

FOOD DESERTS AND CIVIC STRUCTURE

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**Food Deserts:
 Areas with few or no
 retail food stores**
"Many people on low incomes inhabit areas which have been abandoned by retailing." (Lang and Rayner 2002:20)
 When rural areas and urban neighborhoods lack adequate access to affordable, healthy food, households with limited incomes and elderly are more likely to experience food insecurity and poor diets.

Civic Structure: High levels of interactions among citizens and community groups that produce the capacity to solve local problems.

We posit that places with high civic structure will be more likely to mediate the effects of food insecurity and poor diets in areas with few or no retail food stores.

Price per pound for selected food items from USDA thrifty food plan, Iowa, Summer 2002.

Food	USDA			
	May 2002	Iowa Avg	Urban Avg	Rural Avg
Flour, white, all purpose	0.32	0.24	0.22	0.25
Rice, white, long grain, uncooked	0.47	0.45	0.46	0.44
Spaghetti and macaroni	0.90	0.78	0.67	0.89
Bread, white	1.01	0.57	0.48	0.66
Beef, ground, uncooked	1.74	1.88	1.66	2.11
Chicken, fresh, whole	1.09	0.87	0.80	0.94
Tuna, light, chunk	1.96	1.48	1.36	1.60
Eggs, grade A, large per dozen	1.00	0.61	0.61	0.61
Milk, fresh lowfat, per gallon	2.62	2.34	2.06	2.62
Butter, salted, grade AA, stick	3.22	1.67	1.57	1.78
Apples, red delicious	0.92	0.65	0.65	0.66
Bananas	0.52	0.53	0.53	0.54
Oranges, navel	0.85	0.80	0.61	0.98
Potatoes, white	0.51	0.45	0.37	0.54
Lettuce, iceberg (green or red leaf in IA)	0.72	1.50	0.99	1.75
Tomatoes, field grown	1.33	0.98	0.99	0.97
Broccoli	1.04	1.28	1.12	1.60
Orange juice, frozen concentrate per 16 oz.	1.82	1.28	1.12	1.44
Sugar, white, 33-160 oz pkg.	0.41	0.32	0.34	0.29
Peanut butter, creamy	1.98	1.48	1.12	1.84
Total Cost	24.43	20.16	17.73	22.51

Number of Items: 20
 Number of Stores: 9 (4 sites)

USDA prices from selected items from CPI Detailed Reports, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Family Economics and Nutrition Review 2002, Vol. 14(1)91. Price changes for all urban consumers and food prices are U.S. city averages.

Research Questions

- In a land of agricultural plenty, does Iowa have food deserts?
- What are the social mechanisms that expand access to healthy foods when food stores are limited?



"I put in a garden, way too much fruit for the two of us, and I share, I give it to people...that don't have gardens or are older and not able to get out. That's done quite a bit in this town."

Methodology

Year 1

- Focus groups in two rural counties and two urban low income neighborhoods
- Food maps of food purchase points, emergency food resources, community food production, federal food assistance programs, community food assistance programs
- Grocery store market basket survey of food prices based on USDA thrift plan

Year 2

- Survey instrument developed from focus groups
- Random sample survey of 2 rural counties with 2 or fewer grocery stores
- Targeted survey of two low income urban neighborhoods
- Questions on food security, community food structure, civic structure, and health status



"There are three places a day you can eat and on Wednesdays there are four places a day you can eat at. And if you're going to starve in [name of city] it's your own fault."

Preliminary Findings from Focus Groups

- Quality meats are expensive; residents generally go out of their neighborhoods/county to purchase food.
- Meat quality issues are usually food safety issues.
- Fresh vegetables are expensive and limited.
- Rural elderly use their personal connections to obtain food.
- Rural norms about accepting food stamps and using food pantries deter elderly from using them.
- Working poor in urban neighborhoods are likely to have access and affordability issues.
- Low income urban neighborhoods with community programs are solving food problems for disabled and unemployed.
- People living in low income rural counties are less likely to acknowledge food security issues.
- Rural people expect to travel 20 minutes or more for their food.
- Both rural and urban households depend on friends and family a great deal for transportation to grocery stores.
- Adult children often are able to eat out because a parent pays.

Quotes from Focus Groups

Rural Residents

- "I don't go out of town shopping because I don't have a car."
- "It costs you five bucks just to drive to the next town and get food and come back."
- "And there are farms around where you can go and get milk and eggs, various different crops that they have...it's generally cheaper, but not always."
- "I think basically if the problem [food insecurity] is known, the community will work it out...if there are problems, it's basically not general knowledge."
- "I like the [name of senior center]...oh, my Lord, I love their clam chowder. I walk from here to there to get some of their clam chowder."
- Regarding food security, "I don't think so. I think the food is available and they could get it if they want it."

Urban Residents

- "...basically there aren't any small grocery stores [in our neighborhood]."
- "The transportation is lousy."
- "I would have to walk the six blocks to number three [bus] and then take a bus to [name of grocery store] and then walk back...with enough groceries that would last three or four days, because my son is a chowhound. I couldn't carry it all; it's impossible."
- "The churches take good care of us. It's basically the community donating to the community."

Community Food Assessment Project, 2001-2003

CHARACTERISTIC	RURAL				URBAN			
	COUNTY 1		COUNTY 2		NEIGHBORHOOD 3		NEIGHBORHOOD 4	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Population (2000)	8,999		8,016		6,232		10,487	
Median Age	36.4 years		38.7 years		33.1 years		29.5 years	
65 and over	1,535	17.7	1,566	19.5	513	8.0	1,077	10.0
under 18 years	2,002	23.0	2,032	25.3	2,216	36.7	3,058	30.0
Race/Ethnicity (alone and combination)								
White	8,468	97.5	7,925	98.9	1,821	29	7,372	70
Black/African American	101	1.2	33	.4	2,715	44	2,148	20
Asian	89	1.0	41	.5	755	12	449	4
Hispanic/Latino	148	1.7	40	.5	975	16	1,248	12
Native American Indian	65	.7	48	.6	43	1	183	2
Number of Households								
Female house with children under 18 years	173	5.2	178	5.5	369	6	517	5
Householder living alone	1,010	30.3	903	28.0	348	6	779	7
Average family size	2.96		2.97		2.80		2.50	
Number of Grocery Stores	2		2		0		1	
Number of Food Pantries	3		1		3		2	
Number of Emergency Kitchens	0		0		2		3	
Number of Senior Meal Sites	2		1		2		1	
Number of Farmer Markets	1		1		2		2	
COUNTY								
Per Capita Income (State of Iowa \$25,598)	\$16,436		\$22,739		\$32,182		\$26,462	
Housing								
Total housing units	3,833		3,588		85,067		41,350	
Occupied housing units	3,337	87.1	3,228	90.0	80,504	94.6	39,124	94.6
Renter occupied	965	28.9	697	21.6	28,385	33.4	13,626	33.0
Number of Farms	730		691		800		799	
Food Stamps (2000)								
Number of households	310		221		6,912		4,345	
Percent of all residents	7.1%		6.0%		4.3%		6.8%	
Age-adjusted Mortality (1990-1998)	888.5 per 100,000		864.8 per 100,000		848.6 per 100,000		894.1 per 100,000	
Heart disease mortality	282.8 per 100,000		291.8 per 100,000		287.9 per 100,000		297.4 per 100,000	
Cancer mortality	207.1 per 100,000		197.2 per 100,000		210.6 per 100,000		208.8 per 100,000	
Diabetes mortality	13.8 per 100,000		14.9 per 100,000		17.2 per 100,000		15.8 per 100,000	
Registered Voters	5,127		4,977		225,149		83,874	
(President) % voted 2000 (November)	72.2%		73.6%		75.6%		75.4%	
State of Iowa percent voted (71.6%)								
Percent voted 1998 (November)	58.3%		53.8%		56.3%		50.4%	