

COPIING WITH FOOD VULNERABILITY:  
THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN THE LIVES  
OF MISSOURI FOOD PANTRY CLIENTS

Jennifer J. Beggs

Dr. Joan M. Hermsen, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This paper utilizes data from *Coping with Hunger: Food Pantry Clients in the Central Missouri Food Bank Region* (2005) to better understand the ways in which informal social networks are utilized by families and individuals coping with food insecurity. Social networks included family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors. Descriptive and multivariate analyses indicate that utilization of these networks vary by gender, race, education, and marital status, among other characteristics. The findings of this study indicate that social networks are concentric, meaning that people tend to rely primarily on family, followed by friends, then neighbors and coworkers. The number of reported hardships is found to be highly significant in influencing who persons are likely to turn to.