

Literature Review

Food deserts are a major component of structural violence which impacts community wellness in places like Trenton, NJ. The availability of fresh produce is critical to community health. A chapter in *The Farm Bill: A Citizen's Guide* discusses the technical definition of a food desert and the underlying causes such as farm bill policies, trade, and economic infrastructure and contrasts them with “food swamps” or areas with a high concentration of unhealthy, fast food chains (Imhoff 2019). According to the chapter, farmers markets (they provide an example from San Francisco, CA) are effective at providing fresh produce to those who live in food deserts or swamps - especially when they use or match nutritional benefit programs (Imhoff). Additionally, the education and friendship gained from interactions with vendors are factors that attract and retain customers (Imhoff 2019).

Studies have shown that having interactions between farmers and customers beyond that of simply a customer-vendor relationship is crucial to improving the overall health of communities that are affected by food deserts. A study of two farmers markets that operate near a food desert and that have two distinct ways of operating was performed. One of the markets fostered strong interpersonal interactions between farmers, staff, and customers, while the other market seemed more like a place where the customers were there to pay for goods and services rendered by vendors (Larimore 2017). Essentially, the second market did not seem to have an interest in the plight of those who live in a food desert, and Larimore notes that this market seemed to have significantly less customers than the first market despite being just several miles apart. By conceptualizing themselves as providers rather than educators, producers at the first market fostered a sense of community and willingness of customers to benefit from the services and programs offered by the market, leading to increased customer engagement and trust in the market, as the market signaled to those impacted by the food desert that they are there to help them (Larimore 2017). It's clear that how a farmers' market treats its customers is crucial to the overall health of the community it serves, and that certain types of interactions between market staff and customers may be detrimental to the overall health of the community.

A coop grocery store, The Good Food Junction (GFJ), in Canada was analyzed to assess its effectiveness in combating the local food desert (Lotoski et al 2015). It is located walking distance from four low-income, minority neighborhoods and, for a \$5 CDN fee, provides a lifetime membership and stake in GFJ. In addition to fresh produce, it hosts a community kitchen, organizations and meetings, and research offices (Lotoski et al 2015). It was found to reach approximately 70 percent of the targeted community and successfully filled the need for a local grocery store in the former food desert. Like Greenwood Ave, it provided more than just produce; it addressed other gaps crucial to improving the community's quality of life such as facilitating relationship building and providing educational workshops.

Another article discusses the trend of local food, questioning whether it is a fad or food of the future (Ikerd 2020). According to the article, the availability of local and organic produce in commercial stores is increasing and may threaten farmers markets. It may disincentivize going to local markets for produce due to

their increased availability in supermarkets making them more convenient (Ikerd 2020). This is an important trend to note as it may threaten the future of local markets. However, the other services offered at Greenwood Ave may protect it from being crowded out by supermarkets. It is worth considering whether developing and expanding the market in a way similar to the GFJ is a viable and beneficial option for the Trenton community.

In addition to the Farm Bill book, a study found that offering incentives at farmers' markets for those who receive SNAP or WIC benefits helps increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables (F&V) of those families (Bowling, Moretti, et al 2016). These families did not replace the amount of SNAP benefits they spent on F&V but used the incentives to add onto what they already spent on F&V (Bowling, Moretti, et al 2016). The Green Bucks program that the Greenwood Avenue Farmers' Market is offering is beneficial to the community because it allows the community's intake of F&V to increase which correlates to a decrease in the risk or severity of diet-based illnesses. Increasing F&V intake for these families can then lead to improved health for them and the community that they make up.

Research on the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) found that the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables (FFV) increased for seniors who participated in the program (Wilson 2017). It also recommended that senior-specific nutrition education and culturally relevant cooking classes be offered (Wilson 2017). Finally, the study argues that the network seniors build at farmers' markets can also be another source of food security (Wilson 2017). Greenwood Avenue Farmers' Market not only helps the seniors in the community by accepting SFMNP vouchers which helps increase their intake of FFV, but to ensure that the seniors who qualify actually receive these vouchers, they have a table at the farmers' market with a social worker to help seniors apply for the vouchers. A suggestion moving forward is for the nutrition education to include senior-specific information where necessary and to ensure that cooking classes are culturally appropriate, which will benefit all community members, not just seniors. Studies on promotion of home cooking have shown it to be a powerful creator of "promising results on a range of outcomes including improved diet, positive food choices and other health outcomes" (Raber 2016).

Studies on the role of community participation and recreation in farmers markets have shown both to be vital to the success of the markets and have shown that "the recreation occurring at the farmers' market strengthens community bonds" (Farmer 2018). Coordinating with community partners can be incredibly helpful in generating community engagement early on when founding markets. As one study showed, "[t]he existence of a community-based partner committed to advocating for a farmers' market is immeasurable, not only for coordination but also for marketing and outreach to the community" (Young 2011).

A study on mobile health clinics in the Colonias found "a high prevalence of obesity, hypertension, diabetes, and depression" in two impoverished Colonias, but "mobile clinics increase access and address highly prevalent illnesses in the Colonias" (Manusov, Diego, et al 2019). Although Henry J. Austin Health Center has multiple locations in the Trenton area, the mobile health clinic they bring to the farmers' market

benefits the community by further increasing their access to healthcare. Instead of requiring transportation to separate locations, community members can buy healthy food and address health concerns with a nurse practitioner in the same location. Low income areas tend to have high percentages of certain illnesses and the mobile health clinic effectively addresses them within the community. Addressing the health of community members suffering from or at risk of illnesses helps promote the wellbeing of the individuals, their families, and the overall community.

Another study on mobile health clinics, but in Appalachia, concluded that “the mobile health clinic staff disrupted traditional health care scripts and (re)wrote the scripts of privacy and disclosure” (Carmack 2010). As a nontraditional setting of healthcare, the mobile health clinic at the farmers’ market has the capacity to and probably does rewrite the scripts of healthcare, privacy, and disclosure compared to typical healthcare settings. With this opportunity to rewrite the scripts, this can be done in a way that creates trust between the community and healthcare providers, and efforts can be started to ensure that patients are afforded the privacy that they need and would normally receive, even if receiving care on a van. Rewriting how healthcare is offered through the mobile health clinic in a way that targets community-specific needs will help increase community wellness in areas that they specifically need improvement or aid in.

Works Cited

Bowling, April B., Mikayla Moretti, Kayla Ringelheim, Alvin Tran, and Kirsten Davison. "Healthy Foods, Healthy Families: Combining Incentives and Exposure Interventions at Urban Farmers' Markets to Improve Nutrition among Recipients of US Federal Food Assistance." *Health Promotion Perspectives* 6, no. 1 (2016): 10–16. <https://doi.org/10.15171/hpp.2016.02>.

Summary: This article discusses how incentives and engaging activities increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables by those with SNAP or WIC benefits.

Carmack, Heather J. "What Happens on the Van, Stays on the Van?: The (Re)Structuring of Privacy and Disclosure Scripts on an Appalachian Mobile Health Clinic." *Qualitative Health Research* 20, no. 10 (July 2010): 1393–1405. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732310372618>.

Summary: This article discusses how mobile health clinics can change privacy, disclosure, and health scripts compared to what is typically found in normal healthcare settings.

Farmer, J. R., Chancellor, C., Gooding, A., Shubowitz, D., & Bryant, A. (2018). A Tale of Four Farmers Markets: Recreation and Leisure as a Catalyst for Sustainability. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 23(3).

Summary: This article discusses how farmers markets can catalyze healthier communities by serving as places of leisure and recreation.

Ikerd, J. (2020). The Economic Pamphleteer: Local food: Another food fad or food of the future? *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2020.093.005>

Summary: This article discusses the recent increased availability of fresh, local produce in supermarkets and the potential threat this poses to farmers markets.

Imhoff, D., & Badaracco, C. (2019). "Chapter 17: Food Security." *The Farm Bill: A Citizen's Guide*. Island Press.

Summary: This book chapter discusses the effects of farm bills on creating food deserts and the way farmers markets can combat food deserts by providing affordable fresh produce.

Larimore, Savannah. "Cultural Boundaries to Access in Farmers Markets Accepting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)." *Qualitative Sociology* 41, no. 1 (2017): 63–87. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-017-9370-y>.

Summary: In this article, the author conducted an ethnographic study to better understand why farmers' markets often fail to reach the very communities they set out to serve. Larimore notes how differences in relationships between customers and market staff have an impact on overall community health.

Larisa C. Lotoski, Rachel Engler-Stringer, and Nazeem Muhajarine. "Cross-sectional Analysis of a Community-based Cooperative Grocery Store Intervention in Saskatoon, Canada." *Canadian Journal of Public Health / Revue Canadienne De Santé Publique* 106, no. 3 (2015): E147-153. www.jstor.org/stable/canajpublheal.106.3.e147.

Summary: This article is a study done on the effectiveness of a cooperative grocery store at combating food deserts and fostering community in minority neighborhoods.

Manusov, Eron G., Vincent P. Diego, Jacob Smith, Jesús R. Garza, John Lowdermilk, John Blangero, Sarah Williams-Blangero, and Francisco Fernandez. "UniMóvil: A Mobile Health Clinic Providing Primary Care to the Colonias of the Rio Grande Valley, South Texas." *Frontiers in Public Health* 7 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2019.00215>.

Summary: This article discusses the positive impact of mobile health clinics due to their increased ability to reach people and address their needs.

Raber, M., Chandra, J., Upadhyaya, M., Schick, V., Strong, L. L., Durand, C., & Sharma, S. (2016). An evidence-based conceptual framework of healthy cooking. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 4, 23-28. doi:10.1016/j.pmedr.2016.05.004

Summary: This article studies the health benefits of cooking at home and in particular in lowering rates of obesity and cardiovascular issues.

Wilson, Kellie O'Dare. "Community Food Environments and Healthy Food Access among Older Adults: A Review of the Evidence for the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)." *Social Work in Health Care* 56, no. 4 (2017): 227-43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00981389.2016.1265631>.

Summary: This article discusses how the SFMNP increases the intake of fresh fruits and vegetables for seniors.

Young, C., Karpyn, A., Uy, N., Wich, K., & Glyn, J. (2011). *Farmers' markets in low income communities: impact of community environment, food programs and public policy. Community Development*, 42(2), 208-220. doi:10.1080/15575330.2010.551663

Summary: This article focuses on a group of farmers markets in the Philadelphia area and enumerates the important factors in creating a successful farmers market including the choice of a good location, engagement with community partners, and effective organizational tactics.