Angwin Food Pantry: Factors that Affect Arrival Time

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the hours of operation when more customers arrived and to determine if ethnicity and family size affected arrival time. Of 38 heads of household observed, more arrived during the first hour of operation, but ethnicity and family size did not affect arrival time.

Introduction

Hunger has been an ongoing concern in America and is increasingly prevalent—no longer linked only to natural disasters or emergencies. Koch (2010) found that one in eight Americans utilized food assistance services (like Food Stamps) and one in five children received help from these services. Clancy, Bowering, and Poppendieck (1991) found that although food pantries were once only used as a last resort, they have become a regular means of obtaining food. Even in affluent communities like Angwin, California, levels of food insecurity are between 10 and 15 percent (Gregory, Hernandez, Broeckel, & Butler, 2010). This high level of need led to the development of the Angwin Food Pantry (AFP).

Bartfeld (2003) found that Food Stamps are actually becoming harder to obtain, leading more families, mostly single-parent households, to turn to food pantries for assistance. This might also explain why more non-white consumers, some who have lost Food Stamps due to their immigration status, use food pantries more than white consumers (Bowering, Clancy, Poppendieck, 1991). Programs like the AFP assist those who may not have access to government benefits.

The Social Work Forum at Pacific Union College operates the AFP, which provides food assistance to families living in Angwin and Pope Valley, California. In order to maximize customers' access to the AFP, it is important to understand which hours of operation are used the most. The purpose of this study was to identify the prime hours of operation and to determine if family size and ethnicity affected arrival time.

Method

Participants

Participants were 28 AFP customers who received assistance on January 20th and 27th, 2011. Family sizes ranged from one to seven members (1-3 members, 16, 42%; 4-6 members, 21, 55%; 7+ members 1, 3%). Their ethnicities were Hispanic/Latino (29, 76%) and non-Hispanic/non-Latino (9, 24%).

Materials

The AFP uses Customer Record sheets to record each new customer's address, family size, and ethnicity. Each week a customer uses the AFP, their Customer Record is updated with the number of items taken. For this study a separate check sheet was used to record each customer's arrival time

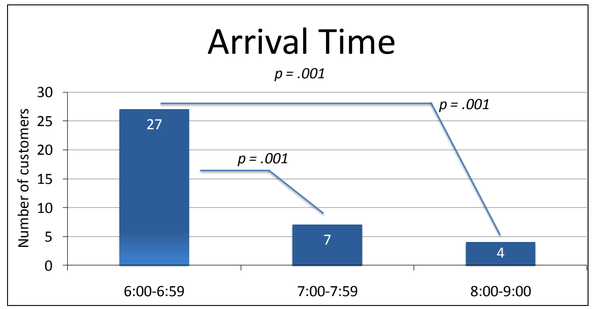
Procedure

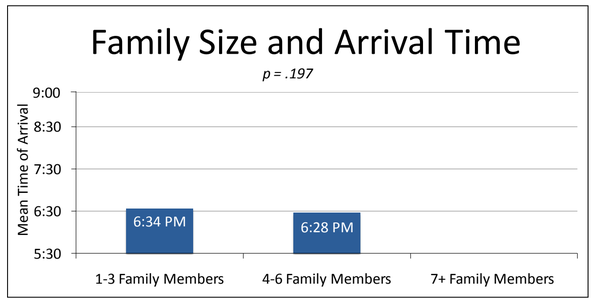
Serving as pantry volunteers, we assigned participants a place in line as they arrived and used a check sheet to record their arrival times in two-minute increments starting at 5:30 pm and ending at 9:00 pm. When it was a customer's turn to shop, we pulled their Customer Record sheet and recorded their family size and ethnicity on the arrival time check sheet. We also recorded customer names in order to avoid repeat participation in the study. These names were removed after all data was collected.

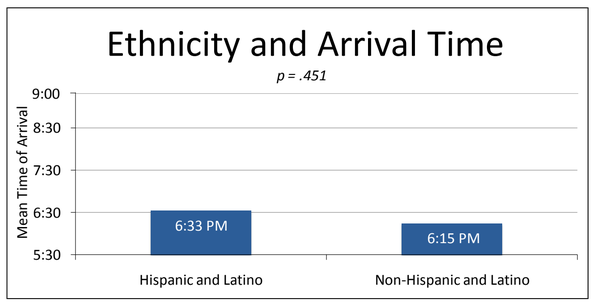
Results

While more AFP customers' arrived before or during the first hour of operation (6:00 pm to 7:00 pm), family size and ethnicity did not factor into arrival time: (a) arrival time, χ^2 (2, N = 38) = 24.68, p = .001, (b) family size, F (2, 35) = 1.70, p = .197, (c) ethnicity, t (36) = .76, p = .451.

We conducted follow-up one sample chi square analyses to evaluate pairwise differences among the three arrival time groups, controlling for Type I error across tests using the Holm's sequential Bonferroni approach. More customers arrived before or during the first hour of operation (6:00 pm to 7:00 pm) than during the second hour of operation (7:00 pm to 8:00 pm), χ^2 (1, N = 34) = 11.77, p = .001, or third hour of operation (8:00 pm to 9:00pm), χ^2 (1, N = 31) = 17.07, p = .001. There was no difference in the number of customers who arrived during the second and third hours of operation, χ^2 (1, N = 11) = .81, p = .366.







Discussion

This study was designed to discover the prime hours at the AFP and to assess how family size and ethnicity affect the arrival time of customers. We found that more customers arrived before or during the first hour of operation and that arrival time of customers was not affected by family size or ethnicity. Given these findings the AFP should consider opening and closing the pantry earlier.

In 1991, Bowering, Clancy, and Poppendieck found that more non-white customers use food assistance than white customers. The present study supported their research, with 76% of participants being Hispanic or Latino. However, there was no difference in the arrival time of Hispanic or Latino customers when compared to non-Hispanic or non-Latino customers. While ethnicity did not affect arrival time, the AFP should consider the food preferences of their customer base when stocking the pantry.

Arrival time was not affected by family size. This said, with one in five children being dependent on food assistance programs (Koch, 2010), the AFP may want to consider family size when determining food item limits for each customer. It might also be beneficial to ask pantry customers to complete a customer satisfaction survey that includes questions related to preferred hours of operation.

References

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