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A Social Innovation: Addressing Relative Food Insecurity and Social Exclusion

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‘Food insecurity’ is a relative phenomenon, as the perceived applicability of the definition will vary depending on the area of the world it is being studied in. Development, whilst not as crucial to the Minority world as it is to the Majority world, should still be strived towards, even in already ‘developed’ nations.

This paper focuses on the case study of relative food insecurity, manifested in the issue of Dutch children who are unable to afford the ‘culturally appropriate foods’ used to celebrate birthdays in the Netherlands, and how this can have a domino effect on such children’s mental and social wellbeing.

It analyses a solution known as the ‘Jarige Job’ scheme, which provides such children with a ‘birthday box’ containing birthday-appropriate resources. The paper concludes with a comprehensive advocacy of the scheme; whilst acknowledging the gap in severity between absolute food insecurity and relative food insecurity, they highlight the necessity of programmes like birthday boxes which continue to bridge socio-economic divides.

[#FoodInsecurity](#) [#SocialInnovation](#) [#LegitimacySocialExclusion](#) [#Children](#)

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Background

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Context



- There has been an upsurge in demand for food assistance in high income-countries in recent years. **Reported rates of food insecurity have increased in several high-income Western nations**, and vary between 5%-25%, matching an increase in reliance on food banks to alleviate food insecurity in countries of this profile.
- Food insecurity **can amplify issues such as social exclusion** when individuals are unable to participate in cultural traditions and celebrations.
- The Netherlands’ food bank infrastructure **reflects the philosophy that assistance to relieve food insecurity should be temporary**, recipients must be below a certain income threshold, and the National Foodbank Foundation of the Netherlands limits access to the service to only three years.
- The wider Dutch approach to the issue of poverty is **to focus on the social injustices which have driven people into such circumstances, rather than demean or undermine the character of the poor**. This is reflected in the National Welfare provided, called ‘Bijstand’, which even includes a separate provision for holidays. However, because of this, **the assumption is that such cover should be sufficient, and the need for foodbanks nullified**, directly clashing with the widespread existence and use of foodbanks in the Netherlands.

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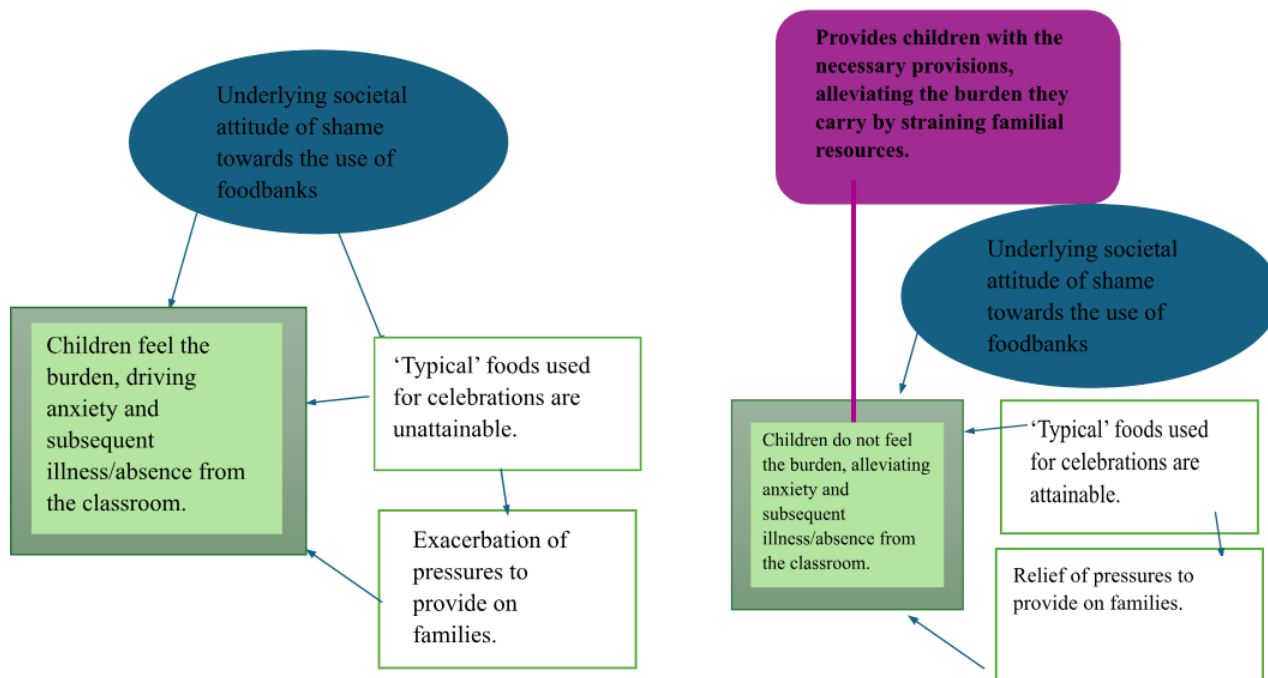
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Take aways & Learnings



- In order to analyse the approach to relative food insecurity, a case study of the 'Jarige Jobs' birthday boxes' scheme was conducted, analysing the revenue, cost development, staff and produce of the scheme from 2012 to 2016.
- **Concluding that the scheme's emphasis on children's birthdays creates a compelling narrative and provoke an emotive response which resonates with volunteers and donors**, and thereby enhancing the program's legitimacy and support.
- Both the paper and the programme referenced draw on the **consequences** of relative food insecurity, such as **absenteeism from schools and feelings of shame inflicted by the Dutch attitude towards food bank usage**.
- 'Jarige Jobs' deflects such notions of shame, as the subject concerned is young children, who have no control over the financial activity of their families. In turn, **this legitimises the issue of relative food insecurity in spite of the adopted attitude in the Netherlands**.
- When utilising a case study, particularly one in which all the groups studied were anonymised, the research and resulting conclusions are **limited in their ability to be applied universally**. However, it succeeds in **providing comprehensive results on an overlooked subject and** can be used for future work to **combat relative food insecurity**.

Explaining the effects of relative food insecurity: How the Jarige Jobs scheme helps:



ERNOP Research Notes provide easy-to-read, practice-oriented summaries of academic articles on philanthropy and are written by practitioner experts. This ERNOP Research Note 2024/22 is published in September 2024 and has been written by Joseph Steet from Centre for European Volunteering. More information can be found at www.ernop.eu.