

The roots of domestic hunger extend far beyond a simple lack of food, as they are connected to historical inequality and contemporary social issues that perpetuate this inequality, such as a city's transportation services and minimum wage laws (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010). Yet, many efforts to combat domestic hunger operate under the assumption that hungry people just need food. At the level of policy, one effort to combat hunger is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which has undergone many changes since it began as the first Food Stamp Program in 1939 (A Short History of SNAP). However, food charity in the form of food banks, soup kitchens, etcetera, seems to bear a large burden of feeding the hungry, despite governmental food aid. At first glance, these forms of charity seem to contain the solution to two problems: hunger and wasted surplus food. However, Janet Poppendieck's *Sweet Charity* (1998) markedly challenged their effectiveness, in which she claimed that this effort to combat hunger is misguided and does not adequately address nor fulfill the needs of aid recipients. Additional literature on food banks criticize their resemblance to corporations and question who the true benefactors of their services are (Riches, 2018).

Bearing this in mind, we must speculate how hunger is defined, whose responsibility it is to eradicate it, and how perceptions of this have changed over the many years that governmental food aid has existed. Moreover, it is important that we understand these notions of responsibility and hunger as historically specific. An understanding of hunger in this context is important for a holistic approach to putting an end to it. A powerful tool that we can use to understand change in public opinion over time is the media. The media constructs subjects through language (Horton-Salway, 2010) and is an important instrument in evaluating the culture surrounding particular issues at specific moments in time, as the public simultaneously uses media to construct meaning and influences media to adopt changing attitudes (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

Through June 2020, I will be conducting a content analysis using newspaper articles as a source of data. I will code about 500 New York Times articles from the early 1900s through today for themes such as hunger, social responsibility, nutrition, and welfare, though I expect other themes to materialize as my research progresses. I plan to compare this data to the historical changes in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, with the intention of understanding how the language surrounding hunger and food charity reflects policies that target hunger. My research questions are: How has the media's coverage of food charity framed hunger and social responsibility, and how does it reflect the historical changes in SNAP? Upon whom does the media place the responsibility of eradicating hunger? I hope to better understand how solutions to social problems are framed, and to what extent they are framed as the fault and responsibility of the public or those affected. I intend to use the PUF Grant to purchase a subscription to Dedoose, a software that will help me greatly with the process of coding the data. I hope that this project will provide insight into the changes in conceptions of hunger over time, and the role that both policy and charity play in constructing these conceptions.

References

- A Short History of SNAP (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/short-history-snap>
- Gamson, W. A., & Modigliani, A. (1989). Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach. *American Journal of Sociology*, 95(1), 1-37. doi:

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Gottlieb, R & Joshi, A (2010). *Food Justice*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Horton-Salway, M. (2010). Repertoires of ADHD in UK Newspaper media. *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine*, 15(5), 533-549. doi: 10.1177/1363459310389626

Poppendieck, J. (1998). *Sweet Charity: Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Riches, G. (2018). *Food Bank Nations*. New York, NY: Routledge.

This research project is my Honors Thesis for the Sociology Department. It is a product of the skills and material I have mastered in my education at UC Davis, and I believe that it will showcase all that I have learned and provide me with valuable experience for my academic plans. After I graduate, I intend to pursue a graduate degree, for which an Honors Thesis will prepare me with crucial technical skills and research experience. I hope to gain significant insight into the aspects of research and academia that fascinate me most and that it will guide me toward a career path that most suits my interests. I am especially interested in issues surrounding food access and I anticipate that I will learn a great deal about how this social issue have been formed and the way that they have been framed over time. With this knowledge, I hope to be able to contribute to the effort to address food insecurity in an educated manner as to not continue to perpetuate the inequality in which it is rooted.

Project Budget	
Purpose	Amount
Dedoose: \$14.95 per month for 10 months (September through June)	\$149.50