

Title: Policy factors influencing domestic food security for marginalized communities: Kingston, Ontario focus.

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Abstract

Objective: To assess the influence of policies on domestic food security in Canada and their influence on the foods provided at food accessibility program

Design: Documentary and Literature Review.

Setting: Canada, with a focus on Kingston, Ontario.

Participants: None

Main Outcome Measures: The influence that policies have on the food decisions of charitable food programs is assessed through a literature review of scholarly literature, government documents, and grey literature. Relevant policies were assessed for their consideration of aspects of environmental justice.

Analysis: Relevant policies that influenced food accessibility were assessed under an environmental justice framework to evaluate the degree to which these policies accommodate for the vulnerable populations they serve.

Results: There are few policies that influence food accessibility programs and influential policies inconsistently demonstrate consideration for aspects of environmental justice.

Conclusions and Implications: Food accessibility programs are becoming an increasingly significant presence in the Canadian food environment and further policies should be developed to support these institutions and ensure the right to food for all Canadians

Key Words: domestic food security, nutrition, socioeconomic factors, environmental justice, recognition, Canada

Introduction

Wide networks of food based charities have developed in many cities throughout the world and focus on improving the nutritional needs of those in the lowest socioeconomic bracket. Fahlamn et al. (2010) analysed socioeconomic disparities in nutrition behaviours and found that individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were less likely to consume nutritious foods, were less knowledgeable of the dietary variables in foods, and had lower self efficacy regarding their ability to change poor dietary habits. Thus, through the food options these initiatives provide, community food service programs, such as food pantries and soup kitchens, may significantly contribute to the nutritional health of the patrons they serve.

In 2012, over 70 percent of Canadian households requiring social assistance were food insecure and these social assistance recipients also made up over 50 percent of the clientele served by foodbanks (Tarasuk, 2014). Canada has had a long-term dependency on food assistance programs to supplement the lack of government assistance programs and policies (Tarasuk, 2014). Despite having over 200 million pounds of food distributed by food security programs annually, these efforts remain insufficient at addressing the food needs of those who rely on these services (Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2013). These programs are operated by the private sector and the Canadian government has been criticized for its lack of policy or government action concerning Canada's food insecurity issue (Rideout et al., 2007; De Schutter, 2012; Tarasuk, 2014).

This study investigates the policy factors which influence the decision-making at food based charities and analyse how these factors impact the experience of these programs' patrons. A documentary review analysing relevant academic literature, grey literature, government policies, and nongovernmental organization documents was conducted to assess the current policies

influencing food accessibility programs in Canada and Canada's long term food security strategy. This analysis identifies several research gaps and proposes several recommendations to address policy shortcomings.

Background

Emergency food programs intensified in Canada during the 1980s as growing poverty, following an economic recession, increased the demand for emergency food programs to alleviate hunger (Riches 2002). The term 'emergency food programs' describe a variety of initiatives that collect and redistribute food and take on a variety of forms; the most common of these include "soup kitchens" which distribute prepared meals, "food pantries" which distribute groceries for home use, and "food banks" which are warehouse sized operations that receive food from a variety of larger organizations and usually distribute the food to soup kitchens, food pantries, and other food accessibility programs (Poppendieck, 1994). These emergency food initiatives were developed as a temporary and reactionary response to poverty associated with the recession; however, as the Canadian economy improved, the experience of poverty and unemployment facing patrons of food programs did not improve. Unresolved poverty issues, alongside increasingly restrictive social policies, that reduced the number of individuals who qualified for government assistance, led to a steady increase in the use of emergency food programs and increasing numbers of food accessibilities initiatives since the 1980s (Riches, 2002; Tarasuk, 2014). For the purpose of this study, these different programs are referred to collectively under the umbrella term "food accessibility program" (FAP).

As the number of FAPs in Canada increased over the past few decades, the issue of poverty and food justice are increasingly prevalent issues emerging in the discourse on the effectiveness

of food accessibility programs at addressing the systemic causes of food insecurity (Poppendieck, 1994; Rock, 2006; Lambie-Mumford, 2013). Food security is an environmental justice issue concerned with the access to safe and nutritious foods for all people at all times (Gottlieb & Fisher, 1996; Porter et al., 2014). Recognizing which factors and actors control the food supply and its distribution are essential for evaluating the strategies and policies that are currently involved in improving domestic food security (Riches, 2002). A recent assessment of the food environment by Health Canada found little evidence for the existence of widespread food deserts, defined as areas in which vulnerable populations have poor geographic access to nutritious foods, but found that food swamps, defined as low-income neighbourhoods with a high geographic access to non-nutritious foods (i.e. foods with high-fat or high-calorie content), were prevalent throughout Canada and likely influence the diets and subsequent health of residents (Health Canada, 2013).

Proponents of food justice perspectives on food security emphasize the importance of solidarity with those experiencing poverty and tend to direct their efforts towards changing policies and institutional structures that hinder the capability of those affected by poverty to improve their situation (Lambie-Mumford, 2013). However, proponents of food justice have differing views concerning the role of food accessibility programs in combating food security. Some proponents have argued that charitable food accessibility programs have become an institutionalized and ineffective response to the issue of food insecurity and the underlying issues of social inequality (Rock, 2006). Other criticisms of FAPS argue that these programs do not provide considerate services. Food accessibility programs often address the immediate caloric needs of those they serve, but meals may be nutritionally insufficient or may lack consideration of culturally significant foods (Gottlieb et al., 1996). Those in poverty may experience

procedural injustices due to limitations in their ability to choose ethically sourced or sustainable foods, and may be hindered from participating in environmental advocacy through their consumption practices (Jordan & Maloney, 2007).

Prominent arguments emphasize that emergency food programs divert resources and energy away from the justice movement, mask the shortfalls of government policies at addressing community food insecurity, and create public misconception concerning the amount of progress that community efforts have had on combating local food insecurity (Poppendieck, 1994; Rock, 2006; Moldofsky, 2000). Recurring themes in multiple studies suggests that the prevalence of emergency food programs hampers the progress of food justice initiatives aimed at addressing root causes of food insecurity (Poppendieck, 1994; Rock, 2006; Moldofsky, 2000). However, food justice proponents are unlikely to argue for an abolishment of accessibility food programs because these initiatives help alleviate the symptoms of poverty for those experiencing hunger (Bazerghi et al., 2016).

Scholarly research has also emphasized unique benefits associated with FAPs. Poppendieck (1994) found that charitable emergency food programs are typically associated with voluntarism and neighbourliness, and attract volunteers whom are often motivated by goodwill or compassion. Studies also suggest that soup kitchens may provide important opportunities for social interactions to some of the most marginalized members of society (Poppendieck, 1994). Soup kitchens are rare social spaces where most of the barriers found in other social venues, that exclude marginalized individuals, are far less prevalent (Mulquin et al, 2000). Tarasuk (2001) illustrates the importance of social networks as her study found that among individuals experiencing household food insecurity, those with a social support network were less likely to experience prolonged periods of hunger. Furthermore, soup kitchens provide an unique

opportunity where individuals from more affluent backgrounds are exposed to the most marginalized members of their community. Soup kitchen provides a space where those with more privilege are exposed to the lives of people on margins of society and this may help foster awareness and compassion in those who volunteer at these programs (Poppendieck, 1994).

Although most of the current scholarly literature emphasize the ineffectiveness of food accessibility programs at combating root causes of food insecurity (Lambie-Mumford, 2013; Wakefield et al., 2013; Heynen et al., 2012), the discourse is also nuanced as some scholars suggests that these facilities play a crucial role in providing immediate solutions for severe food deprivation. Some scholarly literature argues that FAPs may meaningfully improve food security outcomes if these programs are adequately supported, provide nutritious perishable food items, and seek to identify and address the specific food needs of their patrons (Bazerghi et al., 2016).

Initially, this paper intended to assess the major factors influencing the quantity and quality of foods served at FAPs in Kingston, Ontario. The intended data collection method was interviews with key informants involved at a local community food accessibility program. However, due to time constraints and delays in the ethics review process, the initial research for this study was unable to be conducted and the research question was answered through a literature review of current policies instead.

Theoretical Framework

Recognizing the unique challenges faced by those in marginalized positions is important for community food accessibility programs to adequately support those they serve. The study uses an environmental justice framework to evaluate the topic of food insecurity as a justice issue, in which certain groups are disproportionately limited in their access to safe and nutritious foods

(Schlosberg, 2007). Assessing food security under an environmental justice framework acknowledges that those who are marginalized due to discriminatory societal attitudes and systematic structures, based on identity factors such as ethnicity, class, gender, age, or ability, are disproportionately exposed to environmental bads (i.e. foods of lower nutritional quality) and experience significant barriers that prevent them from choosing the foods they wish to consume (Schlosberg, 2004).

From an environmental justice perspective, the limited capabilities of marginalized groups for decision-making may be expressed in terms of distributive injustices, recognition based injustices, and procedural injustices these groups experience in relation to their food choice. Distributive injustices describe how marginalized groups may be disproportionately exposed to lower quality foods or reside in food deserts where food access is more limited (Heynen, Kurtz & Trauger, 2012). Procedural injustices are exemplified through the limitations experienced by marginalized groups to choose ethically sourced or sustainable foods as well as in their reduced ability to participate in environmental advocacy through their consumption practices, and ultimately through the barriers that prevent them from becoming involved in the decision-making processes that impact their food supplies (Jordan & Maloney, 2007). Lastly, recognition injustices - a lack of recognition of culturally significant foods - when combined with limited capacity for decision-making, may allow food accessibility programs to further the experience of marginalization for their patrons (Schlosberg, 2004; Hammelman & Hayes-Conroy, 2015).

A consideration of the environmental justice aspects of food security is crucial for food security programs to effectively meet the needs those they serve and equitably improve the quality of life for those struggling with hunger. Through a detailed documentary and theoretical review this report will assess the extent to which policy factors influence the types of foods

served at accessibility food programs in Kingston, Ontario as well as the extent to which food policies and their programs consider the aspects of environmental justice.

Methodologies

This study evaluates the influences of policies on FAPs in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. Kingston is the second largest city in Eastern Ontario with an estimated population of 171000, an unemployment rate of 6.9%, and a variety of food access programs (Kingston Economic Development, 2017; Link, 2016). A documentary review was conducted on available organization documents and relevant grey literature, and a theoretical review was conducted on relevant academic literature. Academic literature was deemed relevant based on the capacity of a source to contribute to the food policy discourse. Relevant academic sources typically contribute to the food policy discourse through its critique on current policies or its assessment of the implications that potential policies may have on other organizations. To ensure that all potential policies influencing FAPs in Kingston may be identified, this review conducts its analysis starting from the federal level and working towards the municipal level. This study also assesses documents produced by The Ontario Food Banks Association and Loving Spoonful, two non-governmental organizations who have significant influence on the City of Kingston's food security strategy. When possible, this literature review implements methodological values developed by Kirby and McKenna (1989), which prioritize the perspective of marginalized groups whenever they are found in the reviewed documents.

The policies influencing the quality and quantity of food provided by FAPs will be assessed under an environmental justice framework to evaluate their environmental justice considerations. Early food justice scholars identified a collaborative opportunity between the community food

security movement and the environmental justice movement, emphasizing the potential for the development of a more powerful and robust movement (Gottlieb & Fisher, 1996). These movements may improve the strength of their advocacy with increased collaboration as they share a common concern for social welfare advocacy, sustainable food networks, and environmentalism. The categorization of FAPs as a part of the community food security movement is contested because the rise of food banks has not resulted in decreasing demand for these food program services (Riches, 2002). However, Canadian food banks are diversifying to include community gardens, group purchasing programs, and nutritional education programs which suggests that FAPs are attempting to address the broader and more complex factors which contribute to food insecurity (Tarasuk et al., 2014). The potential for FAPs to develop and become a major proponent for community food security is inextricably tied to the factors influencing their longevity and the factors influencing the foods provided by their programs. For this study, food accessibility programs are considered part of the community food security movement due to their potential and the variety of initiatives FAPs are adopting to address the various factors impacting community food security (Tarasuk et al., 2014).

Policy History

Historically, emergency foodbanks emerged in Canada during the 1980s as a private sector-based response to the challenges caused by economic recession (Riches, 2002). In the 1990s, to encourage foodbank donations, various provinces introduced “Good Samaritan” laws, such as Ontario’s Donation of Food Act (Government of Ontario, 1994), which removed the liability of donors for ensuring the health and safety of donated goods (Teron & Tarasuk, 1999). Subsequent

policies were made to support the food banks by facilitating and encouraging food donations (Tarasuk, 2014).

The federal government developed several policies that led to the establishment of agencies that improved the nutrition and supply of food entering FAPs. In April of 1997, the task of food inspection was consolidated away from four different departments to one regulatory body known as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) (Health Canada, 2004). Following the passing of an act by the same name, the CFIA was created by and reported to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food (Health Canada, 2004). To provide a check and balance to this system, the Bureau of Food Safety Assessment (BFSa) was created by the Minister of Health, and was entrusted with the role of evaluating the effectiveness of the programs and initiatives of the CFIA at ensuring the safety and nutritional quality of food supplies (Health Canada, 2004). Few Canada-wide policies have been developed since these agencies were established and domestic food security is mostly discussed in federal policies and statements from the department of Health Canada and the department of Agriculture and Agri-food. Presently, documents produced by these organizations, that are relevant to the issue of domestic food security, are compiled within their own section “Food Security,” on the Public Health Agency of Canada’s “Canadian Best Practices Portal - Public Health Topics” website (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016).

The current consensus amongst Canadian scholars suggest that policy solutions to food insecurity should focus on the larger systemic shortfalls in Canada’s welfare state system and address household food security with solutions beyond traditional food-based approaches (Collins et al., 2014; Tarasuk et al., 2014; Donald & Blay-Palmer, 2006). Whether policies supporting FAPs (including food banks, soup kitchens, and food pantries) should exist or be downplayed in favour of addressing larger systemic issues associated with Canada’s welfare

state is beyond the scope of this paper. This study evaluates existing policies which influence the quantity and/or quality of the foods distributed by FAPs and their consideration of the dimensions of environmental justice.

Federal Policies

At a federal level, the Canadian government's stance on domestic food security has shifted heavily since the World Food Summit on Food Security in 1996. Mah et al. (2014) conducted a policy analysis of Canada's response to food insecurity, since the 1996 World Food Summit, to evaluate the changing discourse on the topic and its consequences for policy. In Canada's 1998 "Action Plan on Security," it stated (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 1998, p10):

In every country, regardless of wealth or level of poverty, people can be food insecure... In examining Canada's Action Plan, it becomes apparent that there are important parallels between Canada's domestic and international food security concerns, although strategies to resolve them may vary between countries and regions.

The rhetoric espoused in this document illustrates the Canadian federal government's commitment to addressing domestic food security. This initial report was followed with five progress reports, the last of which was produced in 2008. However, the discourse concerning Canadian food security has deteriorated. In 2012, a UN rapporteur visited Canada and was critical of Canada's food security response, stating it had inadequate social protection schemes to meet basic household needs and that the domestic hunger issue was growing (De Schutter, 2012). In a press release that followed this report, The Minister of Health said that she was "surprised that this organization [the UN] is focused on what appears to be a political agenda rather than on addressing food shortages in the developing world... Canada ranks sixth best of all the world's countries on [the UN] human development index" (Mah et al., 2014). Through examining language changes in the discourse that occurred throughout the five progress reports for

Canada's "Action Plan on Security", researchers suggest that three notable changes in the rhetorical framing of domestic food security discourse may have contributed to the shift in federal government's attitudes. These include (Mah et al., 2014):

- frame shifts, in which the discourse moved away from addressing access to food as a human rights issue
- frame blending, in which discussion on the poverty issues underlying food insecurity was obscured by a complexity of factors discourse
- and, within-frame incongruence, in which monitoring techniques and assessments between reports became increasingly disorganized as different approaches to monitoring emerged across jurisdictions and reduced the utility of the collected data.

The Federal government's initiatives and policies from their final progress report in 2008 suggests that the federal government was in the process of shifting its focus towards poverty alleviation, framing the issue of domestic food insecurity as largely a symptom of widespread poverty (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada [AAFC], 2008). The report states that support for several existing non-governmental food security programs would be maintained; however, no domestic program was specific to Ontario and no federal food security policies have developed since that provide support for the programs mentioned by the progress report (AAFC, 2008). Recent scholarship has heavily criticised the federal government's silence on the issue of domestic food insecurity and the lack of a comprehensive policy framework at the federal or provincial levels (Gunderson et al., 2017, Collins et al., 2014; Tarasuk et al., 2014).

Presently, there exists one federal policy concerned with improving "access to perishable nutritious foods" for Northern communities (Government of Canada [GOC], 2016a). The "Nutrition North Canada" policy utilises a market-driven model where subsidies are provided to

retailers to offset the high costs of stocking and shipping perishable nutritious foods to northern communities: these savings then translate into lower prices for the residents of these northern communities. A potential issue is that the policy is dependent on support and cooperation from northern food retailers and suppliers, as these businesses must apply for the subsidy and are responsible for passing on the full subsidy to consumers. Furthermore, not all northern communities are eligible for these subsidises as specific facilities, including airports, post offices, and grocery stores, are required to qualify for the program (GOC, 2016 b).

It should be noted that according to Food Banks Canada, the newly appointed Liberal Government, from the 2015 election, announced several major policies changes in the spring of 2016 that would likely help alleviate community food insecurity (Food Banks Canada [FBC], 2016). Further promises of a national food security strategy were also announced by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in 2015 which have been met a mix of optimism and skepticism (Hui, 2016). At the time of this report, most of these promises and claims have yet to be implemented.

Provincial Policies

A lack of federal leadership on the domestic food security issue may have contributed to the array of policies at the provincial level that approach food security from a variety of avenues. Some provincial policies focus on food education (Provincial Health Services Authority, 2011), on poverty alleviation (Government of Yukon, 2012), some continue to use traditional approaches of economic incentives that increase food bank support (Government of Manitoba, 2013), and others utilise a mix of these strategies. The diversity of strategies may be indicative of governing entities recognizing the diversity of issues and the diversity of situations between provinces, which contributes to domestic food insecurity in Canada; however, the lack of a

unified framework in developing these approaches, and the lack of any policies in certain provinces, further emphasizes the disorganized nature of the federal and provincial responses to food insecurity.

The government of Ontario does not have any specific strategy for food insecurity but has developed a recent policy in 2013 which may influence the foods provided FAPs called the Local Food Act. The act provides additional “income tax credits for farmers who donate agricultural products to eligible community food programs in Ontario, including food banks” (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2017). This policy is one of the only ones in recent years that supports FAPs, with specific mention to food programs. The effects of these policies on the donations received by FAPs are unknown as the program has only recently been implemented.

Some studies suggest that a simple comparisons of foodbank usage data may help infer the impact of this policy for food banks (Salonen, 2016; Tinnermann et al., 2012). According to Food Banks Canada (2016), food bank use has risen by 28% nationally between 2008 and 2016, while Ontario is far below the national average, having only a 6.9% rise in foodbank usage since 2008. Mostly notably, between 2012 and 2016 the estimated number of individuals assisted by foodbanks in Ontario decreased from approximately 404 000 to 336000, a decrease of 17% since the implementation of the tax credit (Food Banks Canada, 2016). Loopstra & Tarasuk (2015) suggest that further research should be conducted to assess the causality in the relationship between the 2013 policy and the declining usage of foodbank in Ontario.

Through the monetary incentives it introduced, the Local Food Act may have increased the quantity of produce donated to a variety of community food programs in Ontario. Researchers classified the municipal responses to household food insecurity as either charitable models, of which foodbanks are included, household improvement or support models, of which soup

kitchens are included, and community food systems model, which encourages the development of local food networks (Collins et al., 2014). The study found that only 20-30% of those classified as food-insecure used food banks and preferred other strategies for obtaining food. These preferences may be explained by other studies that suggest food banks are greatly stigmatized and not viewed as a socially appropriate means of obtaining food (Riches, 2002). These findings suggest that patrons may view food banks as a more desperate approach and that they utilise them only after other venues are unable to satisfy individual food needs.

Municipal Policies

The City of Kingston addresses the issue of food security on their official website, in a section of their Climate Action Plan (City of Kingston [COK], 2017). The section on food security encourages the development of community gardens and support for local food. The section states that the Food Policy Council, a regional initiative, has “developed a Food Charter to create a more accessible and sustainable food system” (COK, 2017). The Food Charter explicitly states, in its vision statement, that it hopes promote the concept of food security as a basic human right and seeks the establishment of a just food system that would ensure all individuals with access to adequate, healthy, safe, affordable and culturally appropriate foods” (Kingston Frontenac Lennox & Addington Food Policy Council [KFLA], 2012). However, there are presently no policies in Kingston that define a food security strategy for the city or elevate the right to food.

The lack of policy may soon change as the City of Kingston recently announced its intention to develop a community-based food security plan in 2017 (COK, 2016a). A recent food security policy in support of community farms on municipally-owned land has been attributed to the city’s strategy (COK, 2016c).

Agency Influences

Outside of Local Food Act, there are few recently established Ontario-based policies that influence the types of foods served at foodbanks. However, this may be partially due to the effort that both government groups and non-governmental agencies are directing towards poverty alleviation. The Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB), is a non-governmental organization comprised of 1200 agencies with 125 food banks as direct members. The organization shares an opinion consistent with scholars which emphasize that foodbanks are not the long-term solution. Their latest report states (Fotheringham et al., 2016):

Together, Ontario's food bank network is committed to providing immediate relief to those who are hungry, while developing long-term solutions that address the root cause of hunger: poverty....our network works hard to shed light on the realities of hunger and food bank use, while making well-informed recommendations to key government representatives on how we think these challenges can be addressed or even eliminated.

In their annual "2016 Hunger Report" the OAFB emphasized three policy recommendations for increasing household food security in Ontario (Fotheringham et al., 2016). The policies that the organization promote in their 2016 report encourages public support of poverty alleviation strategies. These policy recommendations were: continuing support for a basic income pilot program, increasing affordable housing, and updating social assistance rates (Fotheringham et al., 2016). Additional content in their latest report included rationale backing their policy recommendations, stories of individuals to illustrate how rising costs of living impacts household food security, and statistics emphasizing the demographics of food bank usership by elderly people, indigenous people, and those on disability support. Despite highlighting the vulnerable situations that foodbank patrons are often in, the document made no mention of specific advocacy or special food-based considerations to better meet the needs of these marginalized groups. Although the stories highlighted by the Hunger Report reflects a diversity of

backgrounds, they are told in ways that solely emphasize how rising costs to living are impacting their access to food and subsequent dependency on foodbanks.

The Loving Spoonful is an food advocacy organization in Kingston that promotes the realisation of a healthy, sustainable, and food-secure community through a variety of initiatives and has history of collaboration with the city of Kingston and other food advocacy groups. In 2016, the City of Kingston entered a partnership with this organization to develop community garden initiatives associated with the city's 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan (COK, 2016a). In 2016, the Loving Spoonful also released a food security analysis report called "Good Food" that City of Kingston intends to use in their development of a community-based food security plan (COK, 2016a; COK, 2017; Link, 2016). Loving Spoonful provides a series of recommendations to improve community food security in the Good Food report. The recommendations were informed by consultations with community members currently utilising FAPs as well as staff and volunteers involved in the operation of these food programs (Link, 2016). The report recognizes a variety of issues, such as stigma, geographic distance to food distributors, mental health, poverty and housing, may hamper access to food (Link, 2016). The report also considers the impact associated with different forms of marginalization by emphasizing nuance in the barriers different individual experience to accessing food related due to issues such as mobility, dietary restrictions, or English fluency (Williams-Forson et al., 2011; Link, 2016).

Environmental Justice Considerations

Although there are few policies influencing the types of foods provided at FAPs in Canada, relevant policies that do exist were assessed under an environmental justice framework described

by Schlosberg (2004), to evaluate the extent to which current policies consider issues of justice in their approaches to improving domestic food security. A recurring theme throughout the analysis suggests that income-based solutions may be inadequate at addressing the diversity of factors influencing food insecurity. Food accessibility programs are becoming an increasingly significant element of the Canadian food environment. This analysis further emphasizes the importance of developing policies that guide and support FAPs towards environmentally just practices. The lack of guidance for FAPs in current policy approaches to food insecurity may hamper domestic food security initiatives and delay the community food security movement.

Distributive Justice Considerations

Distributive justice is concerned with the ways in which major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and assesses the degree to which societal structures achieve a fair distribution of societal benefits and burdens (Sen, 2000). In terms of domestic food security, policy initiatives have partially addressed distributive injustice related to how marginalized Canadians are disproportionately exposed to lower quality foods. The access to safe and nutritious foods in Canada is inextricably tied to an individual's monetary wealth. Communities are often stratified based on income and poorer individuals often reside in less wealthy communities that contain a disproportionate amount of food deserts or food swamps (Health Canada, 2013). The federal policy "Nutrition North" considers aspects of distributive injustice as it attempts to improve the affordability and access to nutritious foods in northern communities. Provincial policies vary in their consideration of the differential access to nutritious foods that marginalized Canadians experience based on income-level. Ontario policies do not contain evidence of specific considerations to improve food access for those residing in food deserts.

Current policies simply incentivise community donations to FAPs but provide no guidance for how FAPs should improve access to food for marginalized groups. Lastly, there are no policies in Kingston that improve access food for those living in food deserts or food swamps. However, the City of Kingston has conducted consultations for their planned community development projects and published comments that emphasis the barriers to food for those in residing in food deserts (COK, 2016b). In a 2016 summary report of a recent community consultation for the North King’s Town project, a comment highlighted by the report states (COK, 2016b):

“I would really like a bus to go through this area...It would be especially helpful for the clients of the food bank; I see people all of the time from the food bank carrying their food down to Montreal Street to catch a bus.”

Expectations are high for the development of policies that improves the barriers to food for residents of food deserts and swamps, as the City of Kingston has stated that it is in the process of developing a community food security strategy that is heavily informed by the Good Food report (COK, 2016a). The Good Food report, compiled by Loving Spoonful, includes the perspectives of several community members that recount the difficulties they face at accessing nutritious food due to where they live (Link, 2016). Overall, current policies help support the longevity of FAPs, but do not provide guidance for these programs may better ensure that those living in food desserts or swamps are provided with tools or strategies to help them overcome the barriers they face when accessing FAPs.

Recognition Justice Considerations

‘Recognition’ as mentioned previously in this paper, is concerned with understanding and valuing difference within the members of a group (Honneth, 2004). A recurring theme within discourse surrounding the types of foods provided by food accessibility programs is the

recognition of culturally significant foods for indigenous peoples (Chan et al., 2006; Lambden et al., 2007; Power, 2008). While the federal government's Nutrition North policy and program aims to improve access to nutritious foods for Northern communities, the program's list of eligible foods that qualify for the subsidy has limited details on the subsidies applied to culturally significant foods (GOC, 2016c). Although qualifying for the Nutrition North program is based on geography and not indigenous status, a substantial portion of Northerners are indigenous and policies should be developed to accommodate for the dietary needs of these people.

The federal government published an adapted version of the Canadian Food Guide in 2010 to include traditionally significant goods alongside store-bought foods for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples (Health Canada, 2010). Although Nutrition North states that eligible food's in the program were selected based on recommendations found in the Canadian Food Guide, few of the traditionally significant alternatives discussed in the food guide are subsidized by the Nutrition North program. Some food groups do not have traditional alternatives which are subsidised, and those foods which are must be processed by plants or distributors registered with the program (GOC, 2016c). For example, bannock, a traditionally significant food for aboriginal peoples and grain alternative according to the Canadian Food Guide, is not covered by Nutrition North subsidies, while enriched white bread is. This creates potential scenarios in which Northerners are required to make compromises concerning whether they should access the cost savings applied to subsidies foods or forgo the subsidies in favour of maintaining traditional diets.

Policies recognizing the importance of culturally significant foods for indigenous people are inconsistent across the provinces and territories. The territories have food policies that consider the importance of recognizing indigenous diets for FAPs; however, this consideration is

inconsistent amongst the provinces. A notable example of the inconsistencies is found in a comparison between the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. According to the Food Banks Canada, aboriginal people comprised 69% and 47% of rural food bank patrons in Saskatchewan and Manitoba respectively (FBC, 2016). However, Manitoba has provincial policies that emphasize the importance of cultural recognition in food security initiatives for individuals of aboriginal descent, while Saskatchewan, with a higher percentage of aboriginal food bank patrons, does not have any provincial policies (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2016). In the absence of provincial leadership, advocacy for improved access to culturally appropriate foods in Saskatchewan is led by charities and NGOs such as Food Matters Manitoba and Food Secure Saskatchewan. Presently, there are no Ontario or Kingston based policies that recognize the importance of providing aboriginal people with culturally significant foods, neither in their income-based policies or other policies that influence the foods provided at FAPs.

The OFBA has highlighted the work of certain FAPs for improving the access of Aboriginal people to culturally appropriate foods in past editions of the Hunger Report (OFBA, 2014); however, no mention of culturally significant foods was made in their most recent report and the OFBA does not possess any organization statements that encourage its associated FAPs to improve access for culturally significant foods. Loving Spoonful's report noted that staff and volunteers involved in the operation of Kingston-based FAPs emphasized the importance of providing culturally appropriate foods as part of their definition for ensured food security (Link, 2016). Due to confidentiality and limited specificity in the Loving Spoonful's Good Food report; however, this study was unable to identify which program organizers held these views or how effectively these views translated into specific practices at the FAPs.

Procedural Justice Considerations

Food accessibility programs typically serve individuals experiencing marginalization due to the strong correlation between economic poverty and FAP usership (Block et al., 2004). Therefore, current policies influencing the foods provided by FAPs may be assessed for their consideration of procedural injustices and efforts to reduce barriers hampering patrons of FAPs from participating in the policy-making processes that may impact the food programs they rely on.

The Nutrition North program explicitly encourages the participation and inclusion of aboriginal perspectives in the initiative's operation. The advisory board overseeing the Nutrition North program states that (GOC, 2016d):

“preference may be given to who self-identify as members of one or more of the following groups: youth, women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities.”

However, this statement may be deceptively inclusive as eligible applicants to the advisory board require a post-secondary education and extensive experiencing living in Northern communities (GOC, 2016d). This heavily reduces the pool of qualified applicants, due to the financial and time commitment required to obtain a post-secondary education, and further decreases the likelihood that the advisory board is comprised of individuals who currently depend on FAPs or have their access to food significantly impacted by the decisions made by the board.

Procedural justice is not only concerned with ensuring that marginalized individuals are invited into the decision-making process, but that the contributions they provide may meaningfully influence the overall decisions as well (Block et al., 2004). For the Nutrition North program, details about the specific decision-making process are not available, however a report from the advisory board in 2012 illustrates several instances in which the advisory board

presented recommendations to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, that were informed by issues raised by aboriginal people that attended public consultations facilitated by board (Wilcox, 2004). The report included several quotes from individuals that expressed concern for various aspects of the Nutrition North policy. Specifically, the report documents the concerns of a participant during a consultation held in 2011, when inquiring about their opinions of the subsidized food list the participant stated (Wilcox, 2014):

"It is scary that the government is going to decide what is good for people. When Big Brother decides, sometimes he makes mistakes."

– Participant at Kuujjuaq public meeting, November 2011.

The details documented in the advisory board's report provide encouraging signs of careful listening and inclusion of the marginalized perspectives which are most heavily impacted the board's decisions. The report suggests that the Nutrition North policy and its programs have thoughtfully considered dimensions of procedural justice throughout the policy's history and its various initiatives.

Outside of the Nutrition North policy, inclusion of the perspectives of marginalized persons was not evident or documented in most provincial policies that influence the practices or foods provided by FAPs. Presently, there are no policies that provide marginalized groups with a platform to voice their opinions concerning the operation or practices at FAPs. The lack of participatory opportunities may also be influenced by the overall lack of federal or provincial policies that provide a domestic food security strategy or influence the operation of FAPs.

Although the City of Kingston does not have any policies influencing the types of foods provided by FAPs, both the KFL&A Food Charter and Loving Spoonful's Good Food report are documents the City of Kingston plans to draw on for developing policies. Both of these documents emphasize the importance of increasing community participation and elevating the

perspectives of the marginalized groups to the development of a comprehensive community food security strategy (COK, 2016a; Link, 2016; KFLA, 2012). The KFL&A food charter states that improving community participation is an essential component to achieving their vision of a secure, accessible, and sustainable food system (KFLA, 2012). Through documenting several responses in the form of quotes, the Good Food report emphasizes the perspectives of community members that depend on FAPs. The organization synthesized the issues raised by community members during their consultations and attempted to address these concerns through the recommendations proposed by the final report (Link, 2016). Lastly, the OFBA has no statements or guidelines that encourages FAPs to develop strategies for improving participation by patrons in the decision-making process regarding the practices or foods provided by FAPs.

The discourse in scholarly literature emphasizes the importance of developing culturally acceptable food systems that focus beyond merely providing and growing culturally significant foods locally, but rather, reforming the food system by intentionally including marginalized perspectives in the restructuring process and policy development (Wekerle, 2004). Marginalized groups may be some of the most knowledgeable concerning the growth and storage of culturally significant foods and may be some of the most capable at recognizing the barriers that prevent them from engaging in the decision-making process (Htun & Ossa, 2013).

Studies suggest that new immigrants, Latin Americans, Aboriginal and black household disproportionately higher rates of household food insecurity in Canada (Tarasuk et al., 2013). Recent literature has also emphasized that the inclusion of marginalized people into the decision-making process is an effective and efficient way to develop food security strategies that meaningfully considers the diversity of cultures these strategies would serve if implemented in Canada (Levkoe, 2014). Given the inconsistency and partial consideration of culturally

significant foods in current Canadian policies, increasing the participation of marginalized people, who utilise FAPs, in the decision-making processes of FAPs and the policies that influence them may be essential for improving the capacity for these programs to meet the needs of those they serve.

Capability-based Justice Considerations

Capability-based justice is concerned with the distribution of equal opportunities and the degree to which institutions provide different individuals with the same access to opportunities and choices (Robeyns, 2005). In terms of the food security discourse, capability-based justice may be used to assess the degree to which current policies and institutions help ensure that different individuals are afforded the same opportunity to a stable supply of food, to food as a means of satisfying basic nutritional needs, and ultimately, the opportunity to a food secure living situation (Burchi & De Muro, 2012). Marginalized individuals may face additional barriers that prevent them from accessing FAPs; these may include individual characteristics such as, but not limited to, mobility issues, language barriers, or mental health issues that reduces the ability of individuals to properly access available food services (Caraher et al., 1998). The Nutrition North policy aims to improve the access to nutritious sources of food for aboriginal communities by subsidising the costs associated with the transport and stocking of more nutritious perishable foods items. However, there exists no federal strategies or guidelines that address the barriers to food access related to individual characteristics such as age, physical mobility, or culture. Furthermore, while there exist some provincial or municipal policies that support FAPs through incentivising donations to these institutions and improving safety

standards for foods distributed by these programs, there are no policies that provide strategies to monitor or assess the accessibility of these programs by the marginalized groups.

Most provincial policies that influence the types of foods served at food accessibility programs, such as Ontario's Local Food Act of 2013, express support for improving food access but do not define clear strategies for improving the ability of marginalized people to access these services (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2017). The City of Kingston's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan is a Kingston wide strategy that aims to address the different dimensions of poverty in the Kingston community. The "Homelessness and Food Security" section of the plan is informed by the KLF&A Food Charter and the Good Food report (COK, 2016a). Both these reports emphasize the importance of developing strategies to accommodate the variety of individual characteristics that may hamper the marginalized from accessing FAP services (KLFA, 2012; Link, 2016). The City of Kingston's recent Community Garden Development policy demonstrates the consideration of capability-based dimensions of justice in the implementation and planning phases of the initiative. The policy supports the development of community gardens on municipally owned lands and considers issues of capability in its efforts to reduce physical barriers preventing individuals from accessing the gardens. The project seeks to site and plot these gardens in ways that help individuals with disabilities overcome the physical barriers that would otherwise prevent them from accessing the gardens, and ensures equal access and participatory opportunities for all individuals who wish to involve themselves with the project and receive its benefits (COK, 2016c).

Discrepancies in food security policies

Through evaluating the policies and organization documents that influences the foods provided by FAPs under an environmental justice framework, several discrepancies in the policies or statements of certain organizations were identified. A notable discrepancy concerning Canadian food security policy is evident when the robust international food security strategy is compared to a non-existent domestic strategy. Canada's Food Security Strategy for developing countries, created by the Canadian International Development agency, emphasizes the importance of ensuring access, availability, quality, and a stable supply of food to adequately achieve food security (GOC, 2014). The document outlines a long-term strategy centered on community investment and the development of resilient agricultural systems (GOC, 2014). This the document also demonstrates consideration for the dimensions of environmental justice as it elevates the status of women and provides a rationale for how the empowerment of women is critical for achieving food security internationally. These concepts are consistent with current ecofeminism literature that highlights the heavy involvement of women in small-scale agriculture and the importance of increasing their influence and control over the means to agricultural production, as they are slowly losing control over their land to the increasingly globalised and commercialized international food system (Shiva, 2014). The international food security strategy categorizes food security into the specific elements of access, availability, quality, and stability. In comparison, the lack of a domestic strategy is justified by a shifting domestic focus towards provincial income-based strategies such as Ontario Works, which provides individuals with a small sum of money when they demonstrate immediate financial need (Maki, 2011). These income-based strategies may not equally or effectively address all the dimensions of food security as outlined by the international strategy. Furthermore, the

international strategy appears to address the present food realities of developing nations and aims to develop policies that builds upon the work already being done; the domestic policies however, seem to neglect the present food environment of Canada, as policies which address the types of foods provided by FAPs are not present in all provinces and there are no existing policies that provide guidance for how these programs may better operate to ensure that marginalized groups are adequately served.

Discrepancies in the advocacy of non-governmental organizations

The Ontario Food Bank Association's lack of advocacy or statements addressing the unique barriers marginalized people face when accessing FAPs, contrasted against the organization's 2016 Hunger Report which highlights the stories of several different individuals, each with their own unique experiences of marginalization, and their experiences of food insecurity (OFBA, 2016). In the 2016 Hunger Report, the stories of several individuals were told to highlight a variety of challenging circumstances that contribute to their experience of food insecurity and subsequent food bank use. The discrepancy associated with the usage of these stories is evident in the story elements which are explicitly emphasized and those which may be implied. While the barriers to food access are explicitly described, there were no statements encouraging advocacy for recommendations and features that would improve their access to food. Instead, these stories all came to similar conclusions emphasizing the need to improve food insecurity through the support of policies that further subsidise costs of living expenses (OFBA, 2016). The Food report utilised these stories to not only propel their policy opinions, but also used these stories encourage monetary donations to the organization itself and local FAPs. Although these stories were used with the consent of the individuals highlighted in the report, it is concerning

that these stories are told without explicit advocacy to lessen the specific barriers mentioned in the stories and faced by marginalized groups. If these stories are primarily used to compel an audience towards the OFBA's policy interests, while advocacy to weaken the barriers highlighted by these stories is neglected, then the use of storytelling may serve to further marginalize the patrons of FAPs, as their experiences are reduced to affective tools that the OFBA may use to promote its preferred policy solutions.

Future research considerations and knowledge gaps

The Local Food act may have produced an increase in donations to a variety of different FAPs, and the decline in food bank user-ship may be due to patron preference for a particular food accessibility program, rather than being indicative of decreasing food insecurity in Ontario. This scenario is supported by a 2015 report on household food insecurity by Statistics Canada which suggests that rates of food insecurity have remained relatively constant between the years of 2007 to 2012 (Roshanafshar & Hawkins, 2015). This is contrasted against the foodbank usage over the same period of time that saw a 29% increase in food bank usage (Food Banks Canada, 2016). Loopstra and Tarasuk (2015) studied the characteristics of food bank patrons and suggest that food bank usage is an overly simplistic measure of food insecurity as usage is heavily dependent on the severity of food insecurity and the health of foodbank programs to accommodate for patrons. These results suggest that foodbank usage may be an inaccurate indicator of food security and that further research is required to accurately assess the impact the Local Food act has had on community food security in Ontario.

Lastly, the policy analysis reinforces scholarly literature that emphasize the dearth of policies, across all levels of government, that influence the quality of foods provided by FAPs as well as

the lack of policies that guide these programs to ensure that marginalized groups have access to the services of FAPs. The discrepancy is evident when the growth of food bank usage is contrasted with diminishing policy attention given to the issue. A simple statistical analysis of changes in the quantity of foodbank patrons was conducted. 2008 was the determined start year as it coincides with the year that the final federal update report on the 1996 UN Food Summit was produced and Canada solidified its shifting policy focus that would address domestic food security through a poverty alleviation approach (AAFC, 2008). According to Food Banks Canada (2016), the total number of individuals assisted monthly by these programs has risen from roughly 680 000 individuals, in 2008, to over 850 000 individuals being assisted monthly in 2015 (Table 1.; Food Banks Canada, 2016). When assessed against the total population between the same timeframe, it is determined that Canadian foodbank usage increased by approximately 26%, while the population grew by approximately 9%.

Table 1. Population size statistics for total population size and monthly amount of foodbank patrons.

	Total individuals assisted by foodbanks	Total Population of Canada
2008	675735	33245800
2015	852137	35848600
Growth Rate (in %)	26.1	9.2

* The data obtained for the table was obtained from the 2016 HungerCount published by Foods Banks Canada and Statistics Canada

* Data rounded to 6 sig. figs.

The analysis suggests that food bank usage increased at almost three times the rate of population growth in the past 8 years. This simple analysis is unable to assess the correlation between the shift in focus of government policies and increased foodbank usership, because the rise in foodbank usage may be influenced by confounding factors such as declining economic

strength of the provinces. However, the analysis does provide a suitable approximation of the growing demand and importance of foodbanks in the Canadian food landscape, as the rate of growth for food usership greatly exceeds the general population growth for that the same time. Although the government of Canada has stated that it intends to address the issue of domestic food security through monetary and income-based policies, the lack of guidance for FAPs by government policies grossly neglects the significance of these programs and their growing importance in Canada's food environment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The environmental justice framework used to analyse the policies influencing the foods provided by FAPs reveal several issues within Canada's policy strategy for addressing domestic food security. The number of policies that influence the foods provided by FAPs is limited, and of those policies that do influence the foods provided, consideration of aspects of environmental justice in these policies is inconsistent and are often partially effective when aspects of environmental justice are considered. For example, the barriers to procedural justice tackled by the Nutrition North program's explicit preference for including Aboriginals perspectives, in their advisory board, is hampered by the qualifications associated with accessing the advisory board. Although the prevalence of environmental justice consideration was inconsistent throughout all levels of policy, municipal policies were generally most considerate of issues of recognition and access. Municipal strategies, while fewer and less developed, were often informed by local organizations, such as the Loving Spoonful, and were more often concerned with the logistical aspects of ensuring marginalized people access to community resources and charitable food programs available at a local scale.

A general issue among the policies that influenced the foods served in FAPs was the predominance of policies that used income or monetary approaches to improve food security and increase support for FAPs. These policies consistently neglected aspects of environmental justice in their approaches. For example, the Local Food Act of Ontario incentivises donations to FAPs; however, the policy expresses limited concern for how the increased support may ultimately to improve food access for severely marginalized people. Presently, the income-based approaches have not been effective at reducing food bank usership and these strategies have often been ineffective at considering dimensions of environmental justice. The analysis illustrating increasing foodbank usership provides an additional reason for Canada to reconsider the effectiveness of its current preference for income support strategies as means to reducing food bank usage. Furthermore, it is recommended that policies are implemented with monitoring programs that may better assess changes in the Canadian food access environment.

Lastly, shifts in the rhetorical framing that surrounds the discourse on domestic food security may be one of the most influential factors contributing to the scarcity of policies addressing the issue (Mah et al., 2014). Change in the discourse surrounding domestic food security, away from being an issue of rights and towards health concerns associated with food insecurity, reduces the impetus for government action that would otherwise view domestic food insecurity as an ongoing violation of human rights. The frameshift removes the notion of food as an entitlement and allows for a societal paradigm in which food shortages are addressed through charity. Current policies influencing the foods provided by FAPs are typically in the form of monetary incentives that are generally less concerned with the outcomes of their initiatives. Government policies which support FAPs through monetary approaches places the onus on the private sector for deciding the process through which food is distributed and which individuals qualify for

accessing these services. When donations decrease, the FAPs are responsible for deciding the course of action related to whether they will reduce the number of patrons they serve or reduce quantity and selection that patrons receive per visit (Tarasuk & Eakin, 2005). Reclaiming domestic food security as an issue of human rights may increase government responsibility and encourage policies that help FAPs to better ensure all residents receive appropriate access to stable quantities of safe and nutritious foods.

Based on these conclusions, further research should be conducted to better assess the relationships between current food policies and the subsequent impacts on foodbank usership in Kingston. Research on the factors influencing inter-governmental communication may help explain the discrepancies observed in quality and depth of food policies between provinces and between Canada's domestic and international food security strategy. Increased inclusion of the perspectives of marginalized Canadians, experiencing food insecurity, in the decision-making process concerning food policies and programs may help these programs to better serve the groups they aim to assist. Lastly, improving education and public awareness on the right to food may improve policy action by increasing support and motivation around issue if the rhetoric surrounding food insecurity was explicitly defined and understood as a human rights violation. Most importantly, food accessibility programs are an increasingly significant presence in the Canadian food environment and further policies should be developed to guide these institutions to ensure the right to food for all Canadians.

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