programs being pulled from their schools, losing their jobs, or angering the faith-based organizations:

*“I guess my role in all of this is just providing the program. They make the decisions and I do it. That's part of the job. I feel like a cog in a wheel, but I do what I am told.”*

*“Oh! I've told them. I've told them a million times – I've told my principal, I've told my church lady that I know, and when the [food bank] person came here – oh, I let him know all right about the issues I have with this whole things. But I don't want to make waves. So I keep my mouth shut and do my business. I don't want to get fired or written up, and I don't want to jeopardize things for the kids.*

*It's like, I know what's going on, the church knows what's going on, and they still want to do what they want to do."*

*"I you know, have mentioned a few times that I think mentoring or another type of program would be better for the kids. Like, they get a meal here sometimes two and a snack. I told the church this and they want to do what they want to do. These kids they need a role model especially the boys I think more than more food, you know. But I mean, my suggestions didn't work out too well. It's just kind of what it is. It's not worth fighting over and losing the whole program."*

Interviewees at schools explained that by providing food-assistance programs, they are able to provide students and families with as many opportunities for assistance as possible. They want to create a sense of community, help students and families, and maintain their identities as teachers. They reported that, to provide food-assistance programs, they are willing to prioritize their students' well-being in addition to other responsibilities they have at school.

In summary, organizations actively want to fulfill values they believe will leave their organizations better off, or to help fulfill their identities. All organizations want to provide a helpful service to their community, and understand their food-assistance programs as a way to do this. To fulfill their identities, organizations make decisions about which values are most important to them that must be fulfilled to achieve this goal. This requires that sometimes they may compromise on values that are less important to them. These value-for-value transactions used to achieve organizational wants are a

powerful way of communicating what is most important in the basis of commitment for each organization.

### **What organizations assume about non-government food programs**

Across organizations, interviewees described three types of program participants: (i) those who would starve without food-assistance programs, (ii) those who were using non-government food programs as a supplement, and (iii) those participating in food-assistance programs where the program was meant to be a gesture of kindness.

#### *Non-government food programs are necessary to survival*

Some interviewees across organizations understood food-assistance programs as urgent and necessary for the survival of program participants. As one faith-based organization interviewee explained, *“The families we help would starve without the food boxes and backpack programs we give to them.”* Providing families with some food regardless of nutritional quality was worthwhile for most interviewees because as a school principal explained, *“something even a candy or fruit snack is better than nothing.”* When program participants wanted to accept old, ill-packaged, or expired food, it further proved organization interviewees’ beliefs that without food-assistance program some would starve.

#### *Non-government food programs as a supplement*

Interviewees who believed food-assistance programs should provide participants with food as a supplement denied the notion that their services could sustain a family for a month, or a week, depending on the program. Church interviewees explained:

*“The pantry is just to help them out when they need it. I mean, we have plenty of food but we also need to serve as many people as we can. I have enough meat here for three months but what good is that if I just give it to one family? We want to spread it out. We could never afford to help 300 families for the entire month.”*

*“No, I believe it’s supposed to be helpful but not everything. I mean that’s ridiculous to think that we could feed an entire family for a week, let alone multiple families.”*

Describing food-assistance programs as a supplement allowed interviewees to not worry as much about how much food the program was providing participants, as the object of providing the food-assistance programs was to help participants through the month, not sustain them. As a school interviewee explained:

*“It’s not supposed to be a whole meal plan. I mean I know the backpack program says that it’s supposed to feed the child for the entire weekend. But I don’t see that being the reality, it’s mostly snacks or what I would think is snacks. It’s just helping a little bit and I think anything that’s extra is always a good thing.”*

A food bank interviewee reported:

*“Food boxes are supposed to be a big amount to help them through the end of the month, maybe for a few days or so. Or they can spread out that food and make it last – I don’t really care either way. The point is, it’s supposed to be helpful.”*

For faith-based organizations and schools, framing food assistance as a supplement meant that quality of the food was relatively unimportant. Many interviewees

from faith-based organizations explained that they enjoyed putting candy and juice boxes into their pre-packed backpacks from the food banks because then “...parents can take that extra money they would spend on treats and spend it on healthier food for the whole family”. Likewise, school interviewees explained that food-assistance programs may not be able to provide the appropriate ethnic foods for families, but felt assured families could use the food instead to help their children assimilate into American culture or for entertaining purposes:

*“We get a lot of food back from Hispanic families because they don’t eat meatballs and stuff. I heard this from [another guidance counselor] too. And we just kind of laughed and I said ‘well that’s what we have so they should get used to it here!’”*

*“The food is supposed to help them, right? So if that’s the case, they can use the food for other people that they have over if they don’t want to eat it themselves.”*

*“You know if you’re truly hungry, you’ll eat what you get, you know what I mean.”*

Food-bank interviewees who understood food-assistance programs as a supplement placed emphasis on providing adequate nutrition through their programs. When able, the food bank tried to provide the most nutritious food to its clients, “*We have a nutritionist on staff, so when we get to order food we order good food*”. Many food-assistance programs that were part of Feeding America’s initiatives were strictly monitored for nutritional value, “*We get pre-ordered food on pallets for our backpack and holiday boxes. All that food has been picked by specialists at Feeding America to*

*make sure things are nutritious*". By the nature of the food bank accepting donations from the food industry and individuals, however, the bank also received food that had little to no nutritional value (e.g., condiments). Often, this food was added to pre-ordered food to bolster the packages of what they were providing to program participants. Defining community food-assistance programs' role as supplemental allowed for the programs to provide food that otherwise would not be acceptable if the goal of community food-assistance programs was to provide adequate, culturally appropriate, nutritional food items.

#### *Non-government food programs as a gesture of kindness*

School interviewees frequently reported food-assistance programs served as a symbol of kindness, rather than as a supplement to their food supply at home. Often the student came from struggling middle class families, where food was not as important as other disruptions at home (e.g., a divorce, child neglect). Food-assistance programs provided a way for interviewees at schools to show that for each student, they were cared for and were loved:

*"Some kids get the backpack and I know they don't need it. But they do need an excuse to come see me on Fridays so picking up the bag for them is huge. We talk for a little bit, give them a hug, and they get their food. It's not about them being hungry for those kids."*

*"It's just about showing them that someone out there cares about them. I know that it's not going to end them being hungry forever, but it's a nice thing to be able to give for students that have it really hard at home."*

Faith-based organization interviewees expressed this same sentiment, sharing that the goal of their non-government food programs were to provide some food along with a lot of caring:

*“I’m not delusional, I know the food doesn’t keep them from starving. I think it helps though. I think it helps more that the kids know someone somewhere is thinking about them. Like, ‘this cheese-it bag came from someone thinking about me and my family’. Does that sound crazy? I just think the kids can pick up on, you know, what the real thing behind it is.”*

*“People know when they receive things that it was packed and made with love. So that’s what we are selling- or, or giving to them, love. And they can feel that so even if it’s not about the food, it is in a way.”*

*“It’s not about the food.”*

In conclusion, most organizations reported their food-assistance programs serve as a supplement to participants’ diets, or their food-assistance programs are a symbolic gesture of caring. Framing food-assistance programs in this way allowed organization interviewees to justify providing the quantity and quality of food provided to program participants, as their programs are not intended to sustain families in the long term.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Understanding commitment**

In this study, organizations’ key actors provided us insight into what about non-government food programs engendered their sustained commitment. The interviewees in

this study reported that their commitment is based on a combination of how non-government food programs align with their organizational identities, what their organization wants, what they assume about their involvement in addressing hunger – all while using values to assist in their basis for commitment. This acknowledgement of their commitment to non-government food programs for the betterment of their organizations as well as a way to address hunger is consistent with literature that describes organizational commitment and perspectives.

### *Values*

To date, no study to our knowledge has assessed how commitment is linked to organizational values in the context of food assistance. This study provides insight into how values are used by organizations providing non-government food programs. For example, the food bank used their high-level position with Feeding America to secure relationships in the local community with other organizations (e.g., faith-based organizations and schools) – thus, using power to acquire affection. Through their position of power, the food bank also had the ability to accrue enlightenment, in that information about best practices, national statistics, programming, and local information were readily available to them. The food bank also utilized their power to command a majority of the resources required for non-government food programs (e.g., finances, food, space, volunteers), making themselves an appealing partner for faith-based organizations looking to provide non-government food programs. Affection through non-government food programs at schools is achieved weekly when church members drop off food to a school pantry and the guidance counselor is able to inform the members about

the needs of the students. Well-being is addressed as non-government food programs inherently are focused on providing food to those who are hungry.

Many faith-based organizations reported that providing non-government food programs that were based in best practices, and backed by a reputable organization (Feeding America) was worth the price, and stringent requirements to provide the programs. This is an example of how the acquisition of values in favor of others was reported in our data. Acquisition of values was frequent with our school interviewees. Interviewees reported that they make a conscious decision to give up their power to make decisions about the non-government food programs they provide, in favor for the values of affection and well-being. Interviewees at schools hoped that this acquiescence of power would allow them to create a healthy, supportive environment for their students and their families.

### *Identity*

Organizations utilize non-government food programs as a way to pursue identities important to them. They do this through the use of values (e.g., schools interviewees identify as caregivers to students, utilize the value of affection), and symbols. Food bank and faith-based organizations relied heavily on symbols (e.g., logos, name recognition) to express the legitimacy of their non-government food programs. Interviewees at faith-based organizations also reported that the organizational identity was directly linked to their religious affiliation. Most faith-based organizations reported that providing food to the poor was an obligation of their faith, and doing so helped them to achieve their religious identity.

### *Orientation to hunger*

All organizations reported wanting to meet a necessary need in the community, and provide a safety net for families experiencing hardships. Hunger is a tangible symptom of poverty that organizations stated they can address by providing food. Research and justification for non-government food programs comes from practices such as using local and national statistics, methods that have been tested through Feeding America, and school statistics to gauge hunger in the community. Organizations also relied on colloquialisms from other organizations to understand non-government food programs participants. Schools were the only interviewees that consistently reported they had “hands on” experience with program participants.

### *Assumptions about non-government food programs*

Overall, organizations assume that their non-government food programs serve as a gesture of kindness or as a supplement to hungry families. These assumptions help justify the quantity, quality, and frequency in which they provide non-government food programs. They understand hunger as part of the larger issue of poverty in their communities, but are quick to pass judgments on non-government food programs participants.

Prior research has indicated that food banks and their related outreach programs give the impression of effectively responding to hunger because of marketing, and the sheer amount of effort they require to function successfully (Curtis & McClellan, 1995; Eakin & MacEachen, 1998; Janet Poppendieck, 1999; Warshawsky, 2010). Our study supports these findings, while highlighting that the majority of organizations we

examined understood that the purpose of their non-government food programs was to either serve as a supplement for hungry families, or to be a symbolic gesture of good will. They reported that their programs were not helping participants long-term, nor addressing the root causes of participants' hunger. Based on these assumptions and understandings about their programs, organizations reacted adversely to participants attempting to acquire additional food resources (e.g., using additional non-government food programs, government initiatives). When organizations were informed that participants were making such attempts, they expressed skepticism about the motives of participants and questioned their basis for participation. Aside from schools, organizations reported rarely having any interaction with program participants, and their insights into the causes of hunger tend to be anecdotal in nature. Non-government food programs help organizations fulfill their identities, wants, and assumptions, while confirming their orientation to addressing the problem of hunger. There is little interest in creating a broader solution to the problem of hunger per se, however, other than giving food. When non-government food programs are marketed as actual solutions, they tend to obfuscate the root causes of hunger, and may even discourage support for exploring other non-food-based solutions.

There were instances in which school interviewees explained to their corresponding faith-based organizations that they believed hunger was a lower priority for these children than other needs (i.e., mentoring and role models). The need for mentoring related to the challenge of poverty, but not necessarily that of hunger specifically. School interviewees explained that they understood that hunger stems from other issues at home, and mentorship could help students have more positive role models in their lives. When school interviewees suggested this to their faith-based organizations,

they were met with resistance, with the explanation that providing food is the only type of program of interest to their congregations. An organization's resistance to solutions other than giving food was often an attempt to preserve the food-assistance system that currently was satisfying members' wants, needs, and assumptions. This is consistent with existing research which reports that non-government food programs conceptualized as part of national food banking systems are primarily focused on self-preservation, not advocacy for the poor (Janet Poppendieck, 1999; Warshawsky, 2010). The commitment from organizations to non-government food programs leaves little space for other solutions, because the food assistance system has also heavily influenced their thinking about program participants themselves.

Instead of viewing program participants who utilize opportunities present in the community (both government supported and other private programs) to help their families as resourceful and innovative, interviewees categorized them as "system abusers" and "not really needy." Interviewees' commitment to this system not only influences their assumptions about what their programs should provide (e.g., whether serving as a supplement or merely a gesture) but, because of limited interactions with program participants, may also further substantiate their assumptions and skepticism about program participants. Commitment to a non-government food programs promotes inflexibility towards any solution that may jeopardize the fulfillment of the provider's organizational identities, wants, and assumptions.

Non-government food programs provide an opportunity for organizations to address a tangible need in their communities. Commitment to these programs fulfills their

identities, wants, and assumptions, but also likely perpetuates hunger by inhibiting both full consideration of the causes of hunger and innovation for other solutions.

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## CHAPTER 4.2

### EFFECTS ON PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELORS OF IMPLEMENTING NON-GOVERNMENT FOOD PROGRAMS AT ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Fishbein, E.M., Frongillo, E.A., Blake, C.B., Saunders, R.P., Shapiro, C. To be submitted to Children and Schools.

**ABSTRACT:** INTRODUCTION: Schools are an epicenter for education, support, and child well-being. In addition to providing government funded food assistance programs, schools provide other non-government food programs to hunger (e.g., backpack programs) supported by local churches and food banks. Little is known about the how non-government food programs are implemented in a school setting, other than the responsibility of implementation is by professional school counselors. The aim of this study to articulate how the implementation of backpack programs affects professional school counselors' daily interactions with students, routines, and activities

. **METHODS:** Twelve in-depth, qualitative interviews were conducted with professional school counselors and a social worker at elementary and middle schools in South Carolina. Coding was guided in part by the concepts of a systems theory, which emphasized the backpack program's embedding in the school, how relationships have changed over time, and positive and negative effects of the backpack program on school dynamics. All notes and verbatim transcripts were analyzed using MAXQDA qualitative analysis software. **RESULTS:** Professional school counselors were responsible for the implementation of non-government food programs, with most schools providing three or more programs. The responsibility of implementation often overshadowed professional school counselors' teaching and staff tasks. Backpack programs created a support system for families through the collaboration of churches and a food bank. Backpack programs provided professional school counselors with additional opportunities to engage with students and families and bring awareness of hunger to the local community. They detracted from guidance counselors' other responsibilities in schools (e.g., one-on-one meetings with students, staff meetings). Professional school counselors reported that

because of the backpack program they felt their interactions with some students became more substantial and helped to foster their trust. DISCUSSION: The positive benefits associated with non-government food programs in schools have little to do with the food provided to participating students. Professional school counselors have less time to spend on their teaching and staff responsibilities in supporting the psychological well-being of students because of the demands of program implementation. Similar to other non-government food programs to hunger, backpack programs obscure a discussion about poverty and provide an illusion of a solution to hunger.

## **INTRODUCTION**

During the 1980's and 1990's, funding for national programs such as Women, Infants, Children (WIC), the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) began to dwindle (Jones & Ward, 2002; Leitner et al., 2007; Warshawsky, 2014; Wilson, 2004). At this time, states began to delegate the responsibility for social services to local governments and non-profit organizations (Warshawsky, 2011; 2014). Due to limitations in federal funding, there was continued pressure and encouragement from the government for the private sector to take the initiative in food assistance (Jones & Ward, 2002; Tarasuk & Eakin, 2005; Warshawsky, 2010). In this context, multi-sector public, private, and civil society institutions collaborated across the U.S. in local settings to further address hunger (Warshawsky, 2014).

Feeding America became a prominent figure in the food-banking world due to its large geographically-distributed network of small local food banks, faith-based

organizations, and schools to provide non-government food programs (Lumpkins, Greiner, Daley, Mabachi, & Neuhaus, 2013; Park & Smith, 2000; Riches, 2002; Tarasuk & Eakin, 2005) Warshawsky, 2010, 2014). Non-government food programs are programs that provide food directly to those experiencing hunger (i.e., a food pantry, school snack bags). Feeding America's non-government food programs were originally developed to be used as a temporary means to address short-term hunger (Janet Poppendieck, 1999; Tarasuk & Eakin, 2005; Warshawsky, 2010). Today, Feeding America partners with more than 500 local food banks and their communities nationwide. Through these partnerships, Feeding America provides access to immediate relief from hunger (e.g., food pantries), and access to consistently available, non-emergency food programs (e.g., senior lunch feeding programs).

Feeding America's "backpack program" aims to alleviate weekend hunger for children, by providing them with a backpack on Friday afternoons at school. The backpacks are filled with easily prepared food for them to take home, and are returned to the school Monday morning (Feeding America, 2016b; Y. E. Rodgers & Milewska, 2005; Shanks & Harden, 2015; Warshawsky, 2010). In many communities, local churches provide the funds, food, and manpower to pack and deliver backpacks to schools, while schools provide logistical assistance in distributing the backpacks, and a platform through which to access families. The backpack program reaches over 450,000 children weekly, and is becoming the largest privately funded non-government food programs to exist in school systems across the country (Feeding America, 2016b).

Independent of any food banks' involvement, schools have a history of responding to the needs of children and families. During the great depression, schools

became an epicenter for health related services including primary care, dentistry, and providing surplus food to children and their families (Bryant, 1913; Gunderson, 1971; Y. V. Rodgers & Milewska, 2007). In a recent national survey, 53% of teachers reported purchasing extra food for students who did not have enough to eat (Fram et al., 2014)(Share our Strength, 2013). Many schools regularly organize holiday food baskets to distribute to families, provide additional snacks to students throughout the day, or establish onsite food pantries that are available to parents (Fram et al., 2014) (Fishbein, 2016). Professional school counselors are responsible for the academic, mental, and physical well-being of students (Lepan, 2001). In many low-income schools, professional school counselors provide an important system to families through maintaining relationships with students (Lockhart, 1998). Often, professional school counselors connect families to outside resources, and provide an extension of trust to parents from the school (Lockhart, 1998). Fram et al suggests that schools are well-poised to address and respond to child hunger, but need dedicated staff to respond to the physical and psychological contributors to food insecurity to have greatest impact on students and their families(Fram et al., 2014).

The literature available on non-government food programs is limited, and is focused on program effects on students. A study conducted in Minnesota reported that students participating in a backpack program did not self-report a significant decrease in their hunger, nor did their “on-task” behavior in the classroom increase significantly after receiving a backpack (Ecker, 2012). Cotunga et al. reported that staff perceived students who receive a backpack as displaying positive psychological effects, improved behavior and academic performance (Cotunga & Forbes, 2008). Likewise, Rodgers et al. also

found that teachers perceived students participating in backpack programs as performing better academically (Y. E. Rodgers & Milewska, 2005). Bernal et al., reported that some food insecure children experienced social consequences (e.g., shame) of others knowing they were out of food and were accepting a food backpack, suggesting that care must be taken in addressing their food insecurity (Bernal et al., 2016). Although most non-government food programs are implemented by professional school counselors at school, there is a lack of research on how these programs effect professional school counselors' daily interactions with students, routines, and activities.

Internal organizational changes are inevitable when organizations choose to adopt any new program or intervention (Hawe, Shiell, & Riley, 2009; Lok & Crawford, 1999; Silverman, 1996). This may include that some roles and responsibilities change in order to best fit the new program (Hawe, 2009). At schools with a backpack program, professional school counselors have reported that administering their backpack programs often took precedence over their other tasks as educators (Fishbein, 2016). Such modifications to daily activities have the potential to impact their relationships with staff, students, and families, displace existing activities, and redistribute and transform materials within schools. We know little about how the implementation of these programs affects the focus of professional school counselors and other school staff in educating students, providing support to families, and adhering to their teaching responsibilities. The costs may be high for schools to provide a program that does little to address its stated purpose of addressing hunger (Warshawsky, 2011).

The aim of this paper is to articulate how the implementation of backpack programs affects professional school counselors in schools. Four research questions are

addressed in this study. First, how do professional school counselors incorporate backpack programs into their schools? Second, how has the implementation of backpack programs influenced their relationships inside and outside of the school setting? Third, what do professional school counselors need to implement the backpack program? Fourth, what activities have changed to incorporate the backpack program? These questions are investigated via qualitative interviews with professional school counselors and social workers at elementary and middle schools.

## **METHODS**

### **Conceptual Framework**

Our data were collected through the use of an interview guide developed based in part on Clark's policy process, which guided us in understanding how and why community organizations (i.e. food banks, faith-based organizations, and schools) sustain their commitment to non-government food programs (Clark, 2002; Fishbein, 2016). Professional school counselors reported that a majority of their time during the school day had changed from focusing on students to time spent on the logistics of the backpack program (Fishbein, 2016). As this change in their behavior seemed important given their role as counselors for students, support for families, and educators, we looked to Hawe's systems-theory to help guide our analysis in articulating how backpack programs may further effect professional school counselors. Hawe's theory suggested using the following four categories to guide an analysis examining changes in an organization due to a new program:

(i) Embedding: The sustainability of the backpack program in schools yields insights into how the procedures around the program become part of the school's organizational routine. There are two dimensions that signify the extent to which the backpack program may become embedded in organizational school practices; the reach, or how far across the system the backpack program is evident (e.g., orientation packets to the entire school, mentioned in regular staff meetings), and the intensiveness of the backpack program's integration into routine practice (e.g., time and space dedicated to the backpack program).

(ii) Relationships: Relationships within the school setting (e.g., teachers and professional school counselors) and outside partnerships (e.g., professional school counselors and contacts at faith-based organizations) tying the school to outside support organizations (e.g., churches, food banks) may influence how the backpack program functions, and why the backpack program is sustained. We aimed to understand how the backpack program affects the nature of relationships related to the backpack program.

(iii) Materials: Both raw and cultural materials are resources that are used in the implementation of the backpack program (Hawe et. al., Clark 2002). Raw materials may be people (e.g., manpower required to pack backpacks), places (e.g., rooms in schools storing the backpacks), money (e.g., funds to buy food), or other materials (e.g., backpacks, flyers about the program). Cultural materials may be ideas, beliefs, or social norms (e.g., behavior, customs, traditions). The backpack program has the potential to transform people, events, and places changing the setting (the school) that link all three in the process.

(iv) Displaced activities: Intervention research has traditionally focused on the new activity introduced, and the effects on the recipients of the new activity. As professional school counselors have had to make changes to accommodate and incorporate them into their daily routine, the actions that are displaced that might more truly account for changes in what outcomes at the school setting level we observe. This is useful for articulating what activities are dropped to accommodate the backpack program, and is vital for monitoring what roles and services are compromised for professional school counselors to provide the backpack program.

### **Participants and setting**

In person interviews (n=12) were conducted with school staff to understand their experiences with non-government food programs to hunger in schools. Interviewees were professional school counselors (n=11, representing 11 different schools) and a district social worker (n=1). Prior literature suggests that professional school counselors are often responsible for the implementation of non-government food programs in elementary and middle schools.(Cotugna & Forbes, 2008; Ecker, 2012; Lapan, Gysbers, & Petroski, 2001; Y. E. Rodgers & Milewska, 2005) The social worker was responsible for backpack programs in fifteen elementary and middle schools. In this study, purposeful maximum variation sampling and snowball sampling was used for the recruitment of participants for qualitative interviews. This sampling design allowed us to capture and describe central concepts that cut across variation between schools, and we recognize that common patterns found to emerge are thereby representative of the core experience within the school community(Michael Quinn Patton, 1990). Data collection and analysis yielded two kinds of findings: 1) detailed descriptions of each individual school, which is useful

for documenting uniqueness; and 2) important concepts that cut across cases which derive significance (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2002; Michael Quinn Patton, 1990).

Interviewees were selected for this study based on the following criteria: all interviewees must be actively involved with a backpack program, have worked in the district a minimum of three years, and speak English.

During the interviews, all professional school counselors referred to their job title as “guidance counselor”. For the remainder of this manuscript the term, “professional school counselors” will be replaced with “guidance counselor”, to be consistent with the experiences of the interviewees.

### **Data collection**

We used two separate conceptual theories in the development and analysis of this study. The first, Clark’s policy process theory, aided in the development of the interview guide. The policy process theory is useful in understanding how community organizations come to a decision about sustaining a particular non-government food program, and how that decision is acted upon and sustained. During these interviews, guidance counselors frequently discussed concerns about non-government food programs, specifically backpack programs infringing on their responsibilities as educators. To better understand their experiences with non-government food programs, we used tenets from Hawe’s systems-theory to guide our analysis in understanding the effects of the backpack program on guidance counselors in schools.

The semi-structured interview guide based on Clark’s policy process theory was developed with open-ended questions to capture the responses of the guidance counselors

and social worker. The interview guide was reviewed and piloted through peer interviews. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, and were completed in guidance counselors' rooms or other school offices. Each interview was audio-recorded and took approximately 90-120 minutes. Interviewees were initially contacted by email, phone, and in person to participate in the study. Informed consent was obtained from the interviewee prior to the interviews, in compliance with study approval from the University of South Carolina's Institutional Review Board. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim.

## **Analysis**

Verbatim transcripts, field notes, and any informational documents available (e.g., pamphlets, flyers) were analyzed with the assistance of a computer software program for qualitative data (MAXDA plus 2015). Our analysis was guided by Hawe's systems-theory. Our primary initial analytic technique was in-depth, repeated, independent readings of the data. Following the independent readings, three experienced qualitative researchers coded two interviews separately, which was followed by in-depth discussions to ensure the interpretations were robust and empirically grounded. From these discussions, a code list was created and used by the lead coder for the remaining data based on the concepts from Hawe's systems-theory theory and by our research questions. Additional categories and concepts were added, and data were recoded with additional dimensions when required. Findings are emergent within each category, not across all data. To further ensure the quality of the data, the researcher responsible for coding participated in peer debriefing. Data were triangulated through multiple tools (e.g., interviews, observations, multiple coders).

## **RESULTS**

The experiences described by school guidance counselors and a district social worker are represented by three categories: 1) commitment to non-government food programs; 2) integration of non-government food programs in schools; and 3) leverage resources. These categories help address the study aim to articulate how the implementation of backpack programs affects guidance counselors in schools. Various concepts and dimensions within each category help to further describe their experiences:

### **Commitment to non-government food programs**

Although this study is focused on the backpack program, in all eleven of the schools we interviewed, our interviewees reported that they provided at least one other non-government food programs, in addition to providing the backpack program. Seven of the schools reported providing two or more non-government food programs in addition to the backpack program. Like the backpack program, many of these programs are provided long-term and consistently throughout the school year.

Breakfast, after school snack, and dinner programs: Schools with a high free and reduced lunch rate utilize government grants, and the support of local faith-based organizations to provide food before and after school. Typically, supporting organizations provide food directly to schools, which is then stored in cafeterias or in another storage area. Every morning, selected students meet in the cafeteria and are fed breakfast. Meals usually consist of a piece of fruit, bread or a bagel, and milk or juice. After school, selected students for snack programs meet in the cafeteria and are a piece of fruit, crackers, and fruit juice. Although not as widespread as breakfast and snack programs,

some schools through the support of local churches provide dinner to students and families 1-3 times per week. As a guidance counselor explained, *“The church gives us all the food we need for the breakfast program. I mean, they pick it out and make sure it’s healthy and all that. They also give us a snack. And monthly they have a dinner.”*(Interview #3)

Summer Feeding Programs: Intended to feed students over the summer in who rely on the NSLP, centralized elementary schools are open daily for meals. Some schools provided only snacks, while others provide a full hot lunch. The local food bank supports the summer feeding program, which has increased the number of schools that are open over the summer. A guidance counselor explained, *“...basically kids come eat here like they would during the school year. I don’t have to be here to run in but I set it all up during the year. Well actually sometimes I do but usually not, it’s regular meals like they have during the day here. No better or worse in quality usually.”* (Interview #9)

Food boxes: Food is donated by congregants to their church, and is placed into a cardboard box to be distributed to families participating in the backpack program over winter, spring, and summer breaks. Some families receive food boxes weekly. Church volunteers deliver the food boxes to the students’ homes. The amount of food in these boxes is meant to help feed a family of four for a week. If the church prefers, they are able to purchase pre-packaged food boxes through the food bank. As a guidance counselor explained, *“We do the food box, too. It’s a bunch of meals in a cardboard box. I give them out. They take up so much space in this room.”* (Interview #1)

Holiday shop: “Holiday related” food (e.g., canned cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie) is donated by the local community directly to the school. This program occurs around holidays including Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. Hidden behind drapes, food is displayed on decorated tables in the cafeteria. Parents of identified students are invited to come and “shop”, to take the food they need home with them for their holiday meals. An interviewee explained, “*At our school, we like to invite the children to tag along with their Moms if they want to so they can help pick some stuff out that they like.*” (Interview #1)

Holiday turkeys and hams: Most frequently, Thanksgiving turkeys and Christmas/Easter hams are purchased by local churches through the food bank, and are distributed to selected families. The food bank may deliver the turkeys and hams to the schools, or to the churches for families to pick up. Some churches purchase all of their turkeys and hams without the help of the food bank and distribute them to families through the use of their volunteers “*...this is a highlight for our kids. We love to be able to help families have a nice Christmas.*” (Interview #4)

Food pantries: Food pantries are located in guidance counselors’ rooms, or in an extra closet located elsewhere in the school. Food is donated by teachers, and is available to students throughout the day. Some provide canned goods to parents. A guidance counselor explained, “*Well the food pantry is in my room right here – see? We bought a special cabinet and we have snacks and then we also have you know, canned goods and things of that nature. Ramen. So teachers know if they have a kids that’s hungry they can come by and get you know, a granola bar, or I can call a parent and tell them I have*

*some extra things for them. Usually it's the same Moms coming in who use it but the teachers, um they are different usually.*" (Interview #5)

Hispanic outreach: Schools with a large Spanish speaking community have programs tailored to their specific needs. Some guidance counselors hold bi-annual meetings for Spanish speaking parents, providing information about enrolling in the WIC, NSLP, SNAP, and the backpack program, "*...when I can I try to pick up you know, Mexican type foods to stick in the backpacks. So they feel more at home. Like sometimes if its on sale I'll buy taco shells and refried beans in the can and stick that in. I think they like it, I – I mean they haven't said anything about it so I keep doing it.*" (Interview #3)

### **Integration of non-government food programs in schools**

#### *Changes in time allocation*

All interviewees reported that their time dedicated to working with students (e.g., one on one counseling, or group counseling) has been compromised to accommodate the time needed to implement the backpack program:

*"It has encroached on my time as an educator, as a guidance counselor, and as staff member. Sometimes I feel like my job description isn't guidance counselor, its 'backpack lady'. I'm not able to do what I should do."* (Interview #2)

Some guidance counselors reported they had missed out on important staff events and meetings to handle their backpack program responsibilities:

*“For two years, I missed every single staff meeting... church could only drop off on a certain day, I had to stay after in my room and organize the bags. It really, I think, um, disconnected me from the school.” (Interview #7)*

### *Incorporating the backpack program*

For some guidance counselors who have implemented the backpack program for many years, they have worked their backpack program responsibilities into their regular routine:

*“The backpack program has changed the way I work at school, the way I think about my responsibilities, the way I do things hour to hour – I mean, it has completely changed um, my, my landscape and I would chance to say scope of what I do here. [This is the 7<sup>th</sup> year] of the program, so now I have a good balance. But the first few years ...I could barely teach the classes I was supposed to, answer to parents, deal with annoyed teachers, get the bags together and organized, and get students to remember.... now, it’s down to a science.”*  
(Interview #6)

For others, integrating the backpack program into their daily routine has been more difficult:

*“I easily spend fifteen hours a week on the backpack program...it spills out onto my weekends as well, and after work. I’ve still got my groups to lead, students to counsel, you know behavioral issues and all that stuff. But between handling phone calls from parents, dealing with our church, collecting the bags on*

*Mondays and then giving them out it takes up much more time than you would think.” (Interview #1)*

*“It’s like I have two jobs but I’m only getting paid for one.” (Interview #8)*

#### *Communication channels: inside the school*

Guidance counselors explained that updating staff regularly about “*good things happening with the program or bad, too (Interview #8)*” was likely to help them gain support for delivery. A guidance counselor explained, “*I try to write about good things first in the email like stories about kids eating the food. Then I move onto issues – like reminding pod leaders to get the backpacks back to me on Mondays.*” (Interview #7)

When asked about how information about the backpack program is shared beyond email, school staff explained that information about the backpack programs is distributed at orientations over the summer. Some schools reported they include a discussion about the backpack program at weekly staff meetings. One guidance counselor elaborated on her efforts to explain food insecurity to school staff during a weekly staff meeting:

*“A few years ago, I decided that I wanted the teachers to know about the backpack program because it was causing a lot of problems and disruption ...in any case, I gave a presentation during a staff meeting with a packet of information that I gave out...but its like nothing happened or changed. They have too many other things to worry about... that was the only time I’ve tried to do something like that.” (Interview #3)*

Information about the backpack program is dispersed through informal conversations between staff members throughout the school day. All interviewees

reported that they often spoken with teachers and other staff members about the backpack program throughout the day when they saw each other in the hallways, during their lunch breaks, after school. Some guidance counselors reported texting teachers during the day about the backpack program. A guidance counselor explained,

*“...usually I see them [the other teachers] in the morning at the car drop-off area and that’s when I hear about it all. We don’t have informal meetings about it because I can just kind of you know get the word about it throughout the day and week. When we do talk about it its usually them complaining about something. A lot of the kids don’t bring back the bags so they’re always complaining about that. Or sometimes they leave the food at their desks all weekend so it can start to smell. Or so and so is getting made fun of and this and that.”* (Interview #4)

One guidance counselor described how the backpack program has provided her with ample opportunities to interact more frequently with teachers on topics not related to the backpack program. It has helped her develop relationships, build trust, and help students:

*“I used to only talk to teachers when there was a problem with a student, or with the backpack program...we still talk that often. Just not about the backpack program. But I think it helped me to be more vocal with teachers.”* (Interview #7)

All interviewees reported that they have created new relationships or have fostered existing relationships because of the backpack program. For example, three guidance counselors explained how they have developed relationships with janitors and cafeteria workers. Prior to the backpack program, they had no reason to interact with

these staff members. At these schools, guidance counselors distribute the backpacks in the cafeteria, with the help of the cafeteria workers and janitors. The cafeteria workers and janitors often notice different behaviors about students that they now share with the guidance counselors:

*“I hadn’t really gotten to know [cafeteria worker and janitor] prior to the backpack program. But since I have organized the backpacks to be picked up in the lunchroom after school, they hang around and help out. They’ve gotten to know the kids more than just in passing – [cafeteria worker] knows the backpack students when they come through the lunch line. And that’s good for the kids. And also, I think they might notice different things about the students since they see them regularly in a different context than the teachers, or you know me.”*

(Interview #2)

*“[The janitor] cleans out everyone’s desks. So he noticed that [student] was keeping food in there. Like half eaten fruit. So he told me that he thought this student may be hungry, and so I got the student to come down to see me and we talked about some stuff, and he wanted a backpack... I probably would have never suspected that student of being hungry.”* (Interview #7)

Most guidance counselors reported that they spoke more frequently with other staff members since their school began implementing the backpack program. Although increased interaction was a positive benefit, guidance counselors reported that the nature and topic of the interactions were less varied and not as focused on students. Instead, they reported the majority of their conversations were about the backpack program:

*“I feel like all I talk about with other staff members is the backpack program. Its just chitchat but it’s always about a student in relation to the backpack program. I’m not longer as diverse I guess you could say, in terms of what I’m needed for.”*

(Interview #4)

*“I’m not focusing on students as much. I’m focusing on the logistics of the backpack program. That’s what the principal pulls me aside to talk about, not necessarily reading scores or this and that. I think the program has changed the focus of what is important to the principal. It’s more about you know, this program and feeding kids which I want to say, I don’t disagree with, I just feel, well, when I think about it, it just seems unbalanced.”* (Interview #8)

Additionally, the backpack program allows for more frequent interactions with students participating in the backpack program. Guidance counselors see backpack program students at least twice per week (once when they drop off the backpack bag on Monday, once on Fridays when they hand them out):

*“But I think this is a way for the school to help out when they’re struggling... I mean, some of the kids really look forward to coming and grabbing their bags. And it gives me time to have more interaction with them when they come to get the bags, and I feel like sometimes they feel more comfortable talking about stuff.*

*Cause they get so comfortable coming in and out of my room.”* (Interview #5)

*“The kids get to know me since they see me more, and I have something to give them. They can trust me, you know? So that helps if they have a problem, they know me. I think that helps they can come to me.” (Interview #1)*

#### *Communication channels: outside the school*

Interviewees reported that the backpack program has increased their interactions with community leaders (e.g., church members, pastors, food bank representatives) to help form open channels for communications between school staff, students, and families. Although many of the interactions were brief, interviewees reported they were beneficial in bringing attention to the school, students, and families participating in the backpack program. A guidance counselor explained,

*“I’ve had so many more interactions with people who I wouldn’t talk to otherwise.” (Interview #1)*

Not all guidance counselors welcome additional communication. Three guidance counselors reported they did not appreciate all of the increased communication:

*“It’s like, every week, twice sometimes three times, I get yanked out of what I’m doing to go kiss the butts of the church people. I’m just being honest. It’s a distraction and every week it’s the same thing, ‘oh yeah, the backpack program is great, kids love it, food is great, everything is great’. I mean what am I supposed to say? The real issues that I have with it? It’s not the place or time for that, in a fact I don’t think there would ever be one for that. But it’s a waste of my time to break up my day and go satisfy people who are clearly already satisfied with themselves.” Interview #10)*

The backpack program provided guidance counselors the opportunity to engage with the parents of participating students. From these interactions, many guidance counselors reported forming trusting relationships with families that may otherwise not exist. From these relationships, guidance counselors have been able to refer these families to a variety of helpful sources outside of the school setting, including other food banks, connecting them with a district social worker, job sourcing opportunities, babysitters, and programs targeted toward Spanish-speaking families:

*“I like to follow up with my backpack families and some of the families have like, three or four kids getting a bag...it’s opened up a bunch of times for us to communicate with the families that I’m not sure I would have had otherwise. Lots of the Moms are skeptical of me calling – like I’m complaining about their kid or their kid is in trouble or something like that. But this program is a really good starting point for us. Like I can ask, ‘has [child’s name] brought home his backpack this week? Oh he has? Good! How’s that working out for you, what else is going on?’” You know things like that. It’s a good conversation piece.”*

(Interview #5)

### *Job duties*

Some guidance counselors reported the backpack program draws unwanted attention and communication from their principals. Often, this has created added pressure guidance counselors:

*“There’s so much attention on the backpack program because our church is a mega church so they want ‘results’...my principal was on me hovering over me. I*

*have so many other things and then all this pressure to make this great and I basically had no guidelines on what I was doing it created some you know, resentment for me towards her because she was watching me. And was very critical.” (Interview #8)*

All guidance counselors reported that they assumed a central role in how the backpack program was distributed at their school. Most reported that although it was not their decision to initiate their program, they have since been tasked with determining the majority of the backpack program practices, and often rely on other staff members:

*“Not everyone [at school] is happy with the choices I make with the program... But, it’s really not up to them... I try to accommodate them as much as I can but like anything, you can’t win ‘em all ...but I do need them to help me out.”*  
(Interview #5)

A guidance counselor reported,

*“...yes, well the backpack program has become my job, my mission, my thing to make sure goes smoothly. Since its my responsibility, I got to decide when I do things, so I’ve tried to designate Monday mornings when I get the bags back, and Friday afternoons. Oh and Thursday afternoons because that’s when the church drops them off and I have to organize them. And Fridays are because that’s when I hand them out.” (Interview #10)*

With the exception of three schools, all guidance counselors reported that they were not provided with any guidelines for how to administer their backpack program. Their inexperience lead many of them to reach out to other guidance counselors at

schools with existing programs, research backpack programs on the Internet, and “...I watched the Dr. Phil shows about backpack programs. I DVR’d them and everything.”

(Interview #6) A guidance counselor explained:

*“The backpack program, besides when the food was delivered was dumped on my lap. I had no idea how to pick students, how to get it out to them, collect them, nothing. So I know a teacher through my sister’s church who has a backpack program at her school. So I called her, and she got me into contact with her guidance counselor. I actually drove up there to talk to her about it and learn about what she does. There’s not really regulations for what to do, and her way was working for her. So that’s what we do here, now.”* (Interview #11)

To help with some of the responsibilities of delivering the backpack program to students, guidance counselors at three schools have independently incorporated special-needs students into their routine. On Friday afternoons, instead of calling students down to guidance to pick up their bags, guidance counselors use special education students to help them deliver the backpacks to classrooms: “...we use the sped kids to help me deliver the backpacks. Because usually on Friday afternoons, like no one is doing work anymore ... I thought it would be a good idea to just grab those kids and have them help me... they look forward to it – you know it gets them out of the classroom, helps them learn student’s names, and I think they like having a job to do. The kids who get the bags you know, I think they are learning tolerance and acceptance because they interact with the sped students more. I just thought it was a good way for me to not have as much to do, but to also let students get out and interact more.” (Interview #9)

## Leverage resources

### *Pragmatic opportunism*

All interviewees reported the importance of addressing hunger in the school setting. Interviewees believed that child hunger was detrimental to students' learning, behavior, and focus throughout the day. Helping their students be more physically comfortable throughout the school day was important in gaining their support for the backpack program:

*“Making sure your students aren't hungry is really, really, important...I really think, like, some people say that the students can't focus because of ADHD and all that crap. I think if you just gave some of them a granola bar or something, they'd sit right down. I mean, I can't focus if I'm hungry and I'm a grown woman!”* (Interview #10)

*“There are some things I don't like about the backpack program, but anything I do, I do for my students. If I can make them more comfortable for a moment, I want to do that. If the backpack program, you know, gives them that comfort, I want to do that.”* (Interview #10)

One guidance counselor explained she believed that the four non-government food programs she provided was a direct result of the media's influence in the community:

*“I've been doing this job for almost thirty years. It seems like, every ten years it's a new thing to do in the schools. Teachers and myself, we've always been feeding hungry students. But why all of a sudden do I have to support and basically run I*

*think – um, six different giving food programs? It's the media. It's all about hunger this and obesity that and nutritious food. If it's important enough for Michelle Obama to talk about, then that you know, trickles down and we have to address it.” (Interview #4)*

Deeming interest in providing food as a “*cultural thing*” was common amongst guidance counselors. Many explained that providing food “feels good”, and helps explain why faith-based organizations are apt to help them they provide programs aiming to alleviate child hunger:

*“Who doesn't like to give food? It feels good. It's a nice thing to do. I think that's why we have so many programs targeting the same thing. The problem is, with this many programs I provide, shouldn't the problem be going away? Like, what's the point of doing all this effort if the problem is still there? If you find the answer, will you tell me?” (Interview #11)*

*“I think that you know, its, it's a cultural thing ... 'oh, my church gives food to the school so I should give food to the school', or like, 'my friend's son's school does this and that so we should bring that to our school'. Kinda like wildfire, you know? It spreads because it's trendy.” (Interview #3)*

Guidance counselors hoped that allowing churches access to families, they would want to provide other services for students, most frequently mentioned, mentorship. A guidance counselor explained,

*“I think [the backpack program is about] raising awareness raises compassion and we, this world always needs more compassion. And even compassionate*

*people need, you know, compassion. So I don't see a detriment to it, I think that it's beneficial for everyone, even if you just hear the message to understand that there are families that are struggling, families that are in your neighborhoods, families that are in your classrooms, grandparents, you know, kids that are in your grandchildren's classrooms, it's everywhere. And so I think raising awareness is always, always, always gonna be beneficial. Even if the end result doesn't change. It's not about hunger...it's about the poor.” (Interview #11)*

For many guidance counselors, the backpack program serves as a way to bring more community support for other needs that have little to do with nutrition or hunger. A guidance counselor further explained,

*“The church people come to the school twice a week, and usually its different volunteers...I think the more people you can get to come out and interact with us the better. They can put a face to a name... maybe all the little interactions will add up – and one day they'll wake up and say 'hey! We should buy the school new computers!' [laughs] ...maybe if they are here enough it will open their eyes to other things going on here with our students.” (Interview #5)*

In this school district, schools were finding it difficult to obtain enough support from local churches to provide all elementary and middle school students with a backpack. This school district is unique in that it was their goal to provide a backpack to every elementary and middle school student, regardless of perceived need. To achieve this goal, this school district decided to hire an additional six social workers to implement the backpack program without the support of local churches. The funding for these fifteen

backpack programs comes from the school district, and the backpack programs are implemented by six newly hired social workers. Each social worker was assigned 1-5 schools (depending on the size of the backpack program), and was responsible for purchasing the food, packing the backpacks, delivering them to the schools. Guidance counselors at each school were responsible for determining which students would participate, obtaining parental consent, and distributing the backpacks. In addition to their backpack program responsibilities, some of these social workers were required to work in the schools providing social work services to students. In this district, there are backpack programs supported by local churches, and backpack program, which are supported entirely by the school district. The social worker explained,

*“I was in charge of hiring the other social workers in the district to come and help out with the backpack program... They’re mostly young since this would burn someone else out... the schools couldn’t find churches to help them, and the guidance counselors almost went on strike because they hated the damn program so much...it’s good because now we have so many social workers but most of their time is spent doing backpack stuff. Some days I help out and I will spend 8 hours of my day working on the backpacks at the warehouse.” (Interview #12)*

The district social worker viewed the backpack program as an opportunity to hire additional social workers that the schools need, regardless of the backpack program:

*“The backpack program has blown up... bringing on more qualified staff was so important to making sure the backpack program become a long-term, sustainable decision for our district. I mean, how many districts can say that every. Single.*

*Child. Can get a backpack if they want one? I'd like to bet not many... the backpack program taken care of by social workers who know it's in their job description, and we get to hire more social workers. Like an excuse to get more help in the district because we have a lot of need.” (Interview #12)*

*Increased material need*

Raw materials (tangible materials that help facilitate the backpack program) and a representative definition provided by interviewees are reported in the table below (Table 1).

Table 4.3. Raw materials used to implement non-government food programs

Resource	Definition	Explanation
Food & physical backpacks	Food placed in the backpacks	<i>“In our bags the students receive food from the church and I also like to put in pop tarts sometimes.” (Interview #10)</i>
Funding	Money dedicated to funding the food provided to students, or to the additional social workers hired by the school district.	<i>“The church pays for everything with their own money. I just hand them out.” (Interview #2)</i>
People	School staff who have significant dedicated time to the backpack program. Most frequently, guidance counselors, social workers, special education teachers, janitors, and other teachers who have a particular interest in the backpack program.	<i>“Well, I [guidance counselor] am responsible for the program. But a lot of the 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers have taken an interest in it, so they like to come by and help me line up the bags for the students when they can.” (Interview #5)</i>
Space	A room to store the backpacks (both filled with food and emptied) is required for the program.	<i>“I choose to label each backpack with a number specific to a student. I line them all out in a row and have</i>

		<i>the students come pick them up [in the guidance room].” (Interview #1)</i>
Informational materials	Flyers to families, emails, fundraising calendars.	<i>“The first week of school we send home a ton of information with the students including a backpack flyer.” (Interview #7)</i>

## DISCUSSION

Schools are an epicenter for education, support, and child well-being, and guidance counselors and social workers are instrumental in fostering psychological, physical, and academic success amongst elementary and middle school students. Guidance counselors and social workers act as mentors for students, provide connections for families, and help to build camaraderie both within and outside of the school. In an attempt to provide additional support for students, schools have tasked guidance counselors with the responsibility of implementing non-government food programs, including backpack programs (Fishbein, 2016). We utilized Hawe’s systems theory to understand how the implementation of backpack programs affected guidance counselors’ responsibilities and routines. Given that guidance counselors and social workers are crucial for the well-being and success of students, it is important that we understand how their regular activities are affected by their added responsibilities to implement non-government food programs.

Hawe’s systems theory articulates that organizations inherently experience changes and effects because of the introduction of a new program (in this study, backpack programs). We applied the four categories of the theory (how backpack

programs are embedded within the school, how they affect relationships, how materials are used in their implementation, and what activities are affected) to interviews with guidance counselors and a district social worker. Guidance counselors are the acting source through which non-government food programs are implemented, and must adjust their routines and activities to support implementation (Fishbein, 2016).

The extent of how the backpack program has become embedded in guidance counselors' daily routines is indicative of the acceptance of the program, both by the school and the implementing guidance counselor. Guidance counselors reported that they regularly communicated with other staff members, their contacts at supporting churches, and participating students and families. In some schools, guidance counselors provided intensive informational sessions with staff members to educate them about backpack program protocol, and how to identify markers of food insecurity and hunger amongst students. In most schools, the backpack program was implemented alongside two or more other non-government food programs. This suggests that providing non-government food programs was a supported and sought-after initiative for schools to provide. In one instance, the implementation of the backpack program became so fundamental to the school district that additional social workers were hired to support implementation.

Backpack programs have created new opportunities for guidance counselors to engage frequently with other school staff members, community leaders, students, and their families. In some schools, guidance counselors have forged new relationships with support staff, which have increased the awareness of need within the school. Guidance counselors reported that although they may interact more frequently with other staff members, the nature of their discussions are frequently only about the backpack program.

This has the potential to limit opportunities for guidance counselors to discuss other topics relating to student well-being or issues with their other responsibilities.

Guidance counselors reported that to implement the backpack program, they must reorganize their schedule and allot more time to the implementation process than some of their teaching responsibilities. Some guidance counselors who had been implementing non-government food programs for many years had integrated the program in ways so that their other responsibilities were not compromised. For others, this was difficult to do. Some reported that backpack program had caused them to feel isolated from the staff, as their implementation responsibilities required that they regularly miss scheduled trainings and meetings.

The backpack program requires a variety of materials, many of which were present in the schools, but have been repurposed to best fit the needs of implementation. For example, the space required for the backpack program is substantial. Most backpack programs have between 30-90 participating children, and many guidance counselors reported storing all of the backpacks and handling the collection and distribution (twice weekly) out of their offices. Additionally, we learned that guidance counselors have the freedom to implement the backpack program (within some parameters of distributing the backpacks on specific days) as they choose. Many guidance counselors reported that they utilize special education students to help with implementation, and they believe that this not only helps with the ease of implementation, but also is a way for these students to become better integrated into the school. We learned that the majority of guidance counselors looked to other schools with existing backpack programs to learn about how to best implement their backpack program, and relied heavily on media sources for

further information. Guidance counselors also reported that they believe that backpack programs create opportunities for the community to become engaged with other hardships families who experience hunger may also be facing. They believe that the backpack program brings community interest to the needs of families, often, which may have little to do with hunger and nutrition.

Based on the current literature on the importance of guidance counselors and their relationship to student and family well-being, we can draw some conclusions about how the changing responsibilities and routines of guidance counselors affect students and their families. Our interviewees reported a variety of ways in which they believed the backpack program positively affected students. The backpack program created opportunities for interactions between guidance counselors, students, and their families. Interviewees believed this was important for building a supportive community to assist them in other aspects of their lives. Additionally, guidance counselors acknowledged the negative consequences of hunger during the school day, and believed the backpack program does provide hungry children with something to eat. Engaging churches through the backpack program may help foster new community relationships, and build a broader network for students and their families.

But the positive results reported by our sample, and the benefits reported in the literature, may be due to the dynamic effects occurring in schools made to support the programs, and have little to do with the food provided. As guidance counselors did not mention the benefit of the provision of food beyond temporary relief from immediate hunger, the positive effects reported in this study and the current literature (e.g.,

improved behavior during the school day) are likely mostly due to the greater support system built for students through guidance counselors.

Frongillo et al. reported that receiving food assistance at school triggered feelings of shame in children, and that some children experienced feelings of embarrassment because their peers knew they received free food (Frongillo et al., 2016). Although we did not interview participating students about their experiences with backpack programs and are unable to draw definitive solutions about psychological impact from this study, we can look to other ways in which backpack program may be negatively affecting students. For example, all guidance counselors in our sample reported that they have significantly less time to spend during the day working with students (hosting counseling session, one-on-one therapy, etc.), and performing their regular duties as educators because of their responsibilities related to the backpack program. Guidance counselors may have increased face-to-face interactions with participating students, families, and staff; but their conversations have become less varied and increasingly focused on issues related to the backpack program. We can posit then, that students are not receiving the support they need from their guidance counselors as their focus is on the implementation of the backpack program. The role of guidance counselors is important for the mental and academic well-being of students (Lockhart, 1996). As the routines and responsibilities of guidance counselors who implement a backpack program have changed, they likely are not able to provide the attention, time, and psychological support that students require. Further, without professionals in schools dedicated to using a holistic approach in addressing both physical and psychological contributors to hunger and food insecurity,

the perpetuation of hunger through non-government food programs is inevitable (Fram et al., 2014).

The explicit goal of non-government food programs is to feed hungry students (Poppendieck, 1996; Feeding America, 2016a). The literature suggests that the majority of community organizations that support these programs understand them to be a symbolic gesture of good will, not a solution to hunger (Janet Poppendieck, 1999; Tarasuk & Dachner, 2009; Warshawsky, 2010). Non-government food programs, like many food assistance programs worldwide, enjoy significant legitimacy by providing some form of hunger relief, as well as providing an outlet for organizations and individuals to demonstrate altruism (Tarasuk, 1998; Fishbein, 2016). These programs in schools may achieve supportive effects for students, but these effects come at the cost of a changed focus for guidance counselors, while providing an illusion of addressing hunger in local communities. These effects have little to do with hunger and the food that is given to students. Given the number of non-government food programs present in schools in our sample, we believe the charity discourse of the public is content to see that hungry children are being fed by well-meaning programs, instead of looking to other ways in which the community could address the overarching causes of hunger (Barrett, 2002; Dayle, McIntyre, & Raine-Travers, 2000; Funciello, 1994; Jan Poppendieck, 1994, 1994; Janet Poppendieck, 1995, 1999; Riches, 2002; Tarasuk & Eakin, 2003, 2005; Warshawsky, 2010). More research is needed to understand the psychological and social effects on students who receive non-government food programs through the school system (Bernal et al., 2016). If non-government food programs are to continue through schools, we suggest future research examine rigorously the effects of such solutions on

child-reported food security, the nutrition of the food given to students and implications for such, and the effects of the programs on family dynamics.

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## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation was to provide insight into how communities think about and act upon hunger in their communities in the presence of a food-banking system. This dissertation articulated how and why organizations are committed to non-government food programs, and how these programs affect the setting in which they are provided. The study fills a gap found in the literature, namely, why there are so many non-government food programs in the midst of rising food insecurity and hunger prevalence. Through qualitative methods, this work explored how communities think about and act upon hunger and the implications for their influence on poverty discourse.

There is much to be learned about how organizational interests influence how hunger is handled in communities. Two manuscripts derived from this dissertation provide a lens through which researchers and community advocates interested in solutions to hunger can assess broad community- level and specific organizational approaches. The decision-making processes to provide non-government food programs was captured through detailed qualitative interviews, and provided an exploratory, in-depth view of the processes surrounding food assistance present in many communities nationwide.

## 5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The first manuscript highlighted how community organizations decide to address hunger, and what sustains their commitment to their decision. Tenants of Clark's policy-sciences framework were used to articulate how organizations come to a consensus about, or decide on non-government food programs, and how they are implemented. The manuscript explored how community organizations define hunger, how they identify themselves, what they want and assume about non-government food programs. Community organizations maintain values they deem important to better position themselves in the decision making process. Additionally, the research articulated how community organizations define hunger, and how their fulfillment of their identities, wants, and assumptions engenders a commitment to non-government food programs.

Engendering commitment varied by organizational type (e.g., food bank, faith-based organizations, schools). Across community organizations, addressing a need in the community was of importance, and hunger provided a tangible need. Additionally, most community organizations assumed their non-government food programs served as a gesture of kindness or a supplement for hungry families. These assumptions about non-government food programs helped justify the quantity, quality, and frequency in which these solutions were provided. At all organizations interviewed, it was consistently observed that interviewees understand that families who experience hunger are in reality experiencing the larger and more encompassing issue of poverty; however many were still quick to pass judgments on those families utilizing non-government food programs. It is worth noting, that faith-based organizations often have limited interactions with those who utilize non-government food programs, and this may contribute to assumptions

and skepticisms about hunger and true need. From our analyses, we concluded the fulfillment of an organizations' identities, wants, and assumptions takes precedence guiding non-government food programs.

The majority of interviews we conducted mentioned one non-government food programs to hunger program frequently – the backpack program. The second manuscript emerged from repeated themes found in the first manuscript, specifically, the effects backpack programs have the guidance counselors who are responsible for their implementation in schools. From in-depth interviews, the study confirmed schools are an important vantage point through which non-government food programs are provided to students and their families. As there is limited data on the distribution of such programs being implemented in schools, particularly backpack programs; this dissertation contributes to fill this gap in the literature. Analyses were based in part on Hawe's system-theory, and articulated how non-government food programs are: embedded in schools; influence relationships; utilize resources; influence schools tasks; and create positive and negative effects for staff and students.

Guidance counselors and a social worker reported backpack programs are embedded in their daily routines, helped forge new relationships between faith-based organizations and the schools, required dedicated room space and time, and have created new opportunities for interacting with participating students and their families. Most schools provide three or more non-government food programs, with the responsibility of implementation resting with guidance counselors. Guidance counselors reported they often spend their time attending to implementation issues with their duties to oversee non-government food programs, rather than attending to their teaching and staff duties.

Although backpack programs create a system of support for students, based on the findings, the support is based on the guidance counselors' attentiveness to the participating students, not due to the food received through the non-government food programs program.

The dissertation reported common themes present in the analyses and preparation of both manuscripts. All community organizations wanted to spread awareness about hunger, and utilize sustained non-government food programs as a way to do something helpful for families. While these intentions were at the forefront of their decision to initially engage in non-government food programs, sustained commitment to these programs was based in ensuring their organizational identities, wants, and were aligned with their assumptions about hunger. This idea was reiterated in the second manuscript, as guidance counselors and social workers prioritized their non-government food programs before their tasks as educators. Guidance counselors hoped the programs would build a network for families, and that the good will of, in this case, the faith-based organizations, will transfer to other community initiatives. The majority of community organizations also understood their programs were meant to serve as a supplement to families, or as a symbol of caring. Guidance counselors further explained they believe non-government food programs (e.g. backpack programs included) are not only ineffective in reducing hunger, but are a distraction from the root causes of poverty.

Guidance counselors did believe there were positive effects to providing non-government food programs in schools. Non-government food programs provided guidance counselors additional opportunities to engage with students and their families, connect them to outside resources for support (e.g., faith- based organizations, the food

bank), obtain the attention of additional staff members (e.g., janitors), hire additional social workers, and as a whole, create a community of caring in the schools. This dissertation suggests these positive effects have little to do with the food students are provided, and are more about the efforts made in part by the guidance counselors to implement their non-government food programs.

## **5.2 UTILITY OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This study was guided by the socioecological perspective (McLeroy et al., Bibeau, Steckler & Glanz, 1988), social determinants of health (Marmont, 2008), the food banking system (Warshawsky, 2010), and the policy process (Clark, 2002). Additionally, this study utilized Hawe's systems theory to further articulate how non-government food programs affect school settings. Based on the socioecological perspective, multiple levels of influence impact the implementation of non-government food programs (Hawe, 2005). Findings of this study are consistent with the ecological perspective, that macro and exo-system organizations (e.g., corporate donations and Feeding America) influence how more local, smaller community organizations (e.g., food banks, faith-based organizations) think about and respond to hunger in their communities. Interviewees from community organizations explained how their decision to work with the smaller food bank was based in part by the information, status, and results from non-government food programs they had learned about from Feeding America. Additionally, interviewees clarified that they were only one set of actors working to address hunger, and that it would take larger systems-level changes to fully address hunger in their communities (macro-level changes). This study took the first step in understanding the role of community organizations influencing how hunger is discussed in the context of a

larger food banking system, laying the groundwork for future studies to further articulate the impact of non-government food programs on poverty discourse.

This study added to the systems theory based on emergent concepts from the interviews. In addition to understanding how non-government food programs effect schools' relationships, resources, daily routines, and existing activities, new activities, benefits, and consequences to staff and students should be examined in future studies to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the full effects of non-government food programs on the school setting.

### **5.3 STUDY LIMITATIONS AND STUDY STRENGTHS**

Although this study has contributed to gaps in the literature, there should be some considerations when interpreting the study's results. The sample in this study by design consisted of 1-2 stakeholder interviews per organization. Therefore, it is possible the study did not capture the beliefs and opinions of all who are involved with non-government food programs at their organizations. Additionally, South Carolina is a unique state, predominately rural, and considered culturally and politically conservative. Consequently, results from this study may not be generalizable to all food-banking systems (particularly the inclusion of faith-based organizations' relationships with schools) in other regions of the U.S. Moreover, this study was based on the opinions and experiences of the interviewees, and they could have provided socially desirable responses.

Despite some limitations, the qualitative approach used in this study is an advantage, considering interviewees were provided an opportunity through which they

could express their voiced opinions and experiences with non-government food programs. As part of the sampling design, the student did not interview any stakeholders who had not been part of their organizations' non-government food program for less than three years. As the sample was diverse, the common themes presented from all organizations signify the true experiences and commonalities across community organizations. Additionally, the student was able to conduct this study with no monetary or other incentives for participants. Overall, this study provided valuable information that can be used to contribute to the future discourse on poverty and hunger in communities.

#### **5.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Non-government food programs give the impression of effectively responding to hunger, due to their marketing appeal and the effort involved in their implementation. Although community organizations in this study cognitively understand they are doing little to address hunger, they continue to sustain commitment to their chosen non-government food programs. This commitment is based on hopes of fulfilling important organizational aspirations. This finding is worrisome given the policy implications for supporting solutions that actually do little to fulfill the ultimate intent of the program – eliminate hunger.

When alternative solutions to hunger were presented by guidance counselors to faith-based organizations (e.g., related to the challenges of poverty), they were met with resistance. This is consistent with existing literature; the charity discourse of the public is content to see that hungry children being fed by well-meaning programs, rather than begin a re-politicized discussion of the root causes of hunger (Tarasuk, 1998). When non-

government food programs are marketed to end hunger, and provide the public with measures of success based on statistics (e.g., providing a certain amount of backpacks to students), and not on measures of food security (e.g., using pre- and post-tests of the household food security measure, longitudinal SNAP enrollment in areas saturated with non-government food programs), addressing the roots of hunger got lost in the enthusiasm for providing non-government food programs and a false sense of success.(Janet Poppendieck, 1999)

From recent literature, inferences can be made as to how non-government food programs may affect children and their families. Receiving food assistance triggered shame among recipients, and children described embarrassment that came with peers knowing they received free food in the form of a backpack program (Frongillo et al., 2016). From the study, guidance counselors reported they have significant less time to spend during the day working with students and performing their regular tasks as educators because of their responsibilities related to the backpack program. It can be posited then, that all students (enrolled in non-government food programs or not) may not receiving the support they need from their guidance counselors, and participating students may be experiencing additional psychosocial detriments. Without professionals in schools to use a holistic approach in addressing both physical and psychological contributors to food insecurity, the perpetuation of hunger, despite the abundance of food available is inevitable (Fram et al., 2014).

Future directions for this work include conducting further analyses of the faith-based organizations and school data. Analyzing observations for race, religious affiliation, and socio-economic status differences may lend additional insight into the

dynamics and challenges related to decision making for non-government food programs. Also, not analyzed for this dissertation, are media materials (e.g., flyers, fundraising calendars, meetings minutes). Future analyses of these materials will provide further insight into how community organizations portray those who utilize non-government food programs to gather support for their solutions. We suggest that future research explore rigorously the effects of non-government food programs on child-reported food security, family food security, family dynamics, the nutrition of the food provided through non-government food programs, SNAP enrollment, and the influence of non-government food programs on academic success. To further understand the effects of non-government food programs provided by organizations, it is important that future research investigate other areas of the country, particularly where food-banking systems do not rely on faith-based organizations. Additionally, a longitudinal analysis of national policy changes in the context of growing local food banking systems would be helpful in tracing the potential influence of community action on national poverty discourse and decisions.

This research provides an opportunity to spark a discussion about poverty reform, and how non-government food programs communities have chosen to adopt may not be effectively addressing hunger, while being detrimental to the school system staff operations. This dissertation will be used as a springboard to engage faith-based organizations, the food bank, and schools, in a discussion about the root causes of hunger, and seek innovative solutions to making a difference in communities.

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APPENDIX A – CODE SCHEMATIC FOR SPECIFIC AIM 1

<b>Descriptive Codes</b>	<b>Code Description</b>	<b>Potential Category</b>
Problem of hunger	Each participant’s explanation of the problem in their community	<b>Orientation to hunger</b>
Contributing factors	Participants describe why families experience hunger	<b>Orientation to hunger</b>
Challenges	Barriers to families getting out of poverty	<b>Orientation to hunger</b>
Setting	Participants describe the socioeconomic and demographic setting in which they provide their programs	<b>Orientation to hunger</b>
Selected population	Participants explain why they choose to focus on children, adults, etc.	<b>Orientation to hunger</b>
Attitudes: - skeptical - understanding - conditional	Varying levels of attitude shown by participants responses in relation to their feelings and beliefs about program participants	<b>Orientation to hunger</b>
Program materials	Participants describe informational materials they distribute about their programs	<b>Solution to hunger</b>
Fixes	What participants believe will address hunger in their communities	<b>Solution to hunger</b>

Feeding America affiliate	Organizations who self- identify as working with Feeding America in any capacity	<b>Identity</b>
Expert	Having expertise in food assistance, distributing knowledge to other organizations	<b>Identity</b>
Faith member - Christian - Muslim - Jewish	Organizations that affiliate with a particular faith	<b>Identity</b>
Safety net	Provide as many opportunities for betterment for children and families in the community	<b>Identity</b>
Liaison	Provide communication between families and other organizations in the community	<b>Identity</b>
Promoting health	Addressing a necessary need in the community, ensuring that all community members have food and are healthy	<b>Wants</b>
Interest	Food oriented solutions must be interesting and promote enthusiasm for supporting organizations	<b>Wants</b>
Working alone	Organizations that choose to provide non-government food programs without outside influence	<b>Wants</b>
Standards	Following any type of regulations, best practices, etc. for providing food oriented solutions	<b>Wants</b>
Reputation	Remaining credible in the community	<b>Wants</b>
Communication	Creating open communication	<b>Wants</b>

	lines within the community	
Extreme	Program participants would starve without non-government food programs	<b>Assumptions</b>
Supplement	Program participants used food assistance as a supplement to their food intake	<b>Assumptions</b>
Symbol	Food assistance is a symbol or gesture, not meant to help with hunger	<b>Assumptions</b>
Caring	Food assistance demonstrates caring	<b>Assumptions</b>
Power	Make out and carry decisions	<b>Values</b>
Enlightenment	To have knowledge, understanding	<b>Values</b>
Wealth	To have money, or equivalent	<b>Values</b>
Well-being	To have health	<b>Values</b>
Skill	To have special abilities	<b>Values</b>
Affection	To have family, friends, and warm community relationships	<b>Values</b>
Respect	Show and receive deference	<b>Values</b>
Rectitude	To have ethical standards	<b>Values</b>

APPENDIX B – CODE SCHEMATIC FOR SPECIFIC AIM 2

<b>Descriptive Codes</b>	<b>Code Description</b>	<b>Potential Category</b>
Food oriented solution	Additional non-government food programs provided in schools	<b>Embedding</b>
Organization	Activities and task that demonstrate how backpack program are integrated into everyday routines	<b>Embedding</b>
Reach	Activities and tasks that demonstrate how far across the backpack program is present	<b>Embedding</b>
Intensiveness	How many activities/initiatives are present in the school for the backpack program	<b>Embedding</b>
Position	Who in the school makes decisions for the backpack program, how this has changed over time	<b>Relationships</b>
Sustainability	Relationships and how they help continue the backpack program	<b>Relationships</b>
Ease	Relationships and how they help/harm providing the backpack program	<b>Relationships</b>
Innovations	How new ideas are developed	<b>Relationships</b>

Raw	Raw materials needed for the backpack program	<b>Resources</b>
Cultural	Cultural resources needed for the backpack program	<b>Resources</b>
Displaced activities	Activities that have been changed or altered to accommodate the backpack program	<b>Activities</b>
New activities	Activities that have been created to help facilitate the backpack program	<b>Activities</b>
Negative	Negative activities or consequences that have resulted because of the backpack program	<b>Activities</b>
Positive	Positive activities or outcomes that have resulted because of the backpack program	<b>Activities</b>

APPENDIX C – INTERVIEW GUIDE

**Interviewer:**  
**Participant # (numerical):**  
**Start Time:**

**Location Site:**  
**Date:**  
**End Time:**

---

*Hello, Thank you for meeting with me today. I would like to learn more about how [insert organization] provides assistance for community members through providing food programs. I am going to ask you about your experiences, and look forward to learning about your involvement with your community. If you have any questions throughout or need clarification, please let me know.*

*Did you have a look at the consent form I sent you by email (or fax)?*

*I have a copy with me here.*

*As you read in the consent form, you are free to stop the interview at any time and refuse to answer any question you wish.*

*Do you have any questions?*

*Great. Let's both sign here.*

*Are we ready to start?*

[START TIME and START AUDIO RECORDER]

*I would like to start by asking you a little bit about yourself and about your history with [insert organization].*

*How would you describe your title, or role in [insert organization]?*

*How long have you been part of [insert organization]?*

*What do you like most about it?*

*Is it different from other organizations you have been part of? How is it different?*

*What programs related to food does your organization provide?*

**ADDITIONAL PROBES FOR ANY QUESTION:** Can you expand on this? Can you give me some examples? Can you tell me anything else?

<b>Main Questions</b>	<b>Additional Questions</b>	<b>Guiding Probe Questions</b>
1. Can you tell me a little bit about the history of [insert program] ?	a. Can you describe the program? b. Who was/has been involved with [insert program] from the beginning? Who is involved regularly? c. What happens on a daily or weekly basis for [insert program] to function?	How did you make the decision to become involved with [insert program]?
2. What prompted the beginning of [insert program]?	a. How did your organization know that there was a problem? b. What is the program intended to do? c. Who is the program intended to serve? d. Where did the idea for the program come from?	Where do participants live? What is that community like in general? Why do you think participants agree to use [insert program]?
3. In our community, Harvest Hope Food Bank provides support to a variety of organizations for food related programs. [Insert organization] does not work with them. Can you tell me about your relationship with Harvest Hope?	a. Has [insert organization] ever had a working relationship with Harvest Hope? In what capacity? IF YES: What were their responsibilities? What were the positives of collaborating with Harvest Hope? What were the downsides of collaborating with Harvest Hope?	Has it always been this way?  What has changed?
4. IF YES TO QUESTION 3: Can you tell me about a time when there may have been a difference in opinions between your organization and Harvest	a. How did you begin to notice this as a concern? b. Did others in [insert organization] see this as a concern? If so, how has it been addressed?	Do you feel as though you can voice your opinions or suggestions?

Hope?	c. Has there been a time where a change has been made because of opinions or suggestions?	
5. Is there anything that you find worrisome about [insert program]?	a. How did you begin to notice this as a concern? b. Do others in [insert organization] see this as a concern? If so, how has it been addressed?	Do you feel as though you can voice your opinions or suggestions?
6. Concerning [insert program], has [insert organization] ever worked with another community group, church, or individual other than Harvest Hope?	a. How did that partnership form? b. Can you tell me a little bit about that [insert program]? c. How is that relationship similar or different to Harvest Hope?	
7. In the big picture of the community addressing hunger [or how they identify the problem], how does [insert organization] fit into solving the problem?	a. How do you feel [insert organization] is contributing to the community? b. Are there aspects of [insert program] that benefit the volunteers as well as the participants?	What do you enjoy most about [insert program]?  How do you see your personal involvement in the community?
8. What do you envision for the future of [insert program]?	a. How do you envision future collaborations with Harvest Hope? b. How do you envision future collaborations with any other community groups?  c. What do you envision for the participants of [insert program].	What do you think your role will be in the future of [insert program]?

*Thank you so much for your thoughtful responses. I really enjoyed learning more about [insert organization], and hearing about your personal experiences with [insert program]. This concludes our interview. I will follow up with you shortly, and if you think of anything else you'd like to share with me please contact me.*

## APPENDIX D – RECRUITMENT LETTER



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH PROMOTION, EDUCATION, AND BEHAVIOR  
ARNOLD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

You are invited to participate in a qualitative research study conducted by Ms. Eliza Fishbein, a doctoral student from the Arnold School of Public Health at the University of South Carolina.

*Purpose:* The purpose of the study is to learn more about how community members in religious organizations, and workers in local food banks work together to develop, implement, and continue to support emergency food programs in their communities. To accomplish this, I am interviewing volunteers and workers who are directly involved with various programs to better understand your perspectives and experiences.

*Study Procedures:* If you agree to participate, you will be asked questions about your perspectives and experiences with helpful programs in your community. Each participant of the study will complete an interview with Ms. Fishbein that will last no longer than 30-45 minutes. This can either be in-person or by phone.

*Eligibility and Participation Benefits:* In order to be eligible for this study, you must be involved with a religious organization or a food bank that supports a program. Although participation in this study will have little direct benefit to you, the knowledge gained may benefit others. This knowledge may assist researchers and community activists who can in the future better assist needy families and inform policy decisions.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions about the study using the contact information provided below. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Eliza M. Fishbein

*Research Associate*, South Carolina Rural Health Research Center

*PhD Candidate*, Dept. of Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior

915 Greene Street, Suite 534 Cell: (443)812-5708 Email: [emfandrolia@gmail.com](mailto:emfandrolia@gmail.com)

## APPENDIX E– INFORMED CONSENT FORM



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH PROMOTION, EDUCATION, AND BEHAVIOR  
ARNOLD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

### **PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM:**

#### **Introduction**

You are invited to participate in research study conducted by a student from the Arnold School of Public Health at the University of South Carolina. The Institutional Review Board of the University of South Carolina has reviewed this study for the protection of the rights of human participants in research studies, in accordance with federal and state regulations. Your signature on this consent form will acknowledge that you received all the information and have been given an opportunity to discuss your questions and concerns with the investigator(s).

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the study is to learn more about how community members in religious organizations, and workers in local food banks work together to develop, implement, and continue to support emergency food programs in their communities.

#### **Description of Study Procedures**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked questions about your perceptions and experiences with preventive dental health in primary care settings, and your thoughts on its implementation. Each participant of the study will complete an interview with the research investigator. Interviews will be audio recorded and written notes will be taken. There is no right or wrong answers to the interview questions. Each interview should last no longer than one hour.

**Risks of Participation**

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this research. Appropriate steps will be followed to protect your privacy.

**Benefits of Participation**

There is no direct benefit for your participation. There will be no compensation for your participation. But, participants will receive complimentary, digitally formatted; dental preventive health materials for their practice. If you choose to participate, you will be helping researchers to better understand the process and development of food assistance in South Carolina.

**Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free not to participate or to withdraw at any time, for whatever reason, without negative consequences. In the event that you do withdraw from this study, the information you have already provided will be kept in a confidential manner.

**Confidentiality of Records**

Participation will be confidential. If coded, a number will be assigned to each participant at the beginning of the project. This number will be used on project records rather than your name, and no one other than the researchers will be able to link your information with your name.

**Contact Person(s)**

For more information concerning this research or questions about your rights as a research subject you can contact any of the research members below:

Eliza M. Fishbein [emfandrolia@gmail.com](mailto:emfandrolia@gmail.com) (443- 812- 5708)

Dr. Edward Frongillo: [efrongillo@email.sc.edu](mailto:efrongillo@email.sc.edu)

**Signatures /Dates**

I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to participate in this study, although I have been told that I may withdraw at any time without negative consequences. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form for my records and future reference.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

As a representative of this study (and Formal Witness), I have explained to the participant or the participant’s legally authorized representative the research purpose, the procedures, the possible benefits, and the risks of this research study; the alternatives to being in the study; the voluntary nature of the study; and how privacy will be protected.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX F– SAMPLING TABLE

<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>RACE</b>	<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>INTERVIEWS</b>
Baptist 1	AA	Backpack, snack, pantry	1: Volunteer leader
Baptist 2	AA	Pantry, senior feeding, holiday boxes	1: Pastor
Baptist 3	AA	Pantry	1: Volunteer leader
Christian 1	AA	Backpack, snack, pantry, holiday boxes, senior feeding	1: Volunteer leader
Christian 2	Mixed	Pantry, backpack	2: Volunteer leader, Pastor
Christian 3	White	Pantry, backpack	1: Pastor
Lutheran 1	White	Backpack, pantry	1: Pastor
Lutheran 2	White	Backpack	1: Volunteer leader
Methodist 1	White	Backpack	1: Volunteer leader
Methodist 2	White	Backpack	1: Pastor
Pentecostal 1	AA	Funding for backpack	1: Volunteer leader
LDS Mormon 1	White	Pantry	1: Ward leader
Presbyterian 1	White	Backpack	2: Volunteer leader
Catholic 1	White	Pantry	1: Volunteer leader
Episcopal 1	White	Backpack, pantry	1: Volunteer leader
Mosque 1	Mixed	Pantry, homeless lunch	1: Iman
Synagogue 1	White	Pantry	1: Rabbi
Elementary 1	Mixed	Backpack, snack, pantry, holiday boxes, lunch buddies	1: Guidance counselor
Elementary 2	Mixed	Backpack, snack, pantry, holiday boxes, parent store	1: Guidance counselor

Elementary 3	AA	Backpack, pantry, holiday backpacks, school snack	1: Guidance counselor
Elementary 4	Mixed	Backpack, school breakfast, parent boxes, lunch buddies	1: Guidance counselor
Elementary 5	Mixed	Backpack, holiday boxes, school snack, school store, Kid's Cafe	1: Guidance counselor
Elementary 6	Mixed	Backpack program, school store, parent boxes, holiday boxes	1: Guidance counselor
Elementary 7	Mixed	Backpack program, holiday boxes, school store, special day club	1: Teacher
Elementary 8	AA	Backpack program, breakfast, school store	1: Principal
Elementary 9	Mixed	Backpack program, pantry, food boxes	2: Principal, guidance counselor
Middle 1	Mixed	Backpack, winter break feeding, holiday boxes	1: Guidance counselor/teacher
Middle 2	Mixed	Backpack, pantry, snack, lunch club	1: Guidance counselor
Middle 3	Mixed	Backpack, pantry	1: Guidance counselor
Middle 4	Mixed	Backpack, snack pack, parent connection, pantry	1: Guidance counselor
Department of Social Services 1	n/a	Funding	1: Grants division employee
Food Bank 1	n/a	Backpack, pantry, snack pack, Kid's Cafe	3: Director, food pantry leader, school-based program leader
District Office 1	n/a	Backpack	1: District social worker