The Current Status of Food Shelf and Soup Kitchen Programs within the Phillips Neighborhood of Minneapolis, Minnesota

Kimberly M. Gartner University of Minnesota

Rebecca L. Brown Augsburg College

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CURA RESOURCE COLLECTION

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University of Minnesota
330 Humphrey Center

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- Staff members at each of the participating agencies:

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- A special thanks to our professors, who offered continual advice and encouragement:
 Elizabeth Lightfoot, University of Minnesota School of Social Work
 Diane Pike, Augsburg College Department of Sociology.

Rebecca and Kimberly

This research project is a study of food shelves and soup kitchens in the Phillips
Neighborhood of Minneapolis, Minnesota. The study takes place on two levels. Rebecca Brown,
from Augsburg College, conducted the research regarding the providers of services at both food
shelves and soup kitchens. Kimberly Gartner, from University of Minnesota, School of Social
Work, conducted the research on consumers of food shelf and soup kitchen services. This report
has been prepared by Kimberly Gartner, drawing extensively upon Rebecca Brown's work and
individual report. We hope that the presentation of a joint report increases its utilization.

Through this report, the terms consumers and soup kitchens will be used, with the recognition that these are not necessarily the terms that individual agencies use to refer to their guests or their programs. A soup kitchen has been defined as any agency that provides free meals on a regular basis. This report will cover the methods and procedures used to conduct this study, a discussion of the results, and several recommendations for food service providers.

Methodologies

A list of food service programs in and around the Phillips neighborhood was compiled from information provided by Bob Frawley (Director of Waite House and Coyle Center) and Tim Barnes (EFN). Sixteen programs were identified within four blocks of the official Phillips neighborhood boundaries, as set by the city of Minneapolis. The four block radius around the neighborhood was included when considering the walking distance for residents who are near Phillips' border. Telephone calls were made to staff members at all 16 food services programs, inviting them to be part of the study. Thirteen programs participated in the provider component of the study, while nine participated in the consumer component.

Providers

There were 23 food service providers, representing 13 different programs, who were study participants. This component of the project aimed to describe the current status of food services in the Phillips neighborhood from a provider's perspective. Data were obtained through interview surveys. The interview form contained 39 questions subdivided into four themes: general information, program mission and goals/ objectives, funding and resources, and participants/agency communication. The main variables addressed included the provider's commitments to the program, the program participants, and the neighborhood; the kind of services provided; the goals supporting the program; the quality of the food and services; the program funding; and the service coordination and communication between other service programs in the neighborhood.

At each of the programs, a person in the "directors" role was interviewed first. A second meeting time was set-up to speak with another employee or volunteer with the program. The

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second person interviewed at each site was either the most conveniently available person for the study or one who was suggested by the "director" of the program.

Consumers

Interviews were conducted with consumers while they were receiving services at one of 9 agencies. Eight (8) of these agencies were in the official Phillips boundaries. Five (5) were food shelves and 4 were soup kitchens. The total number of interviews was 53; 33 at food shelves and 20 at soup kitchens. At soup kitchens the interviews typically took place at tables while a person was eating. Before the interview began, the researcher obtained permission to sit down at the table and to ask questions. Consumers were given a slip of paper that explained the purpose of the survey, along with a phone number and address in case they had further questions or wanted a copy of the report. They were told that their answers would be confidential. No volunteers or staff members would be told what they said. At food shelves, a similar procedure took place; people were interviewed while they waited to be served. Since staff members were often much closer, the consumer was asked if she or he felt comfortable answering questions right there. All participants indicated that they were.

The interview took approximately 5 minutes to complete. It consisted of 15 questions (see Appendix A) pertaining to the consumer's opinion of the service provided and the quality of the food; elements of the program they like and dislike; their need for other services; use of other food programs; and perspective on all the food shelf and soup kitchen services in the Phillips neighborhood. At soup kitchens, attempts were made to interview people from different ethnic groups and genders. At food shelves, interviews were typically held with whomever came, until the necessary number of interviews was reached.

Results and Discussion

Choice

One variable measured in the provider's survey was how the food is determined. The providers often mentioned the positive value of choice, feeling that choice gave the consumers a sense of pride or diminished a sense of shame. While about a third of food shelves, 34.8% distributed prebagged food, 30.4% of the food shelf programs contain some level of choice (see appendix C). Consumers of both food shelves and soup kitchens commented on the choice. At soup kitchens, responses from consumers varied from "It changes every day," to it "could have more variety." At the food shelves, several participants said, "I like it when I get to pick things" and, "You get a choice."

Satisfaction

Interviews with both providers and consumers addressed the satisfaction of program participants. The vast majority of providers felt that consumers were satisfied or very satisfied with their program. These providers felt that clients demonstrated their satisfaction through their statements and their actions. These results correlated with results from consumers. In all areas, consumers rated the programs very highly. In all questions where consumers were asked to rate the program on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being good, the mean response was above 4. This indicates a strong level of satisfaction. The statements from consumers reflect this satisfaction. Positive comments included, "It's a godsend;" "They do a good job;" "They've helped us a lot;" "It's great. This is a good program."

Providers recognized that not everyone was happy with the services. None the less, very few consumers rated the programs negatively. Those who did typically had constructive comments, "They should have more fresh food, like veggies;" "I don't like certain people here;" "Should give me more, because I have a big family. This will last me one day, maybe;" and "They should give more stuff for babies: food, diapers, formula." A number of consumers seemed unwilling to state anything negative about the programs that are helping them. When asked if there were things they did not like or would like to see changed, 57% of both food shelf and soup kitchen consumers responded "nothing." Often this was further explained: "I'm not gonna comment on that;" "I use the place, don't bitch;" "If I don't like it, I won't come back;" and "beggars can't be choosers." Others just felt that if they commented, it would not do anything anyway.

Great need

One of the themes expressed by the providers was the real need for food services in the Phillips neighborhood. For example, providers stated, "the need is obvious," "there is a genuine and honest need for the people in Phillips," and "the need is greater than the supply." Consumers echoed this great need as well. When asked about food services in Phillips, 15 consumers of soup kitchens (62.50%) and 16 consumers of food shelves (57.14%), explained it is greatly needed. Four consumers went so far as to say there is "no hunger in Minneapolis as long as you can get out." Most consumers said that free food is the reason why they come to the agency, further indicating the great need.

Respectful atmosphere

The references made by the providers about the lives of the poor who use the services were typically very respectful and understanding. Participants who were affiliated with a religious organization tended to make statements similar to, "Jesus said, 'Feed the Hungary," or "Never judge someone until you've walked in their moccasins for a month." Providers who worked or volunteered for a non-religious organization sometimes responded with sentiments such as, "society's given up on them," "there are lots of hurting people," and "many are single moms or the working poor...". The majority of providers spoke of the welcoming and inclusive atmosphere at

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their program. One provider said, "we try to validate each person as a person and de-emphasize why they came."

Consumers felt very strongly about the respectful and welcoming environment. When asked to rate how they are treated, 47 out of 50 consumers indicated a 4 or 5, with 5 being good. At food shelves, 16 consumers, 26.23%, said the respectful and friendly people was something they really liked about the program. Other consumers said a certain staff member was the reason why they kept coming. A number of consumers felt strongly about the Christian element of services. Some responded, "it's a Christian place," and "it's nice to pray together." One man did not like other agencies, because "there is nothing Christian about them." Perception of other services

During the interviews with providers, a question pertained to communication between agencies. Thirty-nine (39) percent of providers explained that they shared resources with other food service agencies, such as bread or holiday extras. Forty-seven (47) percent stated that more communication would be good, and 39% said that part of that communication should include letting other programs know what they are doing and when. Having more than one agency to provide for the people was expressed as a positive trait by 52% of the providers.

The providers were asked if, to their knowledge, consumers used other food services in the neighborhood. Seventy (70) percent were sure their consumers used other food programs. However, the response from consumers was different. For those consumers interviewed at soup kitchens, only 9, 47.37%, regularly used other soup kitchens and only 4 (21.15%) used food shelves. From the people interviewed at food shelves, only 9 (27.27%) used other food shelves. Most of these other food shelves were through their churches. Only 6 (18.18%) of food shelf consumers used a soup kitchen. The vast majority of clients at both soup kitchens and food shelves did not use other services. In fact, many were not even aware of other agencies. Ten, or 35.71%, of food shelf consumers said they did not know of other food services, while 2, or 8.33%, of soup kitchen consumers said they did not know of other food services. While some people may be skeptical of these responses, the consumers appeared honest about their lack of knowledge. This can be attributed to several factors. Primarily, people walk to agencies to obtain services. In fact, almost every consumer at some point mentioned that the agency was close to where they stay. While this sample is small, it does indicate that people may not be using other food services as often as providers believe they are.

Recommendations

The following recommendations stem from the information gained through interviews with providers and consumers of food shelf and soup kitchen services.

Advertisement

A number of consumers truly do not know about other services that are available for them. They are in need of services, but do not know where to go. Furthermore, some misunderstandings exist. Some people believe that since they receive food shelf services at one agency, that cannot go to another agency for free meals. Other people believe that they do not qualify for food shelves, because they receive social security. Word of mouth seems to be the way most people know of services. This helps some people, but it does not reach all those in need. Some agencies do provide better meals or larger portions than other agencies. Some people prefer Christian over non-Christian agencies. Even though people are not paying for the services, they deserve to be able to choose the services that are best for them. Fach agency does not have to advertise their own services. This could be done in a collaborative method. Collaboration 3

There seems to be a great need for collaboration among food shelf and soup kitchen services in and around the Phillips neighborhood. While some agencies believe that effective communication takes place, other agencies do not. Providers were not even aware of all of the agencies providing food services. Food service providers also experience may of the same challenges. Through collaborative efforts, food service programs can serve the Phillips neighborhood in the most effective and efficient manner.

Quarterly meetings would be a good way to begin this collaborative effort. These meetings can serve as a forum for food service providers to share ideas and challenges. Funding options can be evaluated. Ways to better serve the Phillips neighborhood can be explored. Agencies can communicate about trends they experience or reasons why one agency may begin to have more consumers (such as an agency temporarily closing). This recommendation is not made to add yet another meeting to the busy lives of social service providers, rather the goal is to improve service delivery.

Include service consumers

The consumers of food shelf and soup kitchen services have a great deal to say about the services they receive. This study touched only the surface. However, consumers of service have no way to provide input at agencies, other than occasional surveys done by agencies. Some consumers even indicated a desire to assist with food service. There needs to be a formal method for consumers to be a part of service delivery. Quarterly collaborative meetings can include consumers, they can be invited to help prepare and serve meals, and they can be used as volunteers in food shelves. If efforts are made to involve consumers, they need to make continuously over time. Consumers are not used to having a voice in service delivery. They may not believe that agencies are making a real commitment to that. However, programs and agencies are designed to serve people in need. These people should be incorporated into service delivery.

Appendix A

Interview Schedule for soup kitchen (food shelf) consumers:

- 1. How's the food here? On a scale from 1-5, with 5 good, how would you rate the food?
- 2. How are the portions? On a scale from 1-5, with 5 good, how would you rate the portions?
- 3. What about the menu (food) variety? On that same scale, how would you rate the variety?
- 4. How are you treated when you are here? From 1 to 5, with 5 good, how would you rate the way you are treated?
- 5. What do you think about the hours they are open?
- 6. How easy or hard is it for you to get here?
- 7. What do you think about the information they require when you come here?
- 8. How often do you come here?
- 9. What are some of you favorite things about it here? What are some things you like?
- 10. What things would you like to see changed? What don't you like?
- 11. Do you go to other soup kitchens (food shelves)? Would you mind telling me where? And how often do you go there?
- 12. Do you use a food shelf (soup kitchen)?
 And where do you go? How often do you go there?
- 13. Other than food, are there any services you need assistance with? What services?
- 14. What brings you to use these services?
- 15. I understand that there are a number of places that have food shelves or soup kitchens in the Phillips neighborhood. What do you think about all those services being offered?

1. How's the food here? (On a scale from 1-5, with 5 good)

	1		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·			
Food shelf			3	44	5	Mean
Soup kitchen	0	1	5	7	18	4.35
	0	0	2	4	12	4.56
Total	0	1	7	11	30	4 43

Comments:

Food shelf:

"It's appreciated by the homeless."

"OK, but they need more fresh food, veggies."

"All right, especially when low on money."

Soup kitchen:

"Good, depends on the day."

"They've helped us."

2. How are the portions? (On a scale from 1-5, with 5 good)

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Food shelf	0	3	5	8	15	
Soup kitchen	0	0	5	3	1.1	4.13
otal	0 .	3	10		11	4.32
			10	1	26	4.2

Comments:

Food shelf:

"Enough for whatever we can use, and we have a large family."

"More than I have in my fridge."

"Not enough. I have 5 people to feed."
"A godsend. I stretch it as far as I can."

"Not enough to come only one time a month. It only lasts a few days."

Soup kitchen:

"Sometimes very little."

"Get a lot, always seconds."

"I'm not going to rate the food. I'm thankful for the food. People are dying."

3. What about the variety of the food you get? (On a scale from 1-5, with 5 good)

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
ood shelf	0	2	4	10	14	1 2
oup kitchen	1	1	4	7	7	3.0
Total	1	3	8	17	21	4.08

Comments:

"Like it. They have different things at different times."

"Same thing every time. No variety."
"You get a choice."

"Not steak and lobsters, but ... "

Soup kitchen:

"It changes every day."

"Could have more variety."

4. How are you treated here? (On a scale from 1-5, with 5 good)

	-					
	<u> </u>		3	4	5	Mean
Food shelf	0	.,, 7	0	6	24	
Soup kitchen	0	🤈	0	-	24	4.71
Total		٢	U	1	16	4.63
TULA	0	3	0	7	40	4.68

Comments for #4:

Food shelf:

"Kindly. With respect."

"Excellent. Like a person."

Soup kitchen:

"Pretty good."

"Nobody bothers me, except you."

"Good, people go out of the way to help." "With little ones, they help you get plates."

5. What do you think about the hours they are open?

soup kitchen	
good	14 (73.68%)
more hours	5 (26.32%)
totals 🙄	19 (100%)

food shelf	
good more hours	25 (75.76%) 8 (24.24%)
totals	33 (100%)

Comments:

"Augh. I wish they were open longer."

"They schedule themselves. If I give comment, they won't change."

"Good hours. Mostly when people are done with work."

"Could stay open longer for people who can't come weekdays. Should be open Saturday, too."

6. How easy or hard is it for you to get here?

	soup kitchen	food shelf
easy	17 (89.47%)	30 (90.91%)
hard	2 \ (10.53%)	1 (3.03%)
depends	0 (0%)	2 (6.06%)
totals	19 (100%)	33 (100%)

Comments:

"Pretty easy to me. I stay near here."

"Take bus, sometimes walk. I don't like to carry groceries home."

"With two bags going home it's hard."

"Only hard because of kids. I have two kids and have to carry them."

7. What do you think about the information required?

Is it too little, about right, too much?

	soup kitchen	food shelf
too little about right too much	1 (3.33%) 26 (86.67%) 3 (10%)	0 (0%) 17 (100%) 0 (0%)
totals	30 (100%)	17 (100%)

Comments from food shelf consumers:

"They need the info or else people will come back again and get food from others who need it."

"Already have it in the computer. Should stop having to bring bill every month. Sometimes I don't get mail until the end of the month and need food sooner."

"Should ask a little more about income to be sure those who really need it use it and those who don't need it don't use it."

"Don't ask too much.

"Can't go to another food shelf. Should need social security numbers for everyone. Just for me. I don't have social security numbers for the kids. They don't get food. I don't know the reason. They are little. Should only need cards for adults." ...

"All food shelves have that."

8. How often do you come here?

5 (23.81%)
5 (23.81%)
3 (14.29%)
2 (9.52%)
2 (9.52%)
2 (9.52%)
2 (9.52%)
21 (99.99%)

-	
food shelf	
1 time/ month	20 (60.61%)
first time	4 (12.12%)
every other month	3 (9.09%)
3-4 times/ year	2 (6.06%)
as little as possible	2 (6.06%)
other	2 (6.06%)
totals	33 (100%)

9. What are your favorite things about it here? What do you like?

soup kitchen	
food	12 (32.43%)
staff	7 (18.92%)
see friends	4 (10.81%)
everything	4 (10.81%)
a place to go	4 (10.81%)
it's free	4 (10.81%)
other	2 (5.41%)
totals	37 (100%)

food shelf	
friendly/respectful	16 (26.23%)
food	14 (22.95%)
staff	8 (13.11%)
non-food items	5 (8.2%)
choices	4 (6.56%)
help me/community	3 (4.92%)
Christian	3 (4.92%)
know people	2 (3.28%)
convenient	2 (3.28%)
other	4 (6.56%)
total	61 (100%)

Comments:

Soup kitchen:
"I'm left alone and can eat in peace."
"See a lot of friends."
"Get as much milk as you want."
"Like talking with the staff."

Food shelf:
"People are excellent, talk to you."
"It's a Christian place."
"Some baby stuff, spaghetti."
"When they let me pick what I need."
"Give transportation tokens if you get a lot of stuff."

10. What changes would you like to see made? Are there things you don't like?

soup kitchen	
nothing	12 (57.14%)
need longer hours	3 (14.29%)
menu doesn't change	2 (9.52%)
bathrooms aren't open	2 (9.52%)
too noisy	1 (4.76%)
need bigger building	1 (4.76%)
totals	21 (99.99%)

19 (57.58%)
3 (9.09%)
2 (6.06%)
2 (6.06%)
2 (6.06%)
1 (3.03%)
4 (12.12%)
33 (100%)

Comments for #10:

Soup kitchen:

"Wish it was a larger building."
"I use the place, don't bitch"
"If I say, they won't change."
"Bathrooms should be open for little kids."
"Need some real cooks."

Food shelf:

"Wouldn't change a thing."
"Wish they had more fresh food, like veggies."
"Should give more stuff for babies."

"They run out of stuff."

11/12. For those who use soup kitchens, do you use other:

	Soup kitchens	Food shelves
Yes	9 (47.37%)	4 (21.05%)
No	6 (31.58%)	15 (78.95%)
Rarely	4 (21.05%)	0 (0%)
	্ব9 (100%)	19 (100%)

11/12. For those who use food shelves, do you use other:

	Food shelves	Soup kitchens
Yes	9 (27.27%)	6 (18.18%)
No	24 (72.73%)	23 (69.70%)
Rarely	0 (0%)	4 (12:12%)
	33 (100%)	33 (100%)

13. What other services do you need assistance with?

soup kitchen	
nothing	10 (50%)
housing	5 (25%)
job assistance	2 (10%)
laundry	1 (5%)
electricity	1 (5%)
no point	1 (5%)
totals	20 (100%)

food shelf	
nothing	17 (44.74%)
transportation	4 (10.53%)
just food	3 (7.89%)
personal items	4 (10.53%)
child care	2 (5.26%)
rent	2 (5.26%)
job assistance	2 (5.26%)
utilities	2 (5.26%)
other	2 (5.26%)
totals	38 (99.99%)
	

Comments:

"A place for homeless to stay. In the summer they stay outside and cause trouble."

"Child care: Centers do not have quota for nationality. Should be diverse, not all Native American,
Hmong... Take care of our own first before everyone else. Should be more fair, not bring immigrants and
give services when we need them first."

"There's so much you can do for people."

14. What brings you to use these services?

soup kitchen	
be around people/friends	6 (26 09%)
live nearby	6 (26.09%)
food/hungry	4 (17.39%)
kills time/place to go	4 (17.39%)
other	3 (13.04%)
totals	23 (100%)

food shelf	
food	18 (51.43%)
live close by	7 (20%)
it's free	3 (8.57%)
short on money	3 (8.57%)
other	4 (11.43%)
totals	35 (100%)

Comments:

Soup kitchen:

"It kills time."

"Saves me washing a few dishes."

"I have four kids; it's like an outing."

Food shelf:

"Had no food."

"It's free."

"Helps out during the month."

15. What do you think about the food shelf services and free meals in the Phillips area?

soup kitchen	
good/needed	15 (62.50%)
no hunger in MN	2 (8.33%)
don't know of others	2 (8.33%)
people take advantage	2 (8.33%)
no point telling you	2 (8.33%)
bad for your health	1 (4.17%)
totals	24 (99.99%)

food shelf	
great/needed don't know of others everyone eats in MN	16 (57.14%) 10 (35.71%) 2 (7.14%)
	28 (99.99%)

Comments:

Soup kitchen:

"It's about a power trip. It's not for the person in need, for the agencies."

"No hunger in Minneapolis as long as you can get out." "The value's dismissed of the people in the neighborhood."

"Some meals at night are good for the homeless, but where do they go after 9 p.m.?"

"A good deal, as long as people know about it. I only know about this one." "People who go (to soup kitchens) don't do enough to solve their problems."

food shelf:

"Ok for people who need them and need to use them."
"There are some I can't use, because we have our own. That's pretty rude."

"Pretty handy, especially in this neighborhood, which is low income."

"Nice to have regions so people aren't going all over the place getting food."

"Haven't seen them. I can only use here, so I don't know."

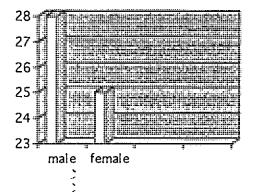
"Pretty cook. If community wants to help out people, it cuts down on thefts. If there is no place to go, people have to steal or something."

"Not enough services offered. I don't like districts or areas."

"I didn't know of any others. Need to send out fliers, lots of people don't know."

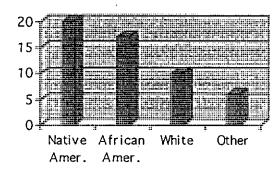
Demographics

Gender of participants



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- 🛮 3-D Column 2
- 3-D Column 3

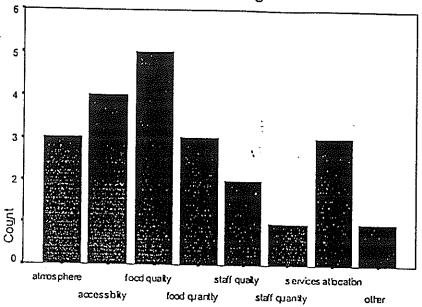
Ethnicity of participants



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- 3-D Column 3

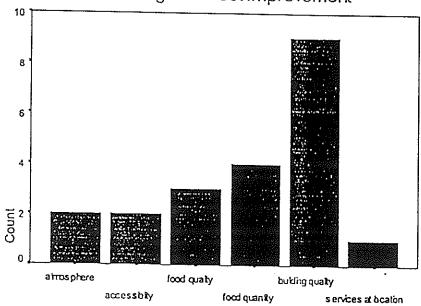
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Strongest Feature of the Program



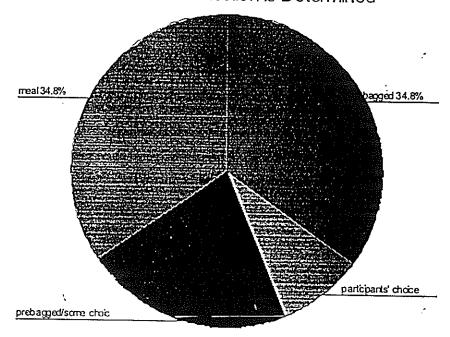
strongest feature of the program

Feature Needing the Most Improvement

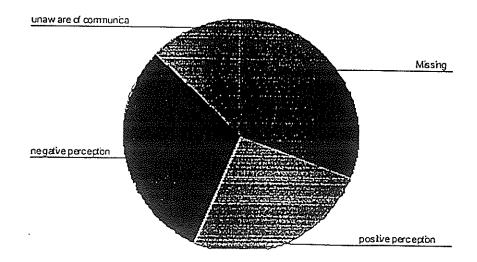


$Appendix\,C$

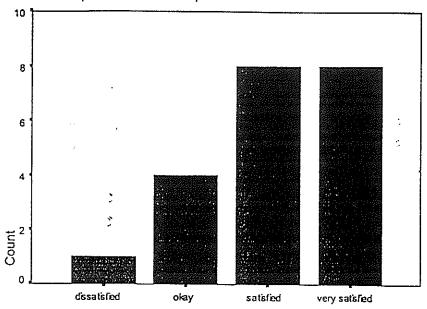
How the Food Distribution is Determined



Perception of Communication

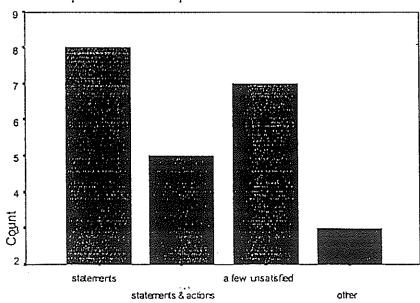


Perception of Participant Satisfaction Level



perception of participant satisfaction level

Examples of Participant Satisfaction



examples of participant satisfaction

2417 Garfield Avenue S. #311 Minneapolis, MN 55405

June 15, 1999

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Ed Drury CURA 330 HHH Center 301 19th Avenue S. Minneapolis, MN 55455

Dear Mr. Drury,

Thank you and CURA for providing the funding that made this research project happen. This quarter I worked on a 25% time assistantship for Waite House. It truly was an exciting project, and I gained great experience. I am submitting a copy of the report, which is really only an executive summary. This summer Rebecca Brown, from Augsburg, and I have decided to volunteer our time to write an extensive report.

This project generated some interesting results. We began to touch the surface of perceptions of food shelf and soup kitchen services in the Phillips neighborhood. As a result of this research, there are a number of opportunities for further work. This research also presented several ethical considerations. Two of the 53 research participants strongly expressed their displeasure with research from the University. One man said to me, "People are always coming in from the University to study us. I don't want to further your study." Another politely answered all my interview questions and then asked, "What are you going to change by all this?" I explained that my role was to obtain descriptive information, which I would present to agencies. The agencies then could do what they want with my research. He huffed, "You better figure out your purpose and what you're going to change."

Research of this kind can raise people's expectations that services will change to better suit their needs. One recommendation I made in the report is for agencies to more formally involve clients in their service delivery. CURA is in a unique position to be able to assist with this. Focus group interviewing could be held with clients of soup kitchens and food shelves within the Phillips neighborhood. A student can initiate the focus groups, perhaps in conjunction with an agency staff member. These focus groups can concentrate on ways clients want to be involved and how they see that possible. Having a staff member as part of the research team can help ensure that these efforts continue once the CURA student is off the project.

I believe the research I conducted will be useful to agencies within the Phillips neighborhood. I mailed my results to 15 agencies and one community member. Additionally, Bob Frawley, the Director of Waite House and the Coyle Center, may take the initiative to hold a meeting for providers of soup kitchen and food shelf services.

Thank you once again for this incredible opportunity.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Gartner