TALKING ABOUT HUNGER: MEDIATING BETWEEN PURPOSE AND PRACTICE

A CASE STUDY OF FOOD PROVISION IN ATHENS, GEORGIA

by

EMILY C. ANDERSEN

(Under the Direction of Hilda E. Kurtz)

ABSTRACT

As access to affordable and nutritious foods has become increasingly difficult for those living in poverty in the U.S., emergency food provision - specifically prepared-meal provision – has become increasingly important. Hunger and food insecurity in cities like Athens, Georgia, have left many people in need of alternative food sources to supplement their diets.

This study examines two prepared meal programs in Athens, Georgia which act as alternative sources of food for those in need – the Athens chapter of the Food Not Bombs movement and Oconee Street UMC's Our Daily Bread soup kitchen. Both of these groups are preparing and serving food to people who are food insecure. The purpose of this study is to explore the moral philosophies informing these groups' work and the ideological and structural contexts within which they operate in order to reveal the mediating entities linking each of these groups to their food programs. Doing so highlights the paradoxical similarities as well as differences between these two groups, and lends insight into debates over emergency food provision.

INDEX WORDS: Hunger, Food Insecurity, Emergency Food
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A CASE STUDY OF FOOD PROVISION IN ATHENS, GEORGIA

by

EMILY C. ANDERSEN
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Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2009
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to the staff and volunteers of Athens Food Not Bombs and Our Daily Bread who welcomed me into their world and graciously offered their time and insight. I would also like to dedicate this work to my husband, William, and to my family who helped keep me grounded and encouraged throughout this process.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my major advisor Hilda Kurtz for her tireless hours reviewing my work, her insightful edits, her thoughtful feedback and her encouragement. Thank you also to the members of my committee Nik Heynen and Steven Holloway for their feedback and guidance.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Hunger, the inability to meet basic food needs, is a problem plaguing the world. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), there are currently 850 million people suffering from hunger and malnutrition (2007). As a result, 25,000 people die a day throughout the world, with the largest proportion of these being children (FAO 2007). Many Americans perceive hunger as a problem which only exists in third-world and developing countries, but 35 million of those who are hungry and malnourished are found in the U.S. (USDA 2007). Also, 35.5 percent of U.S. households are considered food insecure in that they lack consistent and reliable access to socially acceptable means of acquiring nutritious and affordable foods (USDA 2007). Recognized as significant social problems by the general public as well as in academic literature, hunger and food security have become increasingly apparent in recent years.

1 The issue of hunger cannot be discussed and analyzed here without making reference to its relationship to poverty, as the two are closely interrelated. Hunger is one of the multiple indicators of poverty. There have been many attempts over the years to treat the symptoms of poverty, but many believe that until the root of the problem is targeted poverty will never be alleviated. Others argue that curing hunger and food insecurity will in fact end the cycle of poverty. According to the World Food Programme, “food can break the cycle of poverty” (WFP, 2007). This idea is based on the argument that when the “weak and poor [can] stop worrying about their next meal [they can] build a sustainable future” (WFP, 2007). There are many issues related to poverty that demand attention, but for the purposes of this study I will focus on the issues of hunger and food insecurity.
The discourse surrounding hunger in the U.S. has historically been focused on defining and measuring the problem and explaining why so many Americans are hungry and food insecure\(^2\). Much of this work examines the anti-hunger network in the U.S., which includes public and private programs, analyzing its effectiveness, and offering suggestions for improved solutions to the problem (Eisinger 1998; Kotz 1969; Levenstein 1993; Poppendieck 1986; 1997; 1998; Riches 1997; Shwartz- Noble 2002). This discourse has evolved as the situation has been shaped by the context within which it occurs. The discourse during the era of the Great Depression was characterized by the ‘paradox of want amid plenty’ (Levenstein 1993). As discussed below, this is a situation that is unique to American and ‘first world hunger’ (Riches 1997). During the WWII era hunger discourse seemed to take a back seat as food programs were cut back. As the effects of cut backs in federal assistance became increasingly apparent, hunger was “rediscovered” in the 1960s and the blame for the problem was placed on the federal government (Poppendieck 1997).

The rediscovery of hunger and the development of the concept of food insecurity in the nation have provoked an anti-hunger movement in the U.S. beginning in the 1960’s (Poppendieck 1998). Many organizations have formed in the U.S. over the past several decades to address hunger and food insecurity, including hunger awareness groups, food policy coalitions, anti-hunger advocacy organizations, and emergency food providers. Emergency food provision is the focus of this study; intended as temporary aid in times of crisis or emergency, in many cases emergency food provision has become a long-term source of food for those in need. Athens Food Not Bombs (AFNB) and Our Daily Bread (ODB) are two local food programs

\(^2\) While world hunger is an important and multi-faceted issue and one that has received much critical examination (Lappé et al. 1998; Young 1997), I limit the scope of my focus to hunger and responses to it in the U.S.
located in Athens, Georgia\(^3\) that provide food to people in need. While these two groups might not considered themselves “emergency food organizations”, they will be considered as such for this study in that they supplement the diets of those who lack consistent and adequate access to nutritious foods. Each of these groups prepares and distributes meals to people who are hungry in the Athens-Clarke County community\(^4\). Each has been established in response to the need for free food in Athens. At 31.3 percent in 2006, Athens, Georgia had one of the highest poverty rates in the state and even in the nation. According to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), “the ten states with the highest food insecurity rates in 2007 were Mississippi, New Mexico, Texas, Arkansas, Maine, South Carolina, Georgia, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Missouri,” with Georgia ranking 7\(^{th}\) (2009). Also, Athens-Clarke County, Georgia had the second highest poverty rate in the state between 2005 and 2007.

**Table 1.1 Food and Research Action Center** Prevalence of Household-Level Food Insecurity and Very Low Food Security by State 2005-2007 (Average)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Food Insecurity (Low or Very Low Food Security)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Georgia</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^3\) Food Not Bombs is a global movement. For the purposes of this study, Athens Food Not Bombs (AFNB) refers to the group located in Athens, Georgia.

\(^4\) “Athens, Georgia” and “Athens-Clarke County, Georgia” refer to the same geographic area.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Levels of Poverty for the Total Population</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Poverty Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisp County, Georgia</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clarke County, Georgia</strong></td>
<td><strong>28.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toombs County, Georgia</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2 Food and Research Action Center Data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2007 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates. Analysis by the Food Research and Action Center

As a result of high rates of poverty in Athens-Clarke County many people are unable to afford an adequate amount of nutritious food for themselves and their families. Food Not Bombs and Our Daily Bread are both committed to providing meals for those living in poverty who are hungry and food insecure. Through their efforts, people are able to eat who might not otherwise have the opportunity.

Recent studies of emergency food providers have considered how volunteers’ experiences in emergency feeding programs (EFP) inform their understanding of hunger, shape beliefs about social equity and reinforce stereotypes about the poor (Edlesfen and Olson 2002; Ostrow 1995; Curtis 1997). Rather than examining how EFP volunteers are impacted by their experience, this study considers how EFP volunteers represent and make meaning of their work as informed by particular moral philosophies and ideological contexts. I explore this by considering how group members represent their particular moral philosophies and ideological contexts (of political anarchy and Christian service) through the use of discourse when talking about and performing their work, how group members use the construction of scale to link their work to local and global hunger and to situate their work in the broader context of local and global anti-hunger networks.

While AFNB and ODB are materially performing the same act – feeding those who are hungry in Athens- there are significant differences between their rationales for doing this work,
as they would seem to be informed by different moral philosophies and operate within different ideological contexts. By moral philosophy, I am referring to collective beliefs about what is right and wrong, good and bad. These beliefs lead to the creation of significant social issues to which to respond. Ideological context refers to the sets of ideas or systems of thought within which movements and organizations position themselves. The ideological context frames the collective response to the social issue. Moral philosophy informs group decisions about which social issue to respond to, while ideological context is used by groups and organizations to distinguish their response from others (i.e. many organizations base their action on the belief that hunger is bad, however, any particular group’s response is unique because of the particular ideological context within which it is embedded).

AFNB is an activist organization based on radical and anarchist thought, while ODB is a religious organization based on Biblical teachings. Each of these organizations would seem to be motivated by different values and purposes, which are shaped by different beliefs, attitudes, and political and/or religious views. This study examines the way in which the moral philosophies and ideological contexts of these two organizations’ feeding programs are related to group member’s perceptions of hunger and food insecurity and the role that they are playing in the Athens community, and perhaps in the world. As discussed below, these moral philosophies and ideological contexts, as represented by group members, are conceptualized, using a critical realist approach, as the mediating entities and necessary connections between each organization and their food program (Sayer 2000).

AFNB and ODB are also embedded in broad social structures, as they are each part of a network of organizations. In addition to moral philosophies and ideological contexts, interrelationships with other groups and organizations give meaning and purpose to each of these
organizations and their food programs. This study examines each of these food programs as “the focal point of a web of participation, with its own network of suppliers, supporters, contributors, and volunteers” (Poppendieck 1998, 30). Considering these webs of participation, enables a better understanding of these groups and the relationships informing their work. Food Not Bombs is a far-reaching movement with groups located in cities throughout the world, of which AFNB is a part. In addition to being part of this global movement, AFNB is also a local group which is part of a local network of support. Our Daily Bread is also part of a local network. ODB originated in and operates locally in Athens, and this study also considers how ODB might be affiliated with and influenced by the larger movement of religious and, more specifically, Christian service. ODB can also be considered a part of a global movement or network, then, but one which is not quite so easily defined. This study examines the role that these local networks and global movements play in informing each organization’s perceptions of the problem of hunger and their own efforts to address it. While this study considers how influential AFNB and ODB’s global affiliations might be, analysis suggests that their local networks have a much more significant and immediate impact on their work.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the similarities and differences between ODB and AFNB. I argue that this is necessary in order to gain a better understanding and appreciation for each of these organizations and their work feeding those who are hungry. By exposing their similarities, I attempt to prove that OBD and AFNB are each relevant responses to hunger. I suggest that perhaps there are universal strategies employed by different prepared meal programs to legitimate and validate their work. While it is useful to draw out the similarities between these types of programs, it is also necessary to examine the differences between them. Exposing the differences between ODB and AFNB lends insight into their unique approaches to responding to
hunger. These types of programs have been lumped into the same category by the state in anti-hunger networks as well as by scholars in academic literature. I suggest that this is a tactic used in order to contain and control the anti-hunger movement (Piven and Cloward 1977). According to the NEGA Food Bank’s Partner Agency List, AFNB and ODB are two of Athens’ local “soup kitchens”. ODB embraces this classification, while AFNB resists the labels of charity and soup kitchen. However, in order to perform their work AFNB must concede to this classification. By so doing, they are able to enjoy the benefits of a “soup kitchen”: membership with the food bank provides access to bulk food, community service status provides a stream of volunteers from the community and the university, and their meal service attracts clients/guests. In a sense, AFNB does what soup kitchens do, but they are in fact very different from a traditional soup kitchen.

In this paper, I discuss analysis of the paradoxical similarities as well as differences between the motivations and goals of these two organizations in feeding the hungry, as they are informed by particular moral philosophies and ideological contexts. I also explore factors such as the scope of each organization’s local and global networks and the scale of their effort in relation to the scale of the problem of hunger that may be informing the organizational outlook and actions of each of these groups. The scope of networks considers the reach of the organizations’ local effort and involvement as well as their place in a global movement. The question of scale explores how these organizations’ local efforts are being informed and shaped by their perceptions of the local and global problem of hunger. In considering the role of scale, it is important to recognize that scale is being produced and utilized by social actors. As Katherine Jones points out,

We should think of scale as a network, or a strategy linking local struggles to regional, national, or global events. In making these scale jumps or building these networks, local
groups practice politics by actively reshaping the discourses within which their struggles are constituted (1997, 26).

Jones suggests that scales are not “areal units but . . . networks of interaction” (1997, 26).

It is important to consider scale, not as a material or naturally occurring boundary, but rather a construct which is actively and strategically produced and represented by social actors (Jones 1997; Herod 2002; Kurtz 2002).

**Organization of the Thesis**

Chapter Two details the cases under investigation and provides the bases for the study. The issue of hunger and responses to it in the U.S. are highlighted as well as criticisms and defenses of the emergency food network. The literature I have drawn from is focused on the debate over private food assistance, and more specifically emergency food provision. The history and operational details of each organization are presented to provide an understanding of how these groups originated and have come to be what they are today. It is important to not generalize them as a “soup kitchen”, but to understand and appreciate each of them for the unique organization that they are and the contributions they have for society. Chapter Two concludes by arguing the relevance of linking the histories of these organizations to this study.

Chapter Three presents the research design and methodology for the study. I first present the questions that have guided the research. I go on to suggest the significance of studying organizations, arguing that they are important social phenomena. Drawing on Andrew Sayer’s idea of critical realism, the organizations have been studied with regard to the relationship between the group’s ideological context and moral philosophies and the practice of feeding those who are hungry. Within this framework, it is also necessary to consider the structural and social context within which the organization is operating, i.e. the local networks and global movements.
of which it is a part. The methodology chapter goes on to lay out the process of data collection and data analysis. In this study, I used participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and archival compilation to collect textual data. Data collection and analysis have been guided by a critical discourse analysis framework (Fairclough 2005). The use of critical discourse analysis is used to understand how group members frame their work to produce organizational meaning and purpose. More specifically, this study employed an interpretive structuralist approach by considering the individual texts in relation to the broader social context (Philips and Hardy 2002).

Chapter Four presents the analysis and findings of the study. I first argue that a hunger discourse is necessary to these groups in creating and reinforcing purpose and meaning for their existence. It is through the use of a hunger discourse that group members legitimize and valorize their work. I suggest that this hunger discourse is informed by the moral philosophy that hunger is bad and must be fought. In addition to informing a hunger discourse, this moral philosophy also emphasizes the importance of nutrition, waste recovery, justice, and local awareness. Next, I suggest the important role that the scope of the local network and global movements as well as the scale of the organizations’ efforts in relation to a global problem play in the operation of these organizations and in the perceptions of their members. It is the part that they are playing in the local community and a global movement that motivate and encourage their work; and it is their perceptions of a local and global problem of hunger that inform their local effort. I then draw out the distinction between these two groups as is evident through their discourse and work and how these empirical differences are related to differences in the ideological contexts between these groups.
Chapter Five concludes this study by summarizing and discussing the findings, presenting the implications of the work and suggesting further research possibilities for studying emergency food provision and local anti-hunger initiatives.
CHAPTER 2
BACKGROUND

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the bases for this study by highlighting the issue of hunger and responses to it in the U.S. as well as criticisms and defenses of the emergency food network. The history and operational details of each organization are also presented to provide an understanding of how these groups originated and have come to be what they are today.

Hunger and Emergency Food in the U.S.

It can be difficult to pinpoint the exact cause of a rise in hunger and food insecurity in the U.S. However, it can be clearly linked to the situation of the country’s economy and government policies concerning public assistance. Many would argue that unemployment and inadequate public assistance are two of the primary issues related to hunger and food insecurity in the U.S. Relatively high unemployment rates and the occurrence of recessions lend to higher dependence on public and private assistance. The unemployment rate in the United States “averaged 4.6 percent in the 1968-1973 period and 7.2 percent in the 1980-1989 period” (Poppendieck 1998, 55). For the U.S. population over 16 the unemployment rate has been 6.9 percent in 2005, 6.4 percent in 2006, 6.3 percent in 2007, and 7.2 percent in 2008 (U.S. Census Bureau; CIA World Factbook 2009). And the unemployed are less and less likely to receive compensation for their job loss “in good times and in bad” (Poppendieck 1998, 56). The United States has experienced a recession in the early 1980s, the early nineties, and the nation is currently once again in a state of recession. However, whether the country is in a recession or not, there will be people with no or
minimal income who need assistance, and “food is often the most flexible item in the family budget, the place where you can economize, and the easiest kind of help to get” (Poppendieck 1998, 57). In addition to job loss, the government has made policy changes which affect citizen’s access to assistance, increasing their dependence on private food programs. The Reagan administration made severe cuts in programs supporting the poor with the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981. The administration went on to urge American citizens to increase their voluntary participation to make up for where the government left off and facilitated this shift through the establishment of private sector initiatives. With the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, the Clinton administration reformed the country’s welfare program. The Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) welfare program was replaced by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in 1996. The reform in the welfare program was intended to solve the problem of welfare dependency. TANF is intended to facilitate the movement off of welfare and into the labor force (IRP 2007). Reformation of the welfare program resulted in a decrease in the number of people receiving aid, “but there has been no apparent reduction in the national poverty rate” (IRP 2007). As the hunger situation in the U.S. has evolved throughout history, so too has the discourse which produces and represents it.

The discourse surrounding hunger in the U.S. has evolved as the hunger situation has been shaped by the context within which it occurs. The discourse during the era of the Great Depression was characterized by the ‘paradox of want amid plenty’ (Poppendieck 1997; Levenstein 1993). This situation in which hunger and poverty exist in such wealthy and developed countries is one that seems to be unique to American and ‘first world hunger’ (Riches 1997). The causes of hunger are different in this country than in others. It is not war and famine that are causing hunger; we have more than enough food. Instead it is something else. Many have
suggested that is misallocation and misdistribution. Americans are throwing away food and sending food to other countries, while our own citizens are going hungry. Programs were implemented during this era to redistribute agricultural surpluses to people who were hungry. “The practice of using food assistance to dispose of farm surpluses was firmly established and remained the dominant policy for 30 years, ensuring that food programmes would be administered with a priority on benefits to agricultural producers” (Poppendieck 1985; 1997). These programs were cut back during WWII (Poppendieck 1986), and later criticized for not providing adequate assistance. During the WWII era hunger discourse seemed to take a back seat as food programs were cut back. As the effects of cut backs in federal assistance became increasingly apparent, hunger was “rediscovered” in the 1960s and the blame for the problem was placed on the federal government (Poppendieck 1997). Many argued that something must be wrong with federal food assistance programs if millions of Americans were still hungry. “In keeping with the rights consciousness of the era, hunger was portrayed as a failure of the federal government to protect the rights of citizens to due process and equal access” (Poppendieck 1997). Thus, food assistance was reformed and expanded. Peter Eisinger along with others, suggests that federal food assistance is still inadequate because eligibility is too restricted, the stigma is too much for some to bear, and that these programs require more funding (1998). Eisinger argues that hunger is not a complex social problem like crime or drug abuse and should not be difficult to solve. It seems as though the solution to hunger is a fairly simple one: “regular access to sufficient food” (Eisinger 1998, 3) and this is where public food assistance falls short and private programs attempt to fill in the gaps. As Eisinger points out, the groups making up the private and volunteer sector of the anti-hunger network have effectively coordinated their efforts. However, Eisinger goes on to argue that the volunteer sector “cannot compensate for downward
fluctuations in federal food assistance, and it cannot offer consistent help in every season” (1998, 8). Nonetheless,

the private sector effort to feed the hungry has widespread legitimacy in the United States, and it successfully mobilizes the energies of a vast number of ordinary people . . . [the] solutions to food insecurity rest finally on tapping these virtues and creating a stronger partnership between private and public food programs (Eisinger 1998, 8).

In addition to suggesting a tighter collaboration between public and private efforts, more recent work has begun to explore alternative solutions to hunger such as sustainable local food networks, community and urban gardens and community supported agriculture (Koc et al. 2000).

Recent studies which have sought to explain the existence to hunger and offer solutions have focused on public and private responses to hunger (Poppendieck 1998; Eisinger 1998). They have argued for improvements in social provision; that the government would fulfill its obligation to ensure that its people are not hungry or food insecure. Instead of improving welfare, the government has relied on private programs to fill in the gaps. Studies have considered how private programs, namely religious congregations and service clubs, have become an increasingly prevalent and acceptable response to hunger in this country. However, these studies have failed to consider the role that less traditional private programs play in the response to hunger, such as Athens Food Not Bombs. Anti-hunger activity in the U.S. has been characterized as a “national pastime” (Poppendieck 1997), but this notion seems to exclude less traditional, and seemingly anti-American (or at least anti-capitalist) anti-hunger activities. I have included Athens Food Not Bombs in this analysis as these types of anti-hunger activities have been largely ignored and left out of comprehensive analyses of the American anti-hunger network yet play a significant role in the fight against hunger.
As a reaction to the prevalence of hunger and food insecurity, many organizations such as emergency food assistance, hunger awareness groups, food policy coalitions, and anti-hunger advocacy organizations, have been established and grown over the past several decades (Laraia et al. 2003). These organizations vary in their approach to hunger and include food banks and soup kitchens, nutrition and food security education programs, community development initiatives, and policy advocacy and development. Food banks, food pantries and soup kitchens distribute food through emergency food networks. These organizations glean and retrieve surplus and donated foods. Hunger awareness groups, such as nutrition and food security education programs take measures to educate the public on the causes and solutions for hunger and food insecurity. Food policy coalitions inform the development and implementation of policies related to hunger, nutrition, and food insecurity and act locally to promote and ensure community food security. Anti-hunger advocacy organizations are more of an all-encompassing approach, focusing on food distribution and policy initiatives at the local, state, and federal levels. Of the many approaches to ending hunger and food insecurity, emergency food provision has received critical attention, yet continues to be an integral part of the anti-hunger movement.

A central theme in the literature on emergency food provision is whether or not these types of efforts are really doing anything of worth or significance when it comes to combating hunger. Emergency food provision has been criticized for its lack of ability to instill structural or functional change. According to Janet Poppendieck, emergency food is considered a short-term, quick fix to the problem of hunger and does not ensure food security. While the efforts of the staff and volunteers of emergency food organizations (EFOs) have been applauded, it has been argued that EFOs are a “giant band-aid” and not a permanent solution to hunger or food insecurity (Poppendieck 1998). Poppendieck’s work argues for an end to hunger through
improvements in basic social provision and for the emergency food system to truly be an “emergency” source of food. In addition to the instability and insufficiency of emergency food, these programs have also been criticized for serving as an outlet for corporation’s non-saleable foodstuffs (Tarasuk and Eakin 2003) and their lack of global ties and initiatives (Elswick et al. 2003; Johnston and Baker 2005).

Tarasuk and Eakin for example, criticize emergency food provision by demonstrating that “the structure and function of food banks operate to facilitate the distribution of foods not marketed through the retail system” (2003, 178). Like Poppendieck, they believe that emergency food provision is only enabling the persistence of poverty, hunger and food insecurity and does nothing in the way of structural change or improvement. In this critique, food banks and, in effect, soup kitchens are important as they use foodstuffs that would otherwise go to waste, but they are not only serving the poor, they are also serving the corporations who are in need of an outlet for their non-saleable foodstuffs. This is an important debate to explore as soup kitchens are challenged to defend their work and existence against this growing uneasiness and discontent towards their efforts.

Another critique of emergency food provision concerns its local-ness. Johnston and Baker (2005) call for community food security projects to expand their scope and reach and argue that food politics must be multi-scaled in order to be effective. According to Elswick et al., “increased connections between the food security movement in the U.S. with partner entities across the globe can be beneficial” (2003, 1). What these connections look like and how they are significant to local emergency food provision is important to consider. However, investigating organizations that lack these global connections can provide insight into alternatives to enrich local efforts and ways that locally-focused initiatives can be productive and meaningful.
“Communities across the globe are putting an enormous amount of energy into efforts to protect and build” food security (Elswick et al. 2003). A global and unified response to hunger and food insecurity may be ideal, but not necessary. Combating hunger is a process that takes place at multiple levels and scales and for multiple reasons. The geography of emergency food provision is important to consider as the scale of an organization’s operation and network can affect the way in which they view and address hunger.

In response to this criticism of emergency food provision, I suggest that rather than awaiting some change in the system these groups are taking immediate action and do in fact have a significant impact on hunger in their communities. Despite the debate over the effectiveness of emergency food provision, it continues to be an important resource for those who are hungry and food insecure and a significant outlet for its members. I argue that emergency food organizations (EFOs) continue to operate amid these criticisms because they are driven to feed the hungry for reasons other than changing the existing structure of the food system or eliminating food insecurity. It is possible that the underlying purposes of some EFOs, and these two prepared meal programs in particular, are related to other issues or charitable campaigns (Lichterman 2006), such as religiously informed service or politically informed protest. In order to reveal these underlying purposes of AFNB and ODB, this study examines the moral philosophies and ideological contexts informing AFNB and ODB’s work providing food to those who are hungry. In addition to examining the moral philosophies and ideological contexts of AFNB and ODB as evidence of their purposes, I also consider the role of organizational networks and organizational representations of scale.

Through the cases of AFNB and ODB, I explore how organizational networks inform organizational views on hunger, food insecurity, and emergency food provision. This study
investigates how these groups perceive and represent their role in responding to the local need in Athens and how they perceive and represent their place in a putative global network of emergency food provision. These networks, as represented at the local and global scales, may inform each organization’s perceptions of and responses to the problem of hunger; and I explore how this might be related to the collective values, beliefs and perceptions of the members of the organizations. While it is important to “consider all scales as mutually implicated in any conflict” (Jones 1997, 26), Herod and Wright suggest that “it is the global and the local which . . . are most usually thought of in dualistic terms” (2002, 9). I recognize that other scales, such as the national and regional, are important to consider, but for the purposes of this analysis have chosen to focus on production and representation of the local and global scales. I discuss further insights from the literature on the politics of scale directly in relation to my analysis and findings in Chapter Four.

The Cases

This study explores the group members’ perspectives on hunger and food insecurity of two different anti-hunger organizations, which are preparing and serving free meals, as well as their efforts to combat the problem of hunger at a local scale. Following Laraia et al.’s approach to studying anti-hunger advocacy organizations using a multiple case study design, this study will outline “important organizational characteristics” that are relevant to the existence and purpose of these types of organizations (2003, 756). This project identifies and investigates important organizational characteristics of each organization as collectively perceived and represented by its staff and volunteers. Laraia et al. also highlight the importance of the histories of anti-hunger advocacy organizations. Historical research will also be an important approach to the study of AFNB and ODB as exposing the histories of the two organizations will serve to
situate them in a broader context. Documents and literature produced by and about these organizations, such as books, newspapers, and websites, have served to provide the historical contexts.

According to the Food Bank of North East Georgia’s Partner Agency list, AFNB and ODB are two of Athens’ local “soup kitchens” (FBNEGA 2007). Based on radical and anarchist teachings, AFNB’s work is guided by ideas of mutual aid, direct action, solidarity, and non-violent protest. AFNB operates out of a progressive resource center, Common Ground, and shares its meals in a public square in downtown Athens. Based on Biblical teachings, ODB’s work is informed by ideas of religious charity, Christian Service, and a duty to help the needy. Sponsored by Athens Urban Ministry and hosted by Oconee Street United Methodist Church, ODB cooks and serves its meals in the lower level of the Methodist church. Over the course of this research, I participated in each of these food programs which allowed me to collect first-hand data on the daily operations of each.

My positionality affected my entry into these two organizations in different ways. As Sarah Moser points out, “we belong to various social categories that position us differently within power structures” (Moser 1998, 385). As a Christian with experience volunteering in various ministries, including soup kitchens, I expected my entry into ODB to be rather uncomplicated. On the other hand, I had some reservations about my entry into AFNB. I had no experience with and little knowledge of the radical community in Athens and was less aware of what to expect at AFNB than at ODB. While both organizations gladly welcomed me to volunteer with them, I actually felt as though I fit in more with the members of AFNB. There could be a few reasons why this was the case. First, I believe that the age of group members may have played a role in this. The majority of ODB volunteers are older and retired. My perception
was that they were set in their ways and perhaps a bit leery of outsiders investigating (or interfering with) their work. I did not get this impression from the director of the soup kitchen or the pastor of OSUMC, but mainly from the volunteers of the different churches who came in to cook the meals. AFNB volunteers, on the other hand, are younger and closer to me in age than members of ODB. Several of the members are students, as I am, and a few are actually in my department at the university. AFNB’s members were seemingly more open to the presence of outsiders than members of ODB. This might be related to ODB’s desire to protect their guests, while AFNB welcomes publicity and exposure in order to further its cause. However, I should mention that I did not seem to pose a threat to either of these organizations, while there are certain individuals who might. For example, AFNB members were a bit uneasy and more guarded than usual when a newspaper reporter came to question them during the preparation of a meal (I gathered based on group members comments that a reporter had previously misrepresented them in a previous article).

As a result of AFNB members being closer to me in age than members of ODB, I felt more comfortable interacting with and relating to them. In addition to the age of members, the structure and implementation of rules at each organization influenced my perception and behavior. AFNB is more laid back and less-structured, while ODB seemed to be a more formalized operation. AFNB has few rules that are not strictly enforced - there is no appointed leader or authority figure. Groups members work together to make sure that a healthy vegetarian meal gets prepared and downtown for sharing at a decent hour. ODB, on the other hand, does have a formal leader – the director of the kitchen. Her job is partly to make sure that the rules of the kitchen are enforced and that order is maintained. With such a large number of guests (about 100 per meal) and a group of community service workers who do the cleaning, it seems
necessary to have such rules in order for everything to run smoothly. As a result my participation at ODB was not without expectations – I was expected to be there at a certain time and perform certain duties in a particular way. I believe that the lack of these type of expectations at AFNB caused me to feel more comfortable and at ease while volunteering. Overall, I enjoyed my time participating with both groups and greatly appreciate their cooperation with this study.

Case 1: Athens Food Not Bombs

Food Not Bombs is a nonviolent all-volunteer network that provides free, hot vegetarian meals and political support to low income people in hundreds of communities in the Americas, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Australia (FNB 2007).

The Food Not Bombs (FNB) movement began in 1980 in Cambridge, Massachusetts as the result of an anti-nuclear protest. This “revolutionary grassroots movement” currently has hundred of chapters operating throughout the world (FNB 2007). FNB is “devoted to developing positive personal, political and economic alternatives” (2007) to hunger and the like throughout the world and believes in:

Taking nonviolent direct action to create a world free from domination, coercion and violence. [They] organize based on the principle that food is a right, not a privilege (FNB 2007).

Historically, responding to hunger has not been their only cause, but according to this statement is the foundation for their activism. Food Not Bombs non-violently protests the culture of violence and poverty by sharing vegetarian meals with those who are hungry. FNB views poverty and hunger as manifestations of this violence which they are protesting.
Of the many groups located throughout the U.S. and worldwide, there are currently four Food Not Bombs groups located in Georgia, including the Athens group (AFNB). AFNB has been in operation for about 12 years. The Athens group operates with the help of Common Ground, a non-profit organization that provides volunteers and organizational assistance. AFNB serves dinner on Mondays and Wednesdays and lunch on Saturdays in College Square – feeding an average of 20 people per meal. Food and other resources are provided by the Foodbank of North East Georgia and community donations from grocery stores, restaurants, and local farms and gardens.

All members of the organization are volunteers and, as an anarchist organization, there are no formal leaders. Group members work together to collect, prepare, and distribute the food. On Monday and Wednesday evenings group members gather at Common Ground to prepare the meal at five o’clock. The bulk of the food used for the meal has been picked up that day from the food bank. I pick up the food on Mondays and another group member picks it up on Wednesdays. Other group members bring smaller batches of miscellaneous items from places like the Daily Co-op Grocery Store.

The first members to arrive at the Common Ground kitchen usually start preparing the food – rinsing and cutting fruits and veggies – and making a plan for the meal. As more people arrive, they offer their ideas for the meal. The meal tends to consist of a vegetable stir-fry or soup – they try to include pasta or rice if it is available – a potato dish, a salad of greens or fruit, and bread. Occasionally they prepare something really different, like French toast with flax seeds or apple bake. It takes about two hours to prepare the meal and load everything up in the car. There is no official person in charge, but everyone works well together to make the meal and transport everything to the distribution location - College Square in downtown Athens.
For each meal, the volunteers pack up all the plates and utensils in a big blue bin (an extra bin is also brought for the dirty dishes at the end of the meal), a water urn, a folding table, the “Food Not Bombs” table cloth, and the meal. Usually one of the members has a car that everything is loaded into, but many of the group members ride bicycles so there have been occasions where everything was carted downtown in a wagon. The group heads to College Square in downtown Athens and shares the meal around seven o’clock. The table and food are set up right outside of an ice-cream shop and a hamburger joint. The ice-cream shop provides the drinking water and will occasionally donate an ice-cream cake. There is almost always a group of people already out and waiting for the meal. People sit on pine straw islands under trees and at patio tables while they eat and socialize. During the meal there is a lot of conversation and interacting – old friends run into each other and new people meet each other. It is a very friendly atmosphere – most new-comers are made to feel very welcomed unless they choose not to socialize. The meal is shared for about an hour and a half or so. We try to wait until all the food is gone, but sometimes there are just not enough mouths for the amount of food that has been prepared. On average there are about twenty people eating the meal, some days there are over thirty and there have been days of less than five. Once the meal is complete, everything is packed into the car and sent back to Common Ground.

Usually, a new group of volunteers has shown up at the meal and offered to do the cleaning duty back at Common Ground. There continues to be friendly conversation while cleaning. Sometimes music is played to keep the energy high. The dishes and pots are all washed, dried and put away. The counters are wiped and floors are swept and mopped. Any extra food is put away and saved for the next meal. No one individual delegates these tasks or
orchestrates the evening from beginning to end, but all work together to make sure that everything gets done.

*Case 2: Our Daily Bread*

Our Daily Bread is an Athens area soup kitchen which has been operating since 1989 out of the Athens Urban Ministry (Caine 2005). ODB came together based on the idea that there needed to be a focus on one issue – in this case it was food. They wanted to do one thing and do it well, rather than trying to offer several different services half-heartedly. The soup kitchen is headed up by the Oconee Street United Methodist Church (OSUMC), but employs the help of 33 churches and 14 business and civic groups in the Athens community. As noted in a local newspaper article -

Our Daily Bread operates only because of the faithfulness of volunteers from close to 40 different religious, business and civic organizations who give not only much needed financial support, for [they] receive no government funding, but also give of themselves, purchasing, preparing and serving food, now seven days a week, so that no one need go hungry in Athens (Caine 2005).

Our Daily Bread does not discriminate and serves food to anyone and everyone. Though motivated by Christian duty, they make it a point to not preach before or after they serve the meal. They believe that “service is the best sermon” (Caine 2005). Our Daily Bread Serves lunch and breakfast Monday through Friday, a sack lunch on Saturday, and a sack dinner on Sunday. They feed an average of 125 people a day out of the OSUMC kitchen. Their food and other resources are provided by the Foodbank of North East Georgia and donations from the community and local farms and gardens.
Although Our Daily Bread operates out of the kitchen at Oconee Street United Methodist, the two are no more affiliated than ODB and any other church in the community. I was told that the church is just leasing out the space. However, the kitchen director is a member of Oconee Street UMC and the previous director was also the part-time pastor of the church. According to the kitchen director, Oconee Street UMC was about to go under and no other church would house the kitchen, so the Action Ministries board offered the church support if they would take on the kitchen. The church agreed and received a multi-thousand dollar renovation. The kitchen was formed by Action Ministries when its board realized that there needed to be an alliance of churches, regardless of denomination. Different churches had food programs, but there was a need for a centralized soup kitchen. ODB came together because of the need for a centralized location for people to receive a meal. As the kitchen director stated, “There was a need, so they met it”. ODB was not intended as a social service, but as a place where people could come eat a prepared meal without discrimination - there is no test or proof needed to get to eat. The director and volunteers do refer guests to the homeless shelter or other services that they might be in need of, such as legal help, counseling, a place to get clothes, a place to get clean, rehabilitation services, etc. There are also phone numbers and addresses of these places posted on the bulletin board in the kitchen for guest to access.

Each morning of the work week, the ODB director and her community service workers show up at the Oconee Street United Methodist Church kitchen at eight o’clock to prepare a hot breakfast. Some days they prepare a traditional breakfast meal of eggs and pancakes, while other days they use leftovers from lunch the day before and there is always coffee. Breakfast is served to a small group of people (about ten on average) from nine until ten o’clock. Then the kitchen

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5 Actions Ministries is a faith-based nonprofit organization which oversees and provides ministries in North Georgia (Action Ministries 2009).
and dining room are cleaned and prepared for lunch. The volunteer group arrives at the kitchen at ten to start preparing lunch.

The volunteer group brings the food that they use to prepare the meal. Sometimes the groups bring donated foods, but have usually bought their suppliers in bulk on their organization’s budget. A different group prepares the meal each day of the month. The majority of the groups are church groups, but a few others are groups from other community and civic organizations. Each group is made up of about five to seven adults. They have brought all of the food to prepare the meal – ODB provides the facility and all of the pots, pans, dishes, utensils and dessert. Each group prepares a different meal and records it in the log along with the number of meals served. They also record the names of each of the volunteers. Some of the different meals are chicken sandwiches, goulash, and sloppy joes. The entrees are accompanied by a green veggie or salad, a fruit and bread. Dessert is also served, which has been donated to ODB from the food bank or a grocery store. Lunch is served at twelve noon. A blessing is usually prayed over the meal by one of the volunteers or the ODB kitchen director. The kitchen guests have gathered outside the dining room and wait with a number in hand which has been given to them by the kitchen director. About 100 meals are served each day.

Community service workers and other volunteers also help the lunch program run smoothly – one person serves deserts, two run the dish washer, and two help clean the seats and tables. At 1:30 the volunteers and community service workers are allowed to partake in the meal. Also, guests are allowed to get seconds if there is food still available. During the mealtime, there is usually some service being offered in the adjoined building, such as legal advice or checkups with nurses. ODB also serves as somewhat of a resource center – guests are able to get phone numbers, addresses, and details of other services, such as shelters and laundry access, offered in
the community. Many of the guests know one another and use this mealtime as an opportunity to socialize. Sometimes the volunteers also socialize with the guests. The guests usually have cleared out of the dining room by 1:45. On their way out, guests are occasionally offered produce or bread that has been donated to ODB. The volunteer cooks pack up their stuff and leave, while the community service workers put away leftovers, wash dishes, wipe off counters, tables and chairs, sweep, mop, and take out the trash. The recyclable items are separated out from the trash and set aside for pick up. The entire process is very structured and happens about the same way every day. Clean-up is usually complete by 2:15 or so. Meals are also served on the weekends in the form of sack lunches. Sack lunches are prepared on Saturdays and Sundays, usually by church youth groups, and passed out from the ODB kitchen.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has presented a brief history of hunger and emergency food criticism in the U.S., and specifically the histories of AFNB and ODB. By exploring the histories and daily operation of these two organizations, we can begin to see where and how difference and similarities between these two organizations’ approaches to feeding people emerge.

The next chapter presents the research design and methodology for this study, including the literature I have drawn from to form the theoretical framework for this study.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Athens Food Not Bombs and Our Daily bread are both feeding those who are hungry in Athens, Georgia. They are materially performing the same task, but there is much more to the existence and mission of these organizations than their goal to provide food for hungry people in the community. AFND and ODB are two examples of how anti-hunger organizations, and specifically prepared meal programs, can organize and operate based on a wide range of philosophies and ideologies. As I explore the moral philosophies and ideological contexts of these two organizations, four main questions will be driving the study:

1) How do these two organizations link the practice of feeding people locally in Athens, GA to the problems of hunger and food insecurity in their community and worldwide?

2) How does the scope of networks within which each organization is embedded inform their perceptions and approaches to the issues of hunger and food insecurity?

3) How do the moral philosophies of political anarchy and Christian service inform organizational beliefs, perceptions, and actions?

4) How do the ideological contexts of political anarchy and Christian service inform organizational beliefs, perceptions, and actions?
The questions guiding this research are structured in a way to draw on three mediating entities, which are significant to the construction and representation of organizational reality and beliefs. The first question considers the scale of these organizations’ efforts and perceptions by asking how group members are linking their work to local and global hunger. The second question explores organizational interrelationships and scope by asking what roles the local and global networks play. And the third and fourth questions inquire about moral philosophies and ideological contexts by asking in what way we see these informing group values as represented through talk and action. In order to answer these questions, I employ the methods of a critical realist understanding of organizational studies and discourse analysis (Del Casino et al. 2000; Fairclough 2005; Mumby and Stohl 1996; Sayer 2000).

Research Design

I have focused on organizations for this study as they are social phenomena which are socially constructed. As such, organizations are important objects of study in that they are “key social sites for the production of knowledge and meaning” (Del Casino et al. 2000, 529). According to Mumby and Stohl, “organization members engage in the construction of a complex and diverse system of meanings” (1996, 58). Thus, as Fairclough also points out, it is important to explore the conceptions of those who act within the organization (2005). While meaning is produced within an organization (among its members), it is also produced between the organization and the structures and contexts to which it is related. From a critical realist standpoint, organizations are viewed as products of “the interaction of mechanisms and structures” (Del Casino et al. 2000, 529). The organization is a key source of knowledge and meaning production as it is interrelated with other structures. Thus, it is through the negotiation
of these interactions and relationships that meaning is produced and member’s perceptions are formed.

This study seeks to link each of these organizations to the feeding of those who are hungry by conceptualizing the moral philosophies and ideological contexts which inform organizational practice as mediating entities in a critical realist understanding of causality. As articulated by Andrew Sayer (2000), there are necessary connections between objects and events - in the case of this study, between free food providers and the feeding of people who are hungry. But what is it, empirically, that links these organizations to the feeding of people who are hungry? In a critical realist view, “mediating entities [and causal mechanisms] are necessary to account” for this relationship (Fairclough 2005, 922).

Critical realism aims “at explaining social processes and events in terms of the causal powers of both structures and human agency and the contingency of their effects” (Fairclough 2005, 923). The process or event of feeding those who are hungry can be explained by the causal powers of these organizations, their members, and mediating entities including the ideological contexts and moral philosophies in which they are grounded. This study examines organizational representations of hunger, food insecurity and free food provision as the causal mechanisms for two very different organizations in order to tease out the effects of moral philosophies and ideological contexts as the mediating entities. While it is important to explore the causal mechanisms of an event or phenomena, we must also understand that the causal mechanism does not dictate the outcome of the event independent of contextual factors. In examining the causal forces and mediating entities which are informing AFNB and ODB, this study also examines the structural contexts within which these two organizations are situated.
Organizations are considered, from a critical realist perspective, to be “object- or event-producing entities whose actors are embedded in wider social, economic, and political structures and mechanisms” (Del Casino et al. 2000, 526). In studying organizations, then, it is necessary to consider the contextual setting in which the organization is embedded. AFNB and ODB are each organizations which are operating within the wider structures of local and global anti-hunger movements and ideological contexts of Christian service and political anarchy. I argue that these each represent a context which is informing their food programs. How these wider structures and ideological contexts are informing the perceptions and actions of each organization is a central theme in this study.

In studying the contextual settings within which these organizations are embedded I will pay particular attention to organizational representations of scope and scale. The scope and scale of the organizations’ efforts and networks is important to consider, as they are embedded in local networks and global movements. AFNB and ODB are each part of a global movement, but also part of a local network of community organizations. Through the cases of AFNB and ODB we can explore the role of organizational networks in shaping these organizations’ perceptions of hunger, food insecurity, and free food and how their position in local networks might compare to their role in the global movement. The scale of the organization’s action and perceptions are also necessary to consider, as local action is informed by local and global awareness. In the case of this study, both organizations are responding to the local need in Athens, with an awareness of the presence of hunger both locally and globally. The representation of hunger at differing scales may play an important role in informing each organization’s perception of the problem of hunger as well as the effectiveness of their efforts. As Born & Purcell suggest, “scales are strategies pursued by social actors with a particular agenda” (2006). While I suggest that AFNB and ODB
group members favor the local scale, it should not be assumed that the local is inherently good (Born & Purcell, 2006). It is important to remember that scales are socially constructed; and it cannot be assumed that there is anything inherent about any scale be it local or global. The study of these organizations explores how the scope and scale of each group is related to their values, beliefs and perceptions.

This study examines the work of each of these organizations as the product of causal mechanisms of hunger and food insecurity and mediating entities of Christian service and political anarchy. These organizations are conceptualized as actors embedded in wider structures and mechanisms – local networks and religious and political anti-hunger movements. Each organization has been investigated through members’ representations of organizational beliefs and practices (Figure 3.1).
Figure 3.1 Critical realist understanding of causality as related to the social processes of AFNB and ODB’s feeding programs
Methodology

Data Collection

This study explores the organizational views of Athens Food Not Bombs and Our Daily Bread on hunger and food insecurity as well as their perspectives on (emergency) food provision as represented by organizational materials, conversations with members, and organizational practices as related to the feeding of people who are hungry. Through participant observation, archival research, and semi-structure interviews, I have investigated and analyzed these texts in order to understand the ways in which moral philosophies and ideological contexts inform and motivate each of these organizations’ work.

Data were collected from both cases simultaneously. Data collection took place over a four month time period – two months were spent participating as a group volunteer and collecting archival data while the other two months were spent conducting more intense participant observation and interviews. The majority of interviews were set up outside of site visits – five were conducted on-site due to the opportunity for an interview arising. Observation of organization activities was conducted at least two times per week for each organization and sometimes more for ODB as there were more meals being served throughout the week. A formal protocol was not developed to guide field observation, but particular aspects of the environment, activities, and member interactions were paid particular attention such as conversations between volunteers while cooking and interactions between volunteers and guests during the distribution of the food. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was received from the University of Georgia IRB.

The main data-gathering technique for this study is participant observation, supplemented with interviews and review of archival documents. Participant observation is a useful tool for
data collection as it allows the researcher to observe the social phenomenon that is taking place, as well as participate as one of the members of the group. A participant observer “decides where to go, what to look at, what to ask and say, so as to experience fully another way of life and its concerns” (Emerson et al. 1995, 17). Immersion in the activities and experiences of those being studied, as opposed to detached observations, has provided a better understanding of the events taking place and a more holistic understanding of the object under study (Emmerson et al. 1995). Through site visits (attending and participating in food pick-up, preparation and distribution), I have had the opportunity to observe and experience the social relations within each of these organizations. I have been exposed to the dynamics of relationships within each organization which has provided insight into how the organization functions as a whole. I observed casual conversations between organizational members and engaged in many of these conversations. Even seemingly mundane conversations serve as rich sources of data, providing insight into where these members have come from, why they have chosen to be a part of this organization, and how they have been influenced by their participation in the organization. This setting also provided the opportunity for informal, open-ended interviews. I have been attentive to how group members are producing meaning and what is driving their work by observing how they act and what they say while they are preparing and distributing food to those who are hungry. After each visit to the observation site, I typed up a detailed description of the people, objects, places, events, activities, and conversations. In addition to describing, I have also reflected on the observations and experiences, noting ideas, strategies, and patterns that emerge. These fieldnotes have served as an important source for data analysis.
During the preparation of the meal today, there was talk about politics: Voting locally vs. voting nationally. Sean argues that it makes more sense to vote locally because we can be more involved in our local governments and we are more directly affected by them. Through town hall meetings and the like we have the opportunity to directly influence our local government. Reflecting on this conversation, I realize that this group believes that many things “make more sense” at the local level, not just voting, but also producing, recovering and sharing food.

Figure 3.2 Excerpt from AFNB Field Notes, 28 July 2008

In a more formal setting for data collection, I conducted semi-structured interviews with individual members (both volunteers and staff members) of the organizations. Two interview guides were constructed – one for AFNB and the other for ODB. While the nature of the questions are the same, they vary slightly in regards to the foundational beliefs of each of the organizations. Interview questions are aimed at exploring the lived experiences and daily activities as they pertain to the feeding of those who are hungry (see appendix A). The interviews were taped and transcribed. The interviews were conducted in one of two settings, either a local coffee shop or on the premises of each organization. I attempted to set a casual and comfortable mood in order to facilitate productive question and answer dialogue by representing myself as a student conducting academic research and expressing my concern with hunger and food insecurity and my interest in how their particular organization views and addresses these issues. My involvement as a volunteer worker for each organization also helped the informants open up to me and share their personal feelings, opinions, and perspectives. I spent two months in the field building my rapport before collecting any formal data. I found it helpful to become familiar with the environment and potential research participants before delving into the data collection process. I volunteered with the organizations, participating in daily activities of preparing meals.
and cleaning multiple times per week. I was able build relationships of trust with group members during this time.

Through conducting and transcribing interviews, I collected conversations, which serve as the data to be analyzed. Eight interviews were conducted for each organization. FNB interview participants included members who had been with the organization since it began, members who also served on the board for Common Ground, and members who played crucial roles in the recent revival of the program. ODB interview participants included the director of the kitchen, the pastor of UMC and director of Action Ministries, and volunteers from five churches in the Athens area. Ten audio-taped interviews were transcribed verbatim and were reviewed alongside notes taken during the interviews. Six interviews were not recorded due to the unexpected opportunity of the interviews arising – five were conducted on-site, noted, and typed up immediately following the session and one was conducted via email. I had anticipated collecting twenty interviews. However, due to the limited number of available participants and time constraints, sixteen were collected. These sixteen interviews provided a rich set of data, and I probably reached theoretical saturation with these interviews.

**Emily: What is it that attracts people to come to volunteer?**

**Susan:** I think there’s several things. I think people have a heart for the underprivileged. I think especially if they’re church-related people, they know that scripture tells us in the New Testament we’re to take care of those less fortunate. So, there is uh Biblical mandate for that – a faith mandate that we should care for one another. Secondly, it’s an easy thing to do. They can feel that they’ve actually made a difference. And I think, thirdly, ODB has been around long enough that it has a good reputation in this community. So they feel safe coming here and giving . . . they know [efforts and donations] will be used appropriately.

**Figure 3.3 Excerpt from ODB Interview Four, 8 September 2008**
Lastly, organizational archives have served as an important source of data. Documents and literature produced by and about the organizations constitute the archives. These include, but are not limited to books, newspaper articles, websites, fliers, pamphlets and newsletters. These provide a more diverse source of the discourse that is used by and about these organizations. What has been written supplements the data of what is being done and what is being said by and about these organizations. In addition to field notes and transcripts, these documents have served as a source of data for discourse analysis.

The message of Food Not Bombs is simple and powerful: no one should be without food in a world so richly provided with land, sun, and human ingenuity. No considerations of money, no demand for profit, should stand in the way of any hungry or malnourished child or any adult in need. Here are people who will not be bamboozled by 'the laws of the market' that say only people who can afford to buy something can have it.

Figure 3.4 Excerpt from Food Not Bomb How to Feed the Hungry and Build Community, Butler & McHenry, ix-x.

Data Analysis

Many have argued that “discourses are key” in organizational studies (Del Casino et al. 2000, 529). Organizational discourse serves as a rich source of data as it “is the principal means by which organization members create a coherent social reality” (Mumby and Claire 1997, 181). This study will examine the discourses that the organizations’ members use to produce meaning and to represent and reproduce moral philosophies and ideological contexts.

Discourse is “constituted by multiple texts in a particular social and historical context” (Phillips and Hardy 2002, 19). Social reality is created and maintained through the use of language, texts, and discourses. According to Phillips and Hardy, “without discourse, there is no social reality” (2002, 2). We must understand the discourses which are informing and being used
by these two organizations in order to understand their realities because it is these discourses which are creating and maintaining their realities. Using an interpretive structuralist approach to discourse analysis, I examined individual texts within a broader social context, and thereby explore the “ability of actors to use discourse as a resource to bring about certain outcomes” (Philips and Hardy 2002, 21). This study will explore how these organizations and their members use discourse as a tool for the social construction of organizational purpose and to produce meanings from their actions.

Philips and Hardy (2002) have differentiated between four types of discourse analysis according to their relative focus on single or multiple texts, and on social construction or power dynamics. Of these, the interpretive structuralism approach is most appropriate to this study. The interpretive structuralist approach examines how multiple texts are situated in a broad social context, rather than focusing on singular or specific texts alone. Using multiple texts, the interpretive structuralist approach explores the social construction of the world, without close attention to the dynamics of power relations. While individual texts are considered, it is in relation to how they are situated in the broader contexts of organizational networks, discourse, and ideology. In this study, the interpretive structuralist approach is used within a critical realist framework in order to understand how discourse is making action possible and legitimate; and how discourse is used to interpret and represent both ideological and structural context.

I used the methods of discourse analysis to analyze the data from the fieldnotes of the observations, the transcripts of the interviews, and the documents about and composed by these organizations. I used NVIVO Qualitative Analysis Software to code the texts and draw out and categorize themes. I compared the themes that emerged from the texts of the two in an attempt

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6 NVIVO has assisted in the analysis of the data by automating and managing the coding process. It can be compared to an electronic filing system, in that it has kept the documents organized and accessible. The use of
to discern the differences and similarities between the two groups. The analysis of how these organizations portray and represent themselves through the use of discourse has revealed links and inconsistencies between what group members are saying and what they are doing.

Discourse analysis has guided the analysis of the texts collected from these organizations as I draw out and compare and contrast the themes that emerge from the texts of the different organizations on the same issue in order to understand why and how these different groups are each perceiving and addressing hunger. Within the scope of this project, discourse analysis has been used to identify only some of the multiple meanings assigned to these texts. The analytical categories are not exhaustive, but have been generated based on the topic at hand. For example, hunger is a central theme in this study. I began by investigating the different contexts in which “hunger” is used, which led to the discovery of themes that are elements of what I argue is a hunger discourse, such as the representation of hunger at multiple scales. Table 3.1 presents the elements of a hunger discourse. In the following passage I demonstrate how I came to identify a hunger discourse.

Anyway, so hunger . . . Well, as you know, Athens is like 32% poverty rate. Highest in the state, I think. And as far as states go, I think we’re one of the highest in the country. So, we’re pretty up there in terms poverty. So, there’s a lot of people without a lot money and who aren’t able to afford stuff like food. Especially with rising gas prices. People are having to choose between nutritious food and gas to get work. And it’s definitely a global trend. I mean, you know, we’re way better here than in other countries, you know, where they’re reliant on U.S. aid for food. But there’s definitely a lot of hungry people and there’s a lot of food going to waste. (Ralph, AFNB respondent)

Through this response, I was able to discern Ralph’s awareness of the global problem of hunger, but also the urgency of the local problem as he points out that Athens has one of the highest rates of poverty in the U.S. Members of both groups talk about the severity of the

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NVIVO has made the analysis of data more efficient by saving time that would otherwise be spent coding the data manually.

40
problem of hunger in other countries, but also emphasize the extreme need that exists in Athens, GA.

I have also identified elements of the groups’ moral philosophies, which are represented by group goals, and as I argue, are supplemental to the hunger discourse. Table 3.2 lists the elements of a moral philosophy as represented by AFNB and ODB. The following passages demonstrate how I came to identify moral philosophies.

One of our main goals is to aid in the reduction of wasted food. AFNB uses food that might otherwise go to waste. While AFNB is not the most efficient when it comes to feeding people – it is not delivering as many meals to as many people as possible – it has other goals that it is trying to reach – and recovering food is a very important one. (Alex, AFNB respondent)

This country is extremely wasteful . . . [we] don’t waste a crumb. (Margaret, ODB respondent)

When inquiring about organizational goals, respondents often offered reasons for their work other than ending hunger. As seen in these passages, reducing waste is just one of the multiple goals of these groups.

Next, I identified themes related to the ideological context as represented through group members’ talk and action; these include the way in which members represent their work, talk about the distribution of food, and the place where the group distributes the meal, as presented in table 3.3. The following passage demonstrates how I came to identify these elements of what I refer to as an ideological discourse.

Sharing with AFNB is like a family dinner. It’s like we’re feeding ourselves and other people and we’re all hungry. . . In a sense it doesn’t really matter where you’re coming from or who you are. It’s that we’re hungry and we decide to share food. (Christy, AFNB respondent)

Other AFNB members also referred to their work as sharing. In contrast, ODB members referred to their work as service or serving.
Lastly, I have categorized these themes in reference to the tangible and intangible effects at the local and global levels in order to compare and contrast patterns between AFNB and ODB. Based on the elements of a hunger discourse, moral philosophy, and ideological discourse, I have deciphered patterns of similarities and differences between AFNB and ODB’s purposes and practices (Table 3.4).

**Table 3.1 Elements of Hunger Discourse**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hunger</td>
<td>Hunger as a physical feeling felt by the individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hunger as a state of being food insecure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hunger as a social and global problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope</td>
<td>Local Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>Local Responsiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Awareness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.2 Elements of Moral Philosophies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AFNB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminate Inequality</td>
<td>Mutual Aid/Invite guests to help prepare meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise Local Awareness</td>
<td>Direct Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce Waste</td>
<td>Collecting and Redistributing Surplus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Nutrition</td>
<td>Share Vegan and Vegetarian meals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3.3 Elements of Ideological Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AFNB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Protest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.4 Emergent Patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AFNB</th>
<th>ODB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global Tangible</td>
<td>Anti-hunger Movement</td>
<td>Anti-hunger Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FNB Movement</td>
<td>Christian Outreach Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intangible</td>
<td>Ideas/awareness of global</td>
<td>Ideas/awareness of global hunger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hunger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anarchist/Radical Ideological context &amp;</td>
<td>Christian Service Ideological context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>Food Supply Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food Source</td>
<td>Volunteer Supply Resources/Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intangible</td>
<td>Ideas about local hunger</td>
<td>Ideas about local hunger related issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and related issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Radical/Progressive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ideological context</td>
<td>Christian Service Ideological context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

( -- Similarity, △ Difference)
Reflexivity

“Reflexive research includes an understanding of how our own situatedness within an organizational setting – the university, the church, etc. – actually contributes to the frame through which the organization [we are studying] is viewed” (Del Casino, et al. 2000, 534). I have been critically aware of how my involvement in particular organizations frames my perspective on the organizations which I am studying. Exposing my position as a researcher has been an important element of this study. My personal experiences as a volunteer, a student, and a Christian facilitated my entry into the study sites, but also influence my perceptions and assumptions. Self-awareness and flexibility throughout the research process has been necessary in producing a valid and reliable study.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present the research design and methodology for this study, including the literature that forms the basis for theoretical framework informing this study. I have sketched the process of data collection and analysis as well as presented examples of the data and its analysis.

The next chapter is the analysis chapter in which the findings of the study are presented. The first section argues the use of a hunger discourse as informed by moral philosophy, scope, and scale. The second section draws out the distinction between AFNB and ODB as informed by differing ideological contexts.
CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS

Hunger Discourse and Perceptions of Scale

Through this study, I sought to understand how AFNB and ODB each use mediating entities to link the practice of feeding people locally in Athens, Georgia to the problems of hunger and food insecurity, at differing scales, in their community and worldwide; and how the scope of networks and movements within which each organization is embedded inform and mediate their perceptions and approaches to the issues of hunger and food insecurity. I discerned that it is through the use of a hunger discourse that members of each group link their work to the problem of hunger and represent the group as a significant player in local and global networks.

Hunger Discourse

Hunger discourse is the language used by group members to represent the existence and significance of hunger as an entity which must be opposed. In addition, hunger discourse functions to position these groups as legitimate organizational responses to the issue of hunger. Hunger discourse is utilized by group members to create and reinforce the purpose and existence of the group. For example, when an AFNB group member says, “many people are going hungry” and in an ideal world “no one would go hungry,” she is using hunger discourse to create a significant issue to which to respond. It is in the representation of hunger as a problem to be solved that we see a link between ODB and AFNB. In the course of this project, I identified
several elements of a hunger discourse that are invoked by members of both organizations to legitimate and validate their work, as discussed below.

In the text collected throughout the course of this research, we see “hunger” representing multiple concepts. Members of both groups use the term hunger to describe a physical feeling of an individual as they are in need of immediate nutrition, the food insecurity of individuals and communities, and a multi-scaled social issue. In each of these contexts, hunger is presented as an entity which must be opposed as informed by the moral philosophy that hunger is bad. Hunger is something which must be fought and defeated. For example, Henry, an AFNB respondent, emphasized that the group is working towards ending hunger. It is an ongoing battle to eliminate the presence of this problem.

Moral Philosophy

While each of these groups seem to be informed by different ideological contexts, as discussed below, it seems as though they share basic moral philosophies. The moral philosophy that hunger is bad is employed by both of these organizations and promotes and encourages their work feeding those who are hungry. Both groups believe that hunger is bad and wrong and that they must take immediate action to address it by providing meals for those who are hungry. However, their food programs are more strategic than simply providing meals. While preparing and providing meals, each of these groups are acting locally to eliminate inequality, reduce waste, increase nutrition, and raise local awareness about the presence of hunger. As seen through group members’ language and actions it is apparent that both groups value equality, the reduction of waste and recovery of surplus food, increased nutrition and local action and advocacy in their community.
As mentioned earlier, members of both groups represent hunger as an entity which must be opposed. As represented in a local newspaper, ODB and AFNB are categorized together as “organizations [battling] hunger in Athens” (The Red and Black 1996; 1995). In fighting hunger, these groups are also fighting the inequality that exists in this competitive and wasteful culture. Most respondents from both groups suggest that there is more than enough food to end hunger, but this will never happen if we do not do something about misallocation and unequal access. Alex, from AFNB, states that “one of [its] main goals is to aid in the reduction of wasted food . . . [by using] food that might otherwise go to waste”. In their attempts to reduce waste, members of both groups make every effort to incorporate the available food, especially items that might not be good until the next meal. Margaret, of ODB, suggests that “programs like [ODB] are counteracting this wasteful culture” by not “wasting a crumb” of the available food. They are recovering surplus food and redistributing to those who are lacking. Also, this society says that food should only be available to those who have the money to pay for it. FNB and ODB are counteracting this assumption by making food available to anyone and everyone. According to Shelly, ODB members “want to make a basic need available” and are doing so by providing free meals. Patrick, of AFNB wants to “help in the community” by participating in a “mutual kind of give and take”. Like other members of AFNB, Patrick wants to help make food more accessible to all people, and encourages group members and meal guests to engage in helping one another. According to respondents from both groups, nutrition is also important. Their “goal is to [not only] provide a warm meal”, but also nutrition. AFNB provides “a hot and healthy meal”, while ODB “can provide nutrition . . . [with] the only meal that someone gets in a day”. A FNB and ODB are also taking to measures to inform meal guests about nutrition by including healthy options and preparing them in an appetizing way. AFNB members have even invited meal guests
to the kitchen to learn how to cook vegan meals. AFNB and ODB members seem to find comfort in knowing that they have facilitated people being fed nutritious food. “We’re feeding people that are hungry . . . that’s the most real way that we’re helping” (Christy, AFNB respondent). In this way, these groups are meeting the immediate need of those who are hungry. Not only are AFNB and ODB meeting an immediate need for individuals in the Athens community, but they are also raising awareness of the social issue of hunger in Athens. Their work brings light to the prevalence of hunger that members of the community might otherwise be unaware of. These groups have recruited the help of other organizations in the community, such as the local university and government, with their presence and work. Shelly, of ODB, feels “very fortunate that [they] have a government that supports what [they] do and a really heightened awareness in [the] community”. The turnouts for the meals indicate the extent of the problem that the community is facing. Shelly believes that “some folks wish [they] they weren’t here because [they] attract a bad element,” but she goes on to say that “they gotta eat somewhere.” Jesse from AFNB, states that their presence “is definitely to raise awareness”. By showing “that a lot of people out there are hungry”, as Jesse from AFNB suggests, others are prompted to think about it and hopefully respond to it.

AFNB and ODB members both draw from this moral philosophy of good and bad in order to create a hunger discourse; they are also draw from their position in local and global networks to reinforce this hunger discourse.

A Global Problem, A Local Response

In this analysis, I particularly focus on representations of hunger as a multi-scaled issue. Hunger is being represented as a multi-scaled problem, but one which is being responded to by these groups at a specifically local level. I suggest that members of both ODB and AFNB
represent their struggles across differing scales in order to legitimate their work. In so doing, social actors

show the commonalities between their political goals and other more pervasive political goals, thus discursively linking their cause to another cause in ways that work to their advantage. In effect, these local groups are practicing a representational strategy. They discursively re-present their political struggles across scale, and in so doing, they help to recast opposition itself. They show that a ‘local’ struggle, for example, may also be represented as a global struggle, and when it is done so, the local struggle may strike a chord with many people who will argue on its behalf (Jones 1997, 26).

Jones goes on to suggest that social actors “alternately represent their position as global or local to enhance their standing” (1997, 27). As discussed above, members of ODB and AFNB strategically position their organization and work at particular scales in order to legitimate and validate their cause. Kurtz (2002) also advocates the power of scale by suggesting that:

The explanation of a social problem, the attribution of causality and the suggestion of a remedy rely for their meaning, effectiveness, and force on the central reference to social relations organized at particular scales (2002, 254).

Some actors may find interest and benefit in both expanding and reducing scale by representing hunger and their work at local and global scales (Herod 1997). While some may assume that globalizing an issue is the best way to gain support- for as Herod and Wright point out, “the power to proclaim the globality of any event is the power to put the world on alert” (2002, 1)- group members of AFNB and ODB also find value in localizing hunger and their response to it.

Scope and scale play an important role in the operation of these organizations and in their group members’ perceptions and representations of hunger. Scale refers to members’
perceptions of the scale of the problem of hunger locally and globally, as well as the group’s local action in relation to their global awareness. Scope refers to the extent of the organization’s local network and the extent of their putative role in a global movement. It is the part that they are playing in the local community as well as in a global movement that motivates and encourages their work.

Hunger exists at different scales and group members draw on this to represent their work. The feeding of people who are hungry and the distribution of free food in Athens are influenced by the group members’ perceptions of hunger and food insecurity on a local scale in Athens, but also by their perceptions of hunger and food insecurity at bigger scales, such as at the national and global levels. So, there is global hunger and there is local hunger. AFNB are choosing to respond to hunger in particular at the local level because local “hunger is a need [they] can meet” and “every bowl of free food that a Food Not Bombs volunteer hands to a hungry person is a step in that direction” (Caine 2005; Butler & McHenry 2000). The work being done locally is contributing to the larger response to hunger – nationally and globally. When asked about the relationship between local and global responses to hunger, John, an ODB participant, replied that you just have to decide which problem you want to solve, “the one in this country or the one in other countries”. This respondent, aware of the need in other parts of the world, stressed the importance of doing your part in your own community to contribute to the larger movement. By conceptualizing each of their programs as part of a bigger movement, these groups are able to find a broad scope of support for their cause and value in their work in that other groups are working towards the same goal across the globe (other groups across the globe are advocating these local groups work, simply by conducting the same work elsewhere). According to the FNB website, “it is impossible to create a better world unless all of us work together” (2009). As such,
it is being part of a bigger purpose and a sense of working towards a common goal with entities across the globe that encourages and motivates group members to stay active.

AFNB and ODB are each part of a bigger anti-hunger movement. Simultaneously, they are affiliated, respectively, with the Food Not Bombs Movement and the Religious Service Movement. AFNB and ODB do not necessarily rely on the other groups within these movements for physical or immediate support, but more for the moral support of their mission. Christians all over the world are following the scriptural commands to “take care of those who are less fortunate” (Paul, ODB respondent). Organizations, such as World Vision, “motivated by [their] faith in Jesus Christ, help hungry children survive – and thrive – by ensuring their communities have reliable ways to get nutritious food” (World Vision 2009). Bread for the World is another Christian organization informed by scriptural teachings, which focuses on international and domestic hunger with 2,000 church partners (Slutz 2001). Drawing from the work and mission of this larger movement of Christian outreach, ODB finds moral support for its efforts. Similarly, AFNB finds support for its mission from the efforts of the FNB movement. The FNB movement is “devoted to developing positive personal, political and economic alternatives” (2007) to hunger and the like throughout the United States and the World. As one of these many groups responding to hunger throughout the world, AFNB finds purpose in its work through this collective effort.

The local effort is important in that it brings attention to the need in the community. These groups are raising awareness of hunger and food insecurity in Athens, while they are responding to them. Not only are they participating in a movement that is bigger than their own organization, but they are also meeting an immediate need in their own community on a weekly or even daily basis. However, there are variations between these groups’ perceptions of their
work at the local scale. FNB focuses on the local scale with the mindset that in order to provoke change “you have to start somewhere”, and that somewhere for them is the local community. On the other hand, ODB seems to be more focused on the presence of multiple social issues in the community, of which they have decided to focus on hunger. ODB came together based on the idea that there needed to be a focus on one issue – in this case it was food. Still, being part of a local network is significant for both these groups in that it provides support in the way of resource and supply contribution, volunteer labor, and promotion and advocacy.

Athens Food Not Bombs and Our Daily Bread are each part of a local network of organizations, which support their operation in a more tangible sense than their membership in the global network. It is this relationship to other organizations in the Athens area, which are also reacting to hunger, which facilitates the work of these groups. AFNB is a member of the NEGA Food Bank. The food bank is the main source of food for the organization, but it also relies on local and organic groceries, such as the Daily Co-op grocery store and Earth Fare, as well as local restaurants, such as Doc Che’s. Some food comes from the surplus of local farmers and community gardens. Common Ground, a progressive resource center, houses the kitchen used by AFNB and provides a meeting space for its members. Common Ground also hosts fundraisers for AFNB, where supplies and money are donated. Group members are recruited from the local university and high schools and the radical/progressive community in Athens.

ODB is also a member of the NEGA Food Bank, as well as the emergency food bank. Food is also donated by the churches which send volunteers to prepare the meals and from local farmers and gardeners. Oconee Street UMC houses the kitchen and dining room utilized by ODB. Volunteers are recruited from local churches and civic groups. ODB also collaborates with
the Athens Nurses Clinic, UGA law students, and other homeless services to provide resources for their clients.

There is an evident reliance on certain organizations, such as the Food Bank, which provides the bulk of the food for both groups, as well as North Oconee Street UMC and Common Ground which provide the facilities and tools for preparing the meals. One group member from ODB stressed her concern for the welfare of these partnering organizations because their contribution is significant to these groups. Other relationships are more loose connections than official memberships, but also important. For example, both groups are official members of the Food Bank, but only occasionally receive small donations from local grocery stores or restaurants. When the produce supply from the Food Bank pickup is small, an AFNB member will do a run by the Daily Co-op or Earth Fare to pick up any additional produce they might be able to offer, such as a bundle of carrots or a bag of potatoes. According to an ODB informant, “it really is a network, it’s not a formal network maybe, but we all kind of rely on one another”. Most group members agree that the group would not perish or disintegrate without these connections –“If the food bank was no longer providing food, then we would just find the food somewhere else,” responded one AFNB group member. However, these relationships certainly enrich and strengthen the groups’ operations and efforts through their facilities, resources, and advocacy.

We see significant similarities emerge between these two groups in regards to a hunger discourse. While it might be expected that there are also significant divergences between the two groups’ moral philosophies, I have suggested that they are quite similar in regards to their work in the Athens community. However, it is in their ideological contexts that we expose the divergences between them.
### Table 4.1 Evidence of a Hunger Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group members position themselves as responding to hunger as:</th>
<th>AFNB</th>
<th>ODB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group members position themselves as responding to hunger as:</strong></td>
<td>A physical feeling felt by the individual</td>
<td>“But for today, people were fed”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Food Insecurity</td>
<td>We met the “need for a centralized soup kitchen” in the community</td>
<td>“We recognize [and address] the problems our own local community has”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A global and social problem</td>
<td>“What we are doing compared to the big picture may be little, but it does matter”</td>
<td>“The [global] FNB movement is working to end hunger”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group members Respond to hunger because they are part of:</th>
<th>Local Network</th>
<th>ODB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Network</td>
<td>“We all kind of rely on one another”</td>
<td>“Strengthens local orgs in their work to improve our community and world”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Movement</td>
<td>The “collective Christian voice is urging . . . for an to end hunger”</td>
<td>“Food Not Bombs is organizing . . . to end hunger”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Members local action is informed by global awareness:</th>
<th>Local Action</th>
<th>ODB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Action</td>
<td>“Hunger is a need we can meet”</td>
<td>“Every bowl of free food . . . is a step in that direction”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Awareness</td>
<td>Hunger “in this country or in other countries”</td>
<td>“It is impossible to create a better world unless all of us work together”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2 Evidence of Moral Philosophy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AFNB</th>
<th>ODB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eliminate Inequality</strong></td>
<td>“I want to help in the community, but it’s like a mutual kind of give and take”</td>
<td>OBD members “want to make a basic need available”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Raise Local Awareness</strong></td>
<td>“It’s definitely to raise awareness of how many people are hungry”</td>
<td>“We have a government that supports what we do and a really heightened awareness in our community. There are some folks who wish we weren’t here because we attract a ‘bad element,’ but they gotta eat somewhere”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reduce Waste</strong></td>
<td>“One of our main goals to aid in the reduction of wasted food. FNB uses food that might otherwise go to waste”</td>
<td>“Programs like ODB are counter-acting this wasteful culture. [The director of ODB] doesn’t waste a crumb – at times using potato broth”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increase Nutrition</strong></td>
<td>“A small group of people get together . . . to prepare and serve a hot and healthy [vegetarian] meal for whoever would like to come eat”</td>
<td>“The meal is important because it may be the only meal that someone gets in a day . . . we can provide nutrition – we try to have a salad and a fruit and a vegetable”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Role of Ideological Context**

Through this study, I sought to understand how the ideological contexts of political anarchy and Christian service inform the organizational beliefs, perceptions, and actions of each group. It is in organization representations of ideological context that I expose significant differences between AFNB and ODB. While moral philosophies about good and bad lend to the creation of significant social issues, such as hunger and inequality, ideological contexts frame and inform organizational responses to such issues.
Ideological Context

The place we see these two groups diverge from one another in their approach to addressing hunger is in the representations of their ideological contexts. The way in which ideological context affects group members’ beliefs and actions is evident in the way they talk about and perform their work. As such, I explore ideological context as represented by group members’ actions and language – what I refer to as an ideological discourse. It is in the way in which group members talk about their work, the act of distributing food, and the place the meal is served that significant group differences emerge. This study links these empirical differences to the organizational differences in ideological contexts between these two groups.

Representations of ideological contexts, or ideological discourse, can be distinguished from hunger discourse in the texts by considering what the discourse is focusing on. In hunger discourse, the existence of hunger is central – whether it be at the local or global scale. Ideological discourse is more specifically concerned with the organization and its response to hunger and its related issues; their work and beliefs concerning those eating the food and the preparation and distribution of the food as represented through language.

These two organizations represent their work in very different ways. ODB members represent their work as charity. They are offering donations and generosity to help the poor. They are “caring for the least of these” (the “stranger”, “hungry”, and “thirsty”) as an act of kindness, according to Darlene. They have a “desire to be supportive of people who are less fortunate,” according Paul. On the other hand, AFNB members represent their work as protest. As stated on Common Ground’s website, AFNB “brings light to the unjust priorities of a capitalist system that creates great wealth for some, and fails to provide sustenance for others” (2009). AFNB’s work “building Anti-capitalist alternatives” is “undermin[ing] people’s beliefs”
about the food system, according to their website (FNB 2009). AFNB is opposing and protesting
the mainstream food system by seeking and making available alternative food sources, i.e.
community gardens and dumpsters. Dustin illustrated their work as protest by talking about a
particular meal that was served on a football gameday in Athens:

I think we definitely did it as an antagonism, you know, to the greater university culture,
especially on gameday weekends. It was really important to us to kind of be that slap in
the face, that rude awakening.

Another important distinction between AFNB and ODB is in the way group members
talk about the distribution of the meal. AFNB members refer to the sharing of the meal, whereas
ODB members refer to the serving of the meal. In “sharing” the meal, AFNB members are
attempting to eliminate the barrier and inequality between those preparing and those receiving
the meal. In “serving” the meal, ODB members are attempting to place themselves in a position
of giving and charity. They have access to the resources, and thus feel obligated to make them
accessible to those who are lacking. Both groups apparently feel a moral obligation to make food
more accessible. However, ODB members are more likely to use terms such as “caring”, “duty”
and “obligation” as opposed to “building alternatives” or “undermining [popular] beliefs” when
talking about their reasons for responding to hunger.

Members of each group also differ in the way in which they represent themselves. In line
with their efforts to provide charity, ODB members represent themselves as different from the
guests they are serving. They are humble servants, called to do God’s work. They are reaching
out to “take care of those who are less fortunate,” as articulated by Paul. AFNB members do not
do much to differentiate themselves from those who are receiving the meal. AFNB members
represent themselves as political activists who are making food more accessible to themselves
and others. They are opposing the mainstream food system by seeking alternative food sources –
community gardens, food banks, and dumpsters. They resist the label of charity by sharing in the partaking of the meal, inviting all guests to participate in the preparation of the meal, and insisting that no one deserves the food any more or any less than anyone else.

The way group members represent themselves is closely related to how they represent those who are partaking in the meal. ODB members differentiate between guests who deserve the meal and those who do not. For example, one interview participant, Rachel, was rather critical of some of the guests who were clearly college students. She felt as though they were taking advantage of what ODB was offering. It clearly bothers ODB members when “truly needy” guests go without a meal because someone who was not necessarily desperate got the last meal. While they claim to not discriminate, welcoming anyone and everyone to come partake in the meal, there has been some evidence of discrimination. I had been volunteering one day and was waiting in line for my turn to receive lunch. A guest came in line after me and one the ladies in the kitchen insisted that she feed him first because he was a guest. She was more motivated by her obligation to serve the client than the organization’s intent to not discriminate. While I did not disagree that the client should be served first, I simply was more aware of this discrimination due to my experience with AFNB – members from AFNB jump right in line with their guests. AFNB members do not necessarily acknowledge that guests are “needy”, but that they lack access to nutritious food – that is why they are trying to make such food more accessible. AFNB members want to empower the guests, but also each other. They feel that they are just as much victims of the inadequate food system as their guests are.

Lastly, the place, or space where food is served is significant. ODB serves the meal in the church kitchen, which is in the basement of Oconee Street UMC. This is an area that is safe, accessible and not easily visible. ODB members take the measures to protect their guests as
though they are victims, creating “a haven in a way”. Conversely, AFNB serves on the sidewalk in downtown Athens. This is a place that is public, accessible and visible. In serving in a visible place, AFNB is raising awareness of the presence of hunger in Athens; and “not just . . . trying to feed, but [also] impact passersby”, as stated by Patrick.

**Table 4.3 Evidence of Ideological Discourse**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AFNB</th>
<th>AFNB</th>
<th>ODB</th>
<th>ODB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Building Anti-capitalist alternatives” and “undermin[ing] people’s beliefs” about the food system</td>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>“[Caring] for the least of these” – “the hungry”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s very . . . egalitarian. We’re all here to help each other”</td>
<td>Serving</td>
<td>Jesus “called us” to be humble servants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Not just . . . trying to feed, but impact passersby”</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>“It’s a haven in a way”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have argued that the members of AFNB and ODB have employed a hunger discourse, informed by a particular moral philosophy, and an ideological discourse in order to mediate between the existence and work of their organizations. I have argued that this hunger discourse acts as a causal force and is necessary to these groups in creating and reinforcing purpose and meaning for their existence. I suggest that this hunger discourse is
informed by the moral philosophy that hunger is bad and must be fought. In addition to informing a hunger discourse, this moral philosophy also emphasizes the causal forces of nutrition, waste recovery, justice, and local awareness. I have also suggested the important role that the scope of the local network and global movements as well as the scale of the organizations’ efforts in relation to a local and global problem play in the operation of these organizations and in the perceptions of their members. It is the part that they are playing in the local community and a global movement that motivate and encourage their work; and it is their perceptions of a global problem of hunger that inform their local effort. Lastly, I have drawn out the distinction between these two groups as is evident through their discourse and work and how these empirical differences are related to differences in the ideological contexts between these groups. This serves to demonstrate how group members draw from their own particular ideological contexts to represent and produce meaning for their work.

Chapter Five concludes this study by summarizing the findings, presenting the implications of the work and suggesting further research possibilities for studying emergency food provision and local anti-hunger initiatives.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

Findings

I began this study in order to explore organizational purpose and practice of two feeding programs in Athens, Georgia as represented through organizational discourses. This case study demonstrates how members of local feeding programs employ the use of particular discourses in order to produce and reproduce organizational purpose and legitimate and validate their work. Group members of both AFNB and ODB have employed multiple discourses to support and advocate their causes, in an effort to defend their work against criticism of private food assistance. These groups feel a moral commitment to their communities and are driven by particular ideological contexts and moral philosophies to oppose the current situation and provide for those in need. Through this study, it has become evident that each of these organizations are being informed by different sets of beliefs, as is represented by their members’ talk and actions. While there are significant differences in organizational reasons for feeding those who are hungry, there are also common themes informing the work of both programs, such as the importance of local action and global awareness, which link these two programs to one another and to broader anti-hunger movements in their fight against hunger. Some of my original assumptions about possible motivations for these two groups were disproved through this research. I originally suspected that eradicating hunger or overcoming inequality would be common motivations for the two groups. However, eradicating hunger on a large scale does not
seem to be a feasible goal for these groups as members of both groups emphasize their work as “a drop in the bucket”, a “small piece of a bigger puzzle”. We see these groups attempting to do what they can on a local level as their contribution to the global movement by each playing an important role in the fight against hunger in the Athens community. Through their food programs these groups are also addressing issues other than hunger, such as inequality. Inequality is addressed in some way by each group in that they are making food more accessible to marginalized populations. However, AFNB seems to make more of an effort to eliminate boundaries between group members and those receiving the food by using words such as “sharing” rather than “serving” and inviting guests to participate in the preparation of the meal.

In my proposal I suggested that if commonalities are found between the two organizations, perhaps it is possible that they can expand their scope and should work together in addressing hunger in the Athens community. These organizations may view their work as purposeful and effective in serving the Athens community, but perhaps it can be more so if these groups chose to collaborate with each other to some degree. While group differences should be valued and preserved, these groups could benefit from sharing resources and knowledge.

It seems as though these organizations’ members believe that more can and must be done to address hunger, as it is still a persistent problem locally and globally, yet they are very satisfied with their work. They view their local food programs as important and integral in the global anti-hunger movement. They are encouraged and hopeful that their work is making and will continue to make a difference – otherwise, they would not continue to operate. Perhaps we will continue to see a shift from public to private assistance as these types of programs evolve and new ways of responding to hunger are developed.
Significance

The current literature on emergency food provision and private food assistance is in need of a study which investigates the problem of hunger and food insecurity and responses to them from the perspectives of the group members of the organizations which are serving the food to the hungry. This work is important in that it gives these emergency food programs a voice in the debate over the insufficiency and inefficiency of their efforts. The findings of this study have provided insight into how and why different organizations have formed to address the issues of food insecurity and hunger. It has revealed the different influences that play a role in informing an organization’s efforts to provide emergency food. The study also shows the way in which anti-hunger organizations are related to their members and to the broader social context. By exploring these aspects of Athens Food Not Bombs and Our Daily Bread in Athens, Georgia, this study reveals some of the reasons people choose to feed the hungry, such as overcoming inequality and providing nutrition. This project has sought to provide a better understanding of anti-hunger organizations through revealing their motivations, their perceptions of hunger, why and how they are responding to hunger, how they respond to critiques of emergency food organizations and the roles that the scope and scale of their networks play in informing organizational perceptions and discourse.

Future Direction

I suggest three areas in which this study might be expanded: First, by considering the variability among group members within each organization and the implications of this; secondly, a more in depth analysis of the local anti-hunger network in Athens and ODB and AFNB’s efforts in comparison to other models for creating community food security; and thirdly,
an inclusion of the analysis of scales other than the local and global and other socially constructed entities such as gender, race, and class.

While I was particularly interested in gathering a collective response from each of these organizations it was inevitable that variations would emerge between the responses of members within each group. I chose to focus on patterns of agreement among members, but further analysis of the data could reveal areas where the members within a particular group differ in their perceptions and strategies. In so doing, we might explore ways in which these variations are dealt with within the group and the ways in which meaning is negotiated between members to create organizational coherence and maintain the mission of the group.

In this study I have focused on the ways in which AFNB and ODB are supported by these local and global networks of which they are a part. Perhaps future investigation should consider how AFNB and ODB support the other organizations which also are a part of these networks. Further questions might consider how these groups serve the local food bank and their contributions to Common Ground and Athens Urban Ministries. Also, AFNB and ODB are not the only “soup kitchens” in Athens. This investigation would be strengthened by including analysis of other prepared meal programs in Athens, such as the Salvation Army and the Athens Area Homeless Shelter, and considering the role that they are playing in the Athens community and in the global anti-hunger movement. Further analysis could explore more closely how AFNB and ODB are related to other hunger relief organizations in Athens including other soup kitchens, pantries, shelters, senior centers, after school programs, foster parent association, churches, and other non-profit agencies. Future work could, and should, juxtapose the work of these networks with other models of responding to community food insecurity such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), Farmer’s Markets as well as other approaches. This
might look at how AFNB and ODB are related to other organizations focused on hunger and food, such as Athens Urban Food Collective (AUFC) and Promoting Local Agriculture and Cultural Experiences (PLACE) that provide educational and networking opportunities in Athens.

As Johnston and Baker point out “most social phenomena involve a complex intermingling of multiple scales of struggle ranging from the body . . . [to] global” (2005, 314). This study has focused mainly on the local and global scales and would benefit from discussions of hunger and its responses at other scales, such as the body, the home, and the state. While the social construction of scale is an important aspect to consider, so are the social constructions of gender, race, and class and the power dynamics that are associated with each. Evidence of these constructs emerged over the course of this research, but due to the narrow focus of this study were not investigated more in depth. Further analysis needs to be conducted in order to tease out the effects of these constructs and the role that they play in informing group members’ perceptions and organizational discourse. For example, future studies could consider the way in which food is raced in the context of each of these food programs. This analysis might ask how the food is racialized and what role this plays in volunteers’ selection of what food to prepare (and how to prepare it) and how meal guests respond to the particular foods that are served to them. Further investigation might provide a more in depth analysis of the race, gender, and class of meal guests and volunteers and the role that these play in the interaction between volunteers and meal guests.

This study highlights the role of discourse, as employed by group members, in producing organizational purpose and practice. Group members of AFNB and ODB are producing scale in order to represent hunger and their responses to it as significant at local and global scales. This study has also highlights organizational similarities and differences between AFNB and ODB in
order to represent the relevance and significance of their food programs in the current anti-
hunger movement. While I argue that this work is a significant contribution to the debate of 
emergency food provision and related literature on hunger and anti-hunger movements, further 
analysis will strengthen and provide more in-depth insight into the important role that prepared 
meal programs are playing at different scales and in more complex networks.
REFERENCES


Caine, L. “Hunger a Need We Can Meet”. Athens Banner-Herald: Faith. 8 October 2005


APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1) **RQ**: How do these two organizations link the practice of feeding people locally in Athens, GA to the problems of hunger and food insecurity in their community and worldwide?
   a. Who are you serving food to? Why do they come to eat here?
   b. Why are people hungry and food insecure?
   c. How many people are you feeding? How does this number compare to the number of those who are hungry or food insecure in Athens (Do you think that the problem is bigger than what you see based on the number of people who come to eat your food)? How does this compare to the problem of hunger and food insecurity worldwide?
   d. What is being done globally to solve hunger and food insecurity?
   e. What are you doing to solve the problem locally? Globally?
   f. Can hunger and food insecurity be solved? What is the solution? Is there one ‘right’ way?

2) **RQ**: How does the scope of networks within each organization is embedded inform their perceptions and approaches to the issues of hunger and food insecurity?
   a. Describe the ODB/FNB network.
      i. What is the local network like? The global network? What other organizations are you affiliated with? How often and in what way do you interact with these other organizations?
   b. How does this network contribute to the work of the ‘soup kitchen’/food program?
      i. In what ways does the organization benefit from this broader network?

3) **RQ**: How do the moral philosophies and ideological contexts of political anarchy (for AFNB) and Christian service (for ODB) inform organizational beliefs, perceptions, and actions?
   a. Why is it important to prepare and serve food to those who are hungry and food insecure?
   b. How are Christian/anarchist values represented in your work?
      i. How might your work be different if these values weren’t informing your work?
   c. How does your service affect those who are hungry and food insecure? How does it affect you? How does it affect the community and the world?
      i. Would your work be more effective if there were more groups like this one throughout the community and the world? How would this affect the problem of hunger?
APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

Interview Consent Form
I agree to take part in a research study titled “Talking about hunger: Mediating between purpose and practice: A case study of food provision in Athens, Georgia”, which is being conducted by Emily Andersen, Department of Geography, University of Georgia, (770) 990-2522 under the direction of Hilda Kurtz, Department of Geography, University of Georgia, (706) 542-2329.

- My participation is voluntary; I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I can ask to have information related to me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.
- The purpose of the study is to explore the organizational motivations and goals for providing free food to those who are hungry.
- I will not benefit materially from this research. Possible benefits of this study are a better understanding of the problem of hunger and the approaches to solving it.
- As a participant in this study, my work preparing and serving meals will be directly observed bi-weekly over a four month period. I will also participate in a 1 to 2 hour audio recorded interview.
- No discomforts, stresses, or risks to me are expected as a result of participating in this study.
- I have the right to review the audio recordings. Only Emily Andersen and I will have access to the audio recordings. Audio recordings will be destroyed immediately following the conclusion of the research study. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with me will remain confidential.

Emily Andersen, the researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at 770-990-2522.

My signature below indicates that the researcher has answered all of my questions to my satisfaction and that I consent to volunteer for this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

____________________  ___________________  ________
Name of Researcher   Signature    Date
770-990-2522
eander00@uga.edu

____________________  ___________________  ________
Name of Participant   Signature    Date

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu
Hi,

I am a graduate student under the direction of Hilda Kurtz in the Geography department at the University of Georgia and I am conducting a research project on free food provision. I am interested in the motivations and goals of Athens Food Not Bombs’/Our Daily Bread’s prepared-meal food program. I will be conducting participant observation – involvement in and observation of group activities (preparing food, serving food, and cleanup)- in order to learn more about this group and its work providing food for those who are hungry.

I will be here 2 to 3 times per week through at least Septmeber to help prepare and serve food and clean up. I will be participating as a volunteer, but while paying special attention to my surroundings, the interactions and behaviors of the staff and volunteers, and my conversations with other volunteers in order to gain an understanding of this group’s work and its collective beliefs about hunger and free food.

This project seeks to provide a better understanding of this group in order to raise awareness of and appreciation for current responses to hunger. Your involvement in the participant observation component of this study will be confidential, meaning that your names will not be used and your identity will be protected. No risks or discomforts are expected.

Thank You,
Emily Andersen

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If for any reason you do not wish to have your actions observed and recorded then please sign and return this form to me. You may refuse to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Print Name    Signature    Date

Let me know if I can answer any further questions or concerns. I can be contacted by telephone (770) 990-2522 or by email Eander00@uga.edu

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu