

***Changes in the Role of Government Under
Neoliberalism and Food Bank Innovations***

By

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ABSTRACT

Keynesianism became an outdated theory due to its over-reliance on full employment through the labour market demand and supply control and the invisible market control system, which increased inflation and unemployment. After the collapse of Keynesianism and the great depression in society, neoliberalism arose as the solution to the problems created by the Keynesian economic and political paradigm. Neoliberalism is based on the free-market system and the individualism-based self-responsibility concept in the success of a person's life. Countries pioneered neoliberal practices mainly in Europe, the U.K., and the U.S., where substantial tax cuts and continuous welfare reforms were implemented. Therefore, the government contribution or participation in social welfare programs was gradually withdrawn, while new public management policies encouraged public-private partnerships and private interventions in public service provision. Consequently, to fill this gap in the social welfare needs of the populations in the U.K. and the U.S., non-governmental and charitable food organisations stepped up to provide food distribution and relief from hunger. However, there was a greater need to resolve hunger's root causes and address poverty as a widespread problem in many communities. In the U.S. state of Alabama, three food banks, partners of the Feeding America food bank network, have introduced innovations beyond the usual scope of food bank activities. These innovations provide evidence of the influence of the government's role change under neoliberalism which has prompted food banks to identify opportunities and implement new programs to meet the unique challenges of increasing food insecurity. This research shows that progressive food banks in the U.S. are moving from stand-alone emergency food services to long-term, community-wide strategies that address the core causes of food insecurity. This study's key food bank innovations are establishing grassroots advocacy groups, financial credit and revolving loan funds, worker cooperatives, housing security, neighbourhood food hubs, mothers' milk bank, and benefits enrolment centres. These

innovative initiatives go well beyond the normal operations of food banks, mainly aimed at food supply and distribution, and demonstrate a more humanitarian and forward-thinking attempt at addressing the longer-term, underlying causes of poverty and food insecurity in the state of Alabama.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and does not contain any material that another person has written except where due reference is made in the text. The research within will not be submitted for any other future degree or diploma without the permission of Flinders University. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not include any material that has been accepted in substantial part for the award of any other degree or diploma by any university or other institution of higher education.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program
CDFI	Community Development Finance Institute
CFBCA	Community Food Bank of Central Alabama
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
DPAD	Development Policy Analysis Division
EITC	Earned Income Tax Credit
FA	Feeding America
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FFC	Famer Food Collaborative
FTGC	Feeding the Gulf Coast
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HMBANA	Human Milk Bank Association North America
LLC	Limited Liability Company
MMBA	Mother's Milk Bank Alabama
MPIN	Meal Per-Person in Need
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NFPs	Not-for-Profit organisations

NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SSA	Social Structure Accumulation
TEFAP	The Emergency Food Assistance Program
UN/DESA	United Nations Department of Economic Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
SFSP	Summer Food Service Program
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SSI	Supplementary Security Income
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
U.K.	United Kingdom
U.S.	United States of America
USD	United States Dollar
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WFO	World Food Organisation

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Food insecurity is when people and families do not constantly have regular access to sufficient nutritious food to meet their nutritional requirements. Based on that definition, there are classifications of the groups of people affected by food insecurity according to the level of access to food throughout the year. A fundamental challenge in modern capitalist society is that a vast sector of the population cannot eat healthily every day (Long 2020). Conceptually, "food security" implies that all family members can consistently access sufficient food of high enough nutritional quality for an active and healthy lifestyle (Coleman-Jensen 2021). According to Coleman-Jensen (2021), food insecurity can be classified as food insecurity, low food insecurity, and very low insecurity. Food insecurity refers to instances in which families cannot purchase or obtain appropriate food for one or more household members due to a lack of money and other resources. Low food insecurity refers to people who are able to avoid significant decreases or disruptions in their food intake by depending on a few basic meals and minimising variety in their diets (Coleman-Jensen, 2021). Very low food security indicates that families are food insecure to the degree that the eating habits of one or more household members are disturbed. This means that their food intake is lowered, at least sporadically, throughout the year due to the inability to acquire adequate food (Coleman-Jensen, 2021).

In 2020, only 89.5 per cent of households in the United States had enough food for the entire year, while 13.8 million households, or 10.5% of all American households, experienced food insecurity at some point in the year. Moreover, 3.9% (5.1 million households) experience very low food security, which suggests that despite the U.S. being a wealthy, developed

country, food insecurity is a significant problem that urgently needs to be addressed (Coleman-Jensen, 2021).

Due to the widespread problem of food insecurity since the welfare state collapsed, food banks have emerged as the frontline defence against hunger and food insecurity issues in many economically developed countries (Garland 2016). Thus, food banking has reduced the number of people suffering from hunger and poverty, replacing the government's role of social welfare in the free market concept (Riches 2018). The social and economic ideologies of the post-war decades were overturned by the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, including substantial tax cuts, privatisation, and minimal government policies that made the government a facilitator for the free market functions (Garland 2016). When alleviating hunger, the neoliberal, capitalist world has relied heavily on food aid and charitable donations (Long 2020). Therefore, food banks have a critical role to play in the field of hunger relief (Feeding America 2022).

This chapter discusses neoliberalism, the role of government, and the role of the food banks and other actors in the neoliberal changes. In the second chapter, the development of neoliberalism in the U.S. is discussed with a brief introduction to Keynesianism and the effect of the neoliberalism concepts in the field of social welfare due to the change in the role of government. The focus then turns to the food banks that have stepped into the field of food security and hunger relief and the innovations in the hunger and poverty relief programs that have been introduced. Finally, the concluding chapter discusses the study's findings, implications, and recommendations.

1.1.1 Broad issues

Keynesian welfare state policies characterised post-World War II economic policies in the U.S., while the U.K. and other countries in Western Europe also adopted comparable policy approaches. In general, welfare states have five institutional pillars: social insurance, social assistance, publicly financed social services, social work and personal social services, and economic governance, which developed policies for the betterment of the public (Garland 2016). Social welfare assistance programs, social insurance, employee protection laws, and social income support programs are established for income redistribution and to improve equity. In contrast, the government provides education, healthcare, child care, public transportation, and legal assistance services to empower citizens (Garland 2016). These policies coincided with the post-war global economic boom and an extended period of economic prosperity that lasted for three decades. By 1979, however, the oil crisis and stock market crash in the U.S. had led to a recession and rampant inflation. Hence, the government and financial sector introduced neoliberal economic policies that were viewed at the time as the solution to the escalating inflation crisis (Long et al. 2020). Neoliberalism has been widely criticised as a problematic economic and social philosophy that leads to dismantling social welfare systems and creating social injustice. Consequently, the neoliberal approach to government tends to disadvantage marginalised and vulnerable people while also causing a widening of the gap between the rich and poor. In both the U.K. and the U. S, poverty and inequality increased as a result of the reduction in social welfare benefits arising from the small government concept of neoliberalism (Long 2020). Along with the economic philosophies of neoliberal capitalism came a discourse emphasising the importance of personal responsibility for failures rather than the structural causes of capitalism (Long 2020). After the Great Depression, World War II, and the austerity that followed, people learned that we are all in this together. However, decades of peace and prosperity brought back social fragmentation and a less collectivist way of thinking.

Consumer capitalism made this increased individualism possible, which made markets increasingly different; they used advertising and put considerable emphasis on lifestyle choices and individuality (Garland, 2016). Thus, it became more widely accepted that individuals have the responsibility to be successful, and it is not a matter of the government supporting them (Garland, 2016).

The average adult income in the U.S. in 2020 was USD77,090. However, there is a tremendous disparity between the wealthy and the poor. While the bottom 50% earn only USD20,520 per person on average, the top 10% earn 17 times as much (USD350,440) (Coleman-Jensen, 2021). Therefore, despite the high average Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in the U.S., there is a need for ongoing efforts to reduce poverty and food insecurity in vulnerable sections of the population where low income and poor employment prospects are prevalent (Long et al. 2020; Zekeri 2010). Furthermore, according to Long et al. (2020), two aspects of high complexity capitalism, including the application of neoliberal economic policies and the growing income disparity, are the leading causes of poverty, food insecurity, and related social problems in the wealthy, developed countries. Neoliberalism in the U.S. restructured the state's functions, led to changes for the traditional welfare state, and introduced a free-market economy with austerity measures to reduce the costs of welfare provision for the marginalised citizens. These circumstances have created opportunity and the requirement for the food bank concept and other actors to narrow the gap with short-term food supply and redistribution programs for the needy. Thus, food banks have sought to compensate for the rollback of the state in addressing the issue of food security. Therefore, Riches (2002) argued that “as welfare states have been restructured and cut back and basic entitlements have been denied, food banks have become secondary extensions of weakened social safety nets”.

1.1.2 Implications of the research

Since its implementation, research has found that neoliberal policy changes have increased income inequalities, poverty, and food insecurity (Harvey 2020; Long et al. 2020; Taylor & Loopstra 2016). Furthermore, the neoliberal revolution that began in 1979 made it clear that the state was not primarily responsible for assisting those in need; instead, that was the responsibility of civil society and charitable organisations that are increasingly reporting to the state (Long 2020). The increase in the need for food banks in the U.S. and the U.K., particularly after the 2008 financial crisis, was primarily brought on by social security benefit delays, denial of basic entitlements, and low income. The combination of political factors and welfare reforms is the main reason for the demand for food banks (Mook, Murdock & Gundersen 2020). Hence, as income inequality, health issues, and other social issues have grown in the U.S. since 2008, the food bank has played a significant role in addressing poverty and hunger due to the change in the role of the government under the neoliberal concept (Elmes, Mendoza-Abarca & Hersh 2016).

1.1.3 Statement of the problem

The 2008–2009 recession highlighted the failings of neoliberal economic policy and inequality and poverty in advanced capitalist countries. Middle and lower classes bore the brunt of neoliberal capitalism financial institutions' failure in the developed world. The recession increased food insecurity, disproportionately affecting low-income households and increasing overall food insecurity and poverty (Long 2020). According to Steger and Roy (2010), in the first neoliberalism wave of the 1980s, U.S. President Ronald Reagan played a significant role in introducing neoliberal reforms, implementing substantial tax cuts, and reducing welfare facilities by introducing several key welfare policies. In the second era of the 1990s, President Clinton introduced huge policy barriers for the marginalised people to receive welfare benefits. Furthermore, during the continuing neoliberal movement and the 2008 great recession, U.S. income inequality widened, indicating the failure of

neoliberal capitalist economic policies in addressing poverty and hunger. As a result, many people suffer from food insecurity (Long 2020).

1.2 Aim and Objective of the research

This research aims to determine the effect of neoliberalism on government's role in providing social welfare and hunger and poverty reduction, how that role changes, and what impact it has on food bank innovations. Since the adoption of neoliberalism policies in the U.S., food banks in the modern era have a significant role in addressing hunger and poverty with the cooperation of the federal government welfare program (Strickland & Whitman 2020). This research aims to understand the increasing responsibility and importance of food banks in developed countries, such as the U.S. and Britain, as a critical safety net for people living in poverty and food insecurity. Moreover, the research aims to identify and examine the most creative innovations introduced by three food banks in the U.S. state of Alabama. These innovations demonstrate how effective food banks can be and can motivate other food banks to go beyond the normal scope of their operations by addressing the root causes of poverty and hunger in the communities they serve.

1.3 Research questions

This research project examines the following interrelated questions:

- 1) How has neoliberalism changed the role of government in addressing hunger and poverty?**
- 2) How has this change affected the role of food banks in advanced economies?**

These research questions are designed to understand how the government's role has changed within the neoliberalism concept regarding addressing poverty and hunger. Worldwide there is a debate in the literature on the death of neoliberalism, the impact of neoliberalism on welfare policies, and questions about what comes next. The effect of

neoliberalism is the aspect that has been most researched because neoliberalism has not ended yet; neoliberalism is changing the dimension of liberalism and emerging from time to time with new strength (Steger & Roy 2010). Therefore, this research aims to understand the impact of the neoliberalism conceptual changes on addressing poverty and hunger and the impact on the creative acts of the food banks.

1.4 Significance of the research

The literature on food insecurity in advanced capitalist states is extensive, with most English language research being conducted in the U.S., the U.K., and Canada. Furthermore, the U.S., U.K., and Canada use welfare reforms to reduce social welfare expenditure (Hossain, Long & Stretesky 2020). This research will provide insight into the effects of neoliberalism in the U.S. and the rise of food banks to compensate for the state's withdrawal from welfare provision. Research in the literature on innovations in food bank operations is scarce, and many of the most recent developments are yet to be described in the academic literature. Therefore, examining these critical initiatives and tracking their progress may be a valuable contribution that this study can make to fill a gap in the body of published information on the topic. By narrowing the study's focus to three food banks in Alabama, the research will gain a greater, more in-depth understanding of the importance of the innovations implemented there in eradicating poverty and hunger. The findings from this study will deepen understanding of food bank functions and innovative approaches adopted in the neoliberal context of the U.S. and may inform and be of benefit to other food banks that aim to provide improved services to their communities.

1.5 Methodology

Research involves gathering, analysing, and interpreting data to understand a phenomenon. The research process is methodical in that it follows pre-established

frameworks and current regulations to define the purpose, manage the data, and communicate the findings. The frameworks and recommendations give researchers advice on what to include in the study, how to conduct the study, and what conclusions are likely to be drawn from the data gathered (Williams 2007). This research belongs to the quantitative research methodology approach, which requires textual data. The advancements in computer technology, databases, software, statistical techniques, and formal models have led to revolutionary developments in research methodologies over the past forty years (George 2005). As a result of the increasing number of researches on qualitative and formal methods, academics found that case studies and historical works appear outdated and noncumulative. Therefore, researchers developed the method of comparative analysis in social sciences (Esser 2017). Comparative analysis helps to enhance the understanding of the environment of the study, which is more familiar than the other selected section and gives a better understanding of the similarities and patterns of the compared scenario. Therefore, this research has selected the three food banks located in Alabama in the U.S. with similarities in the sector of innovations in feeding hunger. This research selected three Alabama food banks to understand innovative activities of the food banks and compared to understand how the neoliberal political changes driven the food banks to innovate new sectors to expand and address poverty and hunger.

Although there are many research methods employed by social science researchers, such as case studies, participatory observations, observations, interviews, and questionnaires, the literature review method is helpful in collecting the current research findings and existing knowledge in the published body of literature (Esser 2017; Snyder 2019). A broad definition of a literature review is that it is a methodical method of compiling and summarising prior research. An efficient and well-conducted literature review provides a solid framework for knowledge expansion and the facilitation of theory building (Snyder 2019). This strategy might be specialised, such as examining the impact of the relationship between two

particular variables, or it can be more general, such as evaluating the body of evidence in a particular field of study (Snyder 2019). For instance, a review can be used to develop research objectives, identify research gaps, or simply to talk about a certain topic. Literature reviews might also be helpful if the goal is to construct a theory (Snyder 2019). Therefore, reliable data sources are needed to collect necessary data (Esser 2017). Commonly used criteria include the year of publication, the language of the paper, the type of article (e.g., conceptual, randomised controlled trial), and the journal (Snyder 2019).

This research collected secondary data by examining books, journal articles, internet publications, official website articles, and online research theses. However, it is crucial to remember that all decisions must be supported by rationales that can be verified. What literature is included and how it was chosen are crucial considerations regardless of the approach used to compile the work, affecting its overall quality (Snyder 2019). The collected data were mainly sourced through the Flinders University online library database, Google Scholar search engine, and other online databases and libraries, such as Z-library and Proquest. The collected data were mainly sourced through the Flinders University online library database, Google Scholar search engine, and other online databases and libraries such as Z-library and Proquest. The selected material, such as books and articles on the research subject, was scrutinised to select for the most recent and relevant data. With the vast collection of academic materials, such as e-books, peer-reviewed articles, physical books, and journals at Flinders University, reliable data collection was not complex. Instead, the difficulty was screening for the most reliable, trustworthy, refereed, and current works in the literature.

This research is a comparative study of the changes that take place in the role of government under neoliberalism policies and how these changes affect the innovations in food banks in economically developed countries. The study focuses on the U.S., the most significant example of a country that has practised neoliberalism since the 1980s (Cerny 2008). The

rise of neoliberalism as a functioning economic policy in the English-speaking world is most notably associated with the former U.S. President, Ronald Reagan (1981-1988) and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1979–1990) (Steger 2010). Although this period in history was characterised by massive economic development arising from a neoliberal revolution based on capitalist market economies, privatisation, and growth in free trade competition on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, Long (2020) has pointed out that while capitalist societies have large economies, they also have high levels of inequality, poverty, and a significant gap between the rich and the poor. Therefore, the selection of the scope of this research is based on its aim to reveal the key factors that demonstrate the influences of neoliberalism in addressing poverty and hunger in economically developed countries. Moreover, the change in government's role and impact on food banks innovations is revealed. In the advanced capitalist world, the neoliberal revolution that began in 1979 in the United Kingdom under Margaret Thatcher and in 1980 under Ronald Reagan exacerbated the inequality and poverty associated with capitalism. In addition, the neoliberals believed that the state was not primarily responsible for assisting those in need; civil society and charitable organisations were increasingly reporting to the state (Long, 2020). According to the International Monetary Foundation (2012), 'The country classification in the World Economic Outlook divides the world's nations into two major groups: 1) advanced economies and 2) emerging and developing economies. The U.S. is classified in the advanced economy category, falling into the major advanced economies (G7) category. Similarly, according to the country classification prepared by the Development Policy and Analysis Division (DPAD) of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (UN/DESA) (United Nations 2014). According to United Nations (2014), the U.S. is one of the leading countries in the 'major developed countries' category, along with the U.K., Canada, France, Germany, Italy, and Japan (see Figure 1). Furthermore, the U.S. is one of the countries in the high-income country category according to the classification of

Economies by Per Capita Gross National Income in 2012. Yet, despite its position among the top economic ranking nations of the world, the U.S. is also one of the most unequal societies with significant levels of poverty and inequality among its population of over 330 million (2022) (Chancel, 2021).

Figure removed due to copyright restriction

Figure 1. World Country Classification based on GDP. Source: United Nations Country Classification (2020).

To assist in narrowing the scope of this study, three food banks in the U.S. state of Alabama have been selected for examination because Alabama is among the most impoverished states in the U.S. To illustrate the extent of this problem, the poverty rate in Alabama was recently (2019) assessed by the U.S. Census Bureau at 13.9%, with the number of food insecure people living in the state estimated at 788 250. Though the income inequality rate is 16.5 % which is in 41st place in 2020, in overall poverty indication, Alabama is in 45th

rank, and the rate is 15.5% (Talk poverty, 2022). According to Amadeo and Feeding America (2022), poverty in these southeastern U.S. states is associated closely with poor health care outcomes, reduced access to basic food needs and stable housing, and increased risk of chronic disease and mortality. There are four main food banks in Alabama working under the Feeding America program in the U.S. The three food banks that are going to examine have similar innovations beyond the scope of the food bank (Strickland 2020). They have introduced special programs used today by the other food banks in the U.S. For instance, Feeding the Gulf Coast (FTGC) food bank has introduced the benefits enrollment center, which is essential for those who are eligible for government benefits has been implemented by Community Food Bank Central Alabama (CFBCA) (Strickland, 2020, pp. 556-561).

Furthermore, a considerable amount of research has been conducted on the innovations introduced by the Alabama North and Alabama Central food banks to address poverty and hunger in those locations (Duffy 1999, 2002; Strickland 2020). In addition, after Mississippi and Louisiana, Alabama has the third-highest national food insecurity rate. Three of the four Alabama food banks have introduced numerous innovative social programs, including an advocacy organisation, revolving loan fund, local food hub, mother's milk bank, and benefits enrolment centre. Most of these collaborative, cross-service area innovations are unique to the U.S. food banks (Strickland 2020). Furthermore, North Alabama's food bank successfully launched a multi-stakeholder cooperative food hub (Mook, 2020). Moreover, the scope of this research is the United States' political and economic backgrounds that developed with neoliberalism. More precisely, the study synthesises and compares the data that elaborates on the change in the state's role under neoliberalism and the role of welfare facilitators in addressing poverty and hunger. Moreover, it also assesses the innovations that food banks and other actors have implemented to address the change in addressing poverty and hunger in the U.S.

Neoliberalism is a vast domain of study with several different dimensions, which could lead to an overwhelming amount of information and result in a loss of focus for the researcher. Therefore, the focal point of this research moves from the broad subject of neoliberalism and narrows to an in-depth examination of the state's role in ideology, policy perspective, and mode of governance. Because the state is the most important part of neoliberal theory and practise because it is both the most important tool for making markets work and the biggest threat to them. So, neoliberal thought spends a lot of time and space figuring out what role the government should play (Brown 2020). Countries based on the free-market system are more concerned about deregulation, privatisation, and welfare reductions; therefore, in the United States, during the neoliberalism paradigm, more actors came to function in the welfare and surpluses redistribution (Harvey 2007; Wilson 2017). The food bank is a prominent actor that has taken welfare and surplus redistribution apart from the government (Caraher 2016).

1.6 Limitations

This analysis is limited to case studies of the three critical food banks in Alabama that are the focus of the research. The findings from the research may not be generalised to other food banks and other country contexts because of the specific socio-cultural situations and background of the subject of this study. For instance, neoliberalism is neither uniform nor universal, and the consequences of market-based policy changes on social welfare policies and practices vary considerably with respect to both time and location (Blad & Fallov 2018). Furthermore, early neoliberalisation, market liberalisation and the dominance of private capital growth are considered as the foundation in the U.S. and U.K.. In contrast, the pace of such ideological conditioning was considerably slower in more social democratic nations like Canada, Sweden, and France (Blad & Fallov 2018). This research examined the innovations introduced by the three Alabama food banks, located in a rural background and with diverse ethnic groups as clients, such as White Americans, Black Americans, Native

Americans, and Hispanic Americans. Therefore, this research may not be generalised to other countries which do not have a diverse ethnic or racial culture.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Neoliberalism, the collapse of the welfare state, the rise of the neoliberalism concept and its impact on welfare policies and food security are topics that have been widely discussed in the literature (Boas 2009; Garland 2016; Harvey 2007; Saad-Filho 2005). Furthermore, neoliberalism as a socio-economic concept is referred to by some researchers as an idea that has reached an end, while others describe neoliberalism as being like the mythical Phoenix bird that keeps rising from the ashes (Wilson 2017). Some researchers argued that neoliberalism is a class struggle associated with wealth accumulation (Abramovitz 2021; Harvey 2020, 2007). Harvey (2009). presents a historical outline of neo-liberalism in the book, *A brief history of neoliberalism*, which describes the background of capitalist growth and the creation of a new type of embedded liberalism in the 1950s and 1960s. According to Fredrick Hayek (1976), neo-liberalism has contributed significantly to the growth of the laissez-faire economy and has blended with pure liberalism. According to Harvey (2009), the state promotes the free market and defends private property, but only on behalf of specific groups within society, mainly the capitalist class. Neoliberalists believe that the government should leave the market and reduce its involvement. Neoliberalism involves creative destruction and has influenced the contemporary social structures, welfare programmes, technology combinations, and philosophical and way of life frameworks. Along with negative economic repercussions, neoliberalism also has adverse social effects. Also negatively altered is the meaning of words like freedom, democracy, and human rights. These are provided to society as a part of the 'bargain' of the free market.

According to social structures of accumulation and the US welfare state of Abramovitz (2021), the Social Structure Accumulation (SSA), according to theory, governments put in place institutional frameworks that favour capital accumulation for several decades in the wake of a severe economic catastrophe. Another crisis could arise if issues cannot be solved using the current monetary or fiscal methods. A new SSA emerges that is more adapted to the prevailing interests of the modern era. Neoliberalism and Keynesianism concepts both

rose to prominence over time, neither suddenly nor by accident. Instead, each restructuring responded to a significant economic crisis that occurred in the 20th century. Each crisis revealed two flaws in capitalism that its conventional instruments were unable to correct. Harvey (2020) applies SSA theory to the post-World War II growth of the US welfare state and its subsequent mid-1970s decline. The Anti-Capitalist Chronicles of Harvey (2020) provides insightful commentary on the difficulties facing global capitalism as well as the socialist opportunities emerging in the current environment. Many readers who have lived through the rolling calamities of 2020 will undoubtedly relate to the book's central thesis, which is that global capitalism is currently experiencing a variety of existential crises, many of which are the result of the capitalist system's inherent fundamental contradictions. The book is made up of several topic articles on important contemporary, historical, and theoretical issues. In several chapters, topics like Chile's comeback of anti-austerity politics and China's growing importance in the international economic system are covered.

According to Garland (2016), the term "welfare state" itself is somewhat misleading. The middle classes and those with jobs are the main benefactors of these policies, not the impoverished. The one noteworthy trait shared by Bismarck, Hitler, Roosevelt, Clinton, and Bush is their ability to support various welfare state proposals. The world's population of 80 per cent is not represented. One of the main obstacles to comprehending the dynamics of markets and states is the emphasis on the West. Garland uses Esping-Andersen's (1990) paradigm of the 'three worlds of welfare capitalism', although he only briefly acknowledges its drawbacks. The ability of Garland's optimistic reformism to resolve the fresh contradictions at the core of capitalism in the new millennium remains to be seen.

Furthermore, many articles are used to describe the food insecurity, the food bank importance in poverty alleviation and innovations introduced by the Alabama food banks. According to Graham Riches (2011) in 'Thinking and acting outside the charitable food box: hunger and the right to food in rich societies' the 30 members of the Organization for

Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the wealthiest club in the world, can legitimately assert that they are self-sufficient in terms of food supply. However, people struggle to evaluate food. Publicly supported social safety nets and charitable food organisations address issues of food access. The system of emergency food assistance, which is becoming more institutionalised as philanthropic food banks, contributes to the issue. While it helps provide temporary relief, neither fulfilling demand for ensuring the availability of wholesome or culturally appropriate food can be guaranteed. It furthers the idea that fighting hunger is a humanitarian issue, not a political one. Alabama has introduced some innovations to address the food insecurity which is important step according to Strickland (2020) in his article 'Beyond Food Distribution: The Context of Food Bank Innovation in Alabama'. Food banks in Central, North and Gulf Coast are the food banks that introduced a number of innovations, including grassroots organising, advocacy, workers' cooperatives, mothers' milk program, hospital pantry, and benefit enrolment center. According to De la Salle (2016), Canadian and U.S. food banks have introduced thirteen dimensions of social innovations to reduce inequality in food distribution and improve the client's living standards. The innovations implemented by food banks in Alabama can be identified through these dimensions.

2.1 What is neoliberalism?

Neoliberalism is an economic theory that claims that human well-being may best be achieved by releasing individual entrepreneurial independence and skill within an institutional framework of strong private property rights, free markets, and open trade. The neoliberalism concept is most often seen in its contrast with Keynesianism which essentially called for the active participation of the state in all facets of economic policy. To understand the neoliberal social welfare cuts and the government role change, it is essential to understand the background of the neoliberalism and basic concepts. Therefore, to understand the neoliberalism it is important to identify the basic concepts and the different

schools of thought as well as the practical application of the theory. The application of the neoliberalism concept will be discussed with connection to the U.S. in the next chapter, this chapter will examine neoliberalism itself.

The neoliberalism concept has revived the liberalism ideology that developed during the last part of the 20th century until today with a significant exhortation in political and academic debate. The political ideology of liberalism was absent in political debates and policymaking during the World War I and II period of the last century until more recent times when it emerged with a reincarnation as neoliberalism (Thorsen 2006). According to Clarke (2005), neoliberalism's roots can be seen in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* in 1776. Smith was a Scottish philosopher who first wrote about the industrialised capitalist system that was challenging the mercantile system of restrictive trade tariffs of that era in Britain. The concept of freedom and equality of all people have been the important values in liberalism, which identifies how these values are threatened by state interventions limiting individuals' choices and substituting individual rights with collective choices. Therefore, the chief task of the government applying liberalism (or more recently, neoliberalism) was to secure and protect individual rights and most importantly introduce minimal government as an integral aspect of economic liberalisation (Brown 2020; Harvey 2007; Steger & Roy 2010). However, Harvey (2007, p. 39), pointed out that the neoliberal revolution was achieved via democratic methods, while Steger (2010) believed that the consequences of the Keynesian economic advocacy and subsequent collapse paved the way for the emergence of neoliberalism which was intricately interwoven with the rise of globalism. Despite the emphasis on minimal government in neoliberalism, it is essential to note that the function of the state does not disappear entirely within the framework of neoliberalism; rather, it is deconstructed and reconstructed towards the new ultimate goal of growing private markets (Wilson 2017). Furthermore, neoliberalism arose after the collapse of the Keynesian welfare state, but was the culmination of many economic, political, and social factors that converged in the early

decades of the twentieth century and gradually gained popularity toward the mid to end of that period (Wilson 2017). Thus, neoliberalism is a wide-spaced advocacy that developed throughout decades in the light of liberalism and its essential concepts.

Neoliberalism has had a number of trends and variants over time. Neoliberalism is based on two traditional liberal concepts: 1) the automated market and 2) globalisation concepts. According to Wilson (2017), with broad acceptance of the idea of globalisation as a phenomenon of world economic integration, neoliberals developed a standard set of conceptual and political principles designed to advance a free-market, free-trade economic model worldwide. Steger (2010) suggested that the three interconnected expressions of neoliberalism are the best approaches to understand it: a philosophy, a form of government, and a set of policies. Thus, neoliberalism introduced consumerist, free-market ideology, and the 'new public management' concept as the governance model that is rooted in entrepreneurial values (Steger & Roy 2010).

Harvey's (2009) view of neoliberalism as a political ideology sees it as a class project that attempts to change the balance of power of global capitalism and introduces fresh ways to accumulate capital (Clarke 2008). Disempowerment of labour, periodic asset values crises, inequality, and the collapse of credibility of government are some of the most noted weaknesses of neoliberalism, and there have been other criticisms (Harvey 2009). Yet, neoliberalism has been surprisingly resilient and adaptable in one form or another as a governing, economic theory, which over time has often been proclaimed dead only to rise again from the ashes and even gaining traction in the over the last 25 years.

2.2 What is the role of government?

The term "government" refers to a collection of organisations, generally forming a state, that are employed to carry out a diverse range of functions for the benefit of the community it serves (Spicker 2000). According to Jessop (2002) there are a number of approaches used

by scholars to understand the government or the state, as it is sometimes referred. According to Weber, political power in the state is territorialised; Marxists see the state as a social relation; critical discourse analysts study the political imaginaries that shape government's character and aims; while the Foucauldian approach looks at the technology of government (or governmentality). Governments have a significant and expanding role in all facets of meta governance. They are active in redesigning markets, changing the constitution and the legal re-regulation of organisational forms and goals, determining policy, setting up the circumstances for self-organisation, and, most crucially, cooperating (Jessop 2002). Based on social democracy, the command economy has more responsibilities for the government regarding ownership or regulating businesses and industries. Some free-market economic countries have more responsibilities, whereas others think the government is only a 'night watchman' (Steger 2010). According to Donovan (1993) the role of the government as a modernised political system is to make decisions on behalf of the community and enforce regulations and compliance through a generally accepted legal system.

According to modern scholars, the questions about the role of government concerns economic characteristics. For instance, authors question whether governments should be limited to providing goods and services, or should some of the services be handed over to the private sector, or should the government provide welfare facilities and impose taxes for income redistribution (Brown 2020, pp. 75-76; Donovan 1993; Harvey 2007; Jessop 2002). However, according to Nedergaard (2008), all modern governments have the legitimate responsibility to manage income distribution and improve productivity by encouraging people to participate in economic activities. The government manages the society and the economy by using regulations, taxes, permissions, infrastructure, standards, and working conditions to influence private market decisions. Moreover, the government redistributes

income from the wealthy to those who are poor and need support to maintain equality, human rights, and a prosperous society (Hughes 2012).

The neoliberal theory has introduced a clearcut picture of the state's role, which has shifted from a welfare state to a free-market economy. The state's role has changed to be more focused on the role of the enabler than the producer after changing the political context into neoliberalism. Hughes (2012) pointed out that the "government is not very good at running companies selling private goods, but that the private sector is not very good at running the welfare sector" (Hughes 2012). According to the welfare state context, collective action is necessary for all government actions; they depend on coordinated activity within a pre-existing social framework to function effectively (Spicker 2000). Furthermore, one of the fundamental features of Western statehood after the Second World War is the provision of welfare to the citizens. Rather than focusing on the most vulnerable groups, traditional aid programs have been converted into comprehensive systems that bring advantages to everyone (Kus 2006). Therefore, modern governments are also responsible for providing welfare facilities while encouraging the private sector to intervene in welfare and surplus redistribution with their modern facilities.

2.3 Neoliberal state, poverty, and hunger

Under neoliberalism the government has limited functions and emphasises free-market and minimal government interventions. The neoliberalism paradigm is based on the self-regulating market concept, a classical liberal idea (Steger 2010). When it comes to describing the turning point of market deregulation, privatisation, and welfare-state retreat that swept the first, second, and third world countries in the early 1980s, neoliberalism was employed in a totally different context (Venugopal 2015). Government is the issue, not the answer. Reagan's inauguration address outlined his economic diagnosis and remedy. Reagan created the foundation to reduce Washington's size and influence by blaming it for

economic problems. Reagan's downsizing included an attack on welfare (O'Conner 1998). Reducing social assistance was a direct response to the administration's declared and unspoken economic goals of reducing government, increasing productivity, and enhancing the adaptability of the labour force, all of which were regarded by the public as having a detrimental impact on the economy (O'Conner 1998). Government needs high taxes to maintain the big government as well as the welfare programs; therefore, reforms were introduced in both tax and welfare programs. According to O'Conner (1998) not only Reagan, but both George Bush and Clinton in the following U.S. administrations continued introducing the reforms to reduce welfare provision by the state. Therefore, social inequality increased during these neoliberal reforms that led to high levels of food insecurity and poverty in the U.S. population.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (2008), food insecurity, poverty, malnutrition, and hunger are closely linked, global issues threatening the lives of millions of people and causing them to be vulnerable to humanitarian crises. The interconnections are shown in Figure 2, which illustrates how poverty, hunger, and malnutrition lead to poor physical and cognitive development in a population. This situation in turn reduces food production and impacts the economy directly in a cycle of declining growth and ever poorer outcomes for people. Economic growth or food provision alone cannot overcome this problem of poverty and famine without investment in health, education, clean water, the environment, and sustainable practices. Solid policies, strategies, and interventions by government are required to resolve food insecurity and eliminate mass poverty and hunger. Therefore, governments must take action to manage the conditions necessary for food productivity and betterment of society.

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Figure 2. Flow diagram illustrating how food insecurity, malnutrition, and poverty are deeply interrelated phenomena. Source: Food and Agriculture Organization (2008).

During recent decades, the introduction of market deregulation, privatisation, and withdrawal of the welfare state concept under neoliberalism has increased poverty and hunger in economically developed nations due to the political-economic relationships that have evolved (Hossain 2020). Both the beginning of the neoliberal revolution and the Great Recession that occurred between 2008 and 2009 contributed to a worsening of the inequality and poverty that are inherent to capitalism in the OECD countries. On the other hand, in the U.S. the government has declared that the government is not the only agent responsible to fulfill the people's needs (Long 2020). Furthermore, taxpayer-funded social programmes to assist people living in poverty have been severely reduced due to neoliberal policies. Market-based welfare reforms and disenfranchisement efforts of the 1980s and 1990s have pushed this issue out of the public eye (Riches 2011). Furthermore, in the Western neoliberal environment, a good citizen is one who is economically productive and self-sustaining without the need for government support. Good citizens are expected to contribute to society and make appropriate, healthy decisions, whereas those who are

economically underproductive are viewed as lazy, deviant, and irresponsible (De Souza 2019). Therefore, neoliberal governments emphasise that people working hard, being self-reliant, and being able to make their own decisions are core ideals of neoliberalism. Therefore, the government's view is that people feeding themselves is a personal responsibility matter rather than the government's responsibility (De Souza 2019).

2.4 Role of food banks and other actors

During the last ten years, global hunger and absolute poverty have become an increasingly significant societal concern in many developed countries, as well as the developing world, due at least in part to the burden of population growth and dwindling resources. Therefore, governments and international humanitarian agencies have increasingly sought more effective means of addressing poverty and hunger in the world (UNICEF 2020). Studies in the literature (e.g., Long 2020; Loopstra 2018, 2019; Riches 2011) suggest there has been a moral awakening of society which has led to some significant social and economic reforms in governance and policy-making in some nations to assist people living in poverty. However, the more prominent societal change has arisen as a result of the efforts of local charitable, not-for-profit organisations (NFPs) to step up in supporting people in need where government policies and programs are lacking. Hence, in developed countries, food banks have become a widespread community-based approach to resolve household food insecurity for the poor. Non-governmental, community support organisations have emerged in response to damaging welfare reforms and inadequate public finance authority policies. For instance, the United Kingdom has a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), such as the Trussell Trust, Independent Food Aid Network, and Fare-Share, which provide emergency food support for the estimated 14 million Britons living in poverty (San-Epifanio 2015; Tarasuk 2020).

In many wealthy nations, charitable food aid programs have become a crucial component of the fight against food poverty. Every country has a different system for operating food banks, especially in terms of how much the public sector and NFPs are involved. Generally, concerns are raised about the problem of food insecurity and suffering among the population that results from pervasive poverty, unemployment, and underemployment, whereupon charities respond in various ways to assist the needy (Tarasuk 2014). International-level non-government organisations (NGOs) and local and independent NFPs often cooperate in acting on food insecurity, poverty, and hunger. These NGOs include the World Food Organisation (WFO) and the United Nations affiliate international organisations working in food security, while NFP charitable organisations work domestically and locally in acting on food security and food resources redistribution (Tarasuk et al. 2014; Vyas 2000). In reaction to changes in the welfare system and the rising understanding that hunger is a genuine and widespread problem, private, non-profit food banks have emerged as key partners in the fight against hunger and poverty. The increased reliance on private food aid necessitates a greater focus on gathering data on the operations of private food banks, as well as the requirements of current and prospective consumers (Escajedo San-Epifanio 2022). Hence, researching and reporting on data and results, and the coordination of efforts, are worthy activities that can assist in expanding and improving services and approaches to addressing the problems.

Food banks are frequently designed to offer temporary relief to individuals who are economically, geographically, or socially vulnerable. The term "food bank" can refer to either a huge organisation that distributes salvaged food to smaller organisations which then provide food to groups of people who are food insecure, or it can refer to a smaller, local organisation that gives its customers groceries (Bazerghi 2016). However, in addition to distributing food aid, food banks may also be active in addressing the underlying causes of poverty and food insecurity. Justice-oriented techniques enable full community involvement

(including food availability) providing support with dignity and equality. Concerns about public health disparities, nutritional adequacy, and diet-related disease frequently involve looking at socioeconomic determinants of primary health care and food security, which are closely linked (De la Salle 2016). Furthermore, food banks and some international organisations, such as FAO, WFO, UNDP, and UNICEF, are working on zero poverty and zero hunger programs through advocacy programs and sustainable development programs (United Nations 2021). Working in collaboration, these organisations have recognised the need for innovation to overcome the complex and persistent issues of food insecurity as human health and sustainability situations around the world continue to worsen.

With his research on social innovations of food banks, De la Salle (2016), presented the following nine approaches of social innovation: 1) Establishing a shift platform, 2) Adopting a whole-systems perspective, 3) Emphasising quality above quantity, 4) Scaling down instead of up, 5) Establishing a strong and vibrant shift culture, 6) Juggling the need for emergency food services with the need for change, 7) Including fresh voices, 8) Commencing with resources, and 9) Effort upstream. Therefore, the food bank network represents the leading voluntary group of organisations in the economically developed countries that operate the food distribution and food relief programs which have changed the approaches to addressing the root causes of poverty and hunger.

CHAPTER THREE: HOW HAS THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT CHANGED IN ADDRESSING POVERTY AND HUNGER?

This research examines and describes the relationships between the change of the role of government with neoliberalism, its effects on the social welfare sector, and innovations of the food banks to eliminate poverty and hunger. Therefore, this chapter focuses on understanding the change in the role of government in the U.S. and how changes have created a gateway for charitable and non-governmental organisations to intervene in the social welfare sector. To understand the changes in the government's role, it is essential to examine step by step the government's driving forces in economic structure. Neoliberalism is not a single concept developed in one country in recent times but is a policy model with several variations on a central theme that has gained global popularity in many nations since the 1980s (Steger 2010). Neither Keynesianism nor neoliberalism was incidental developments; they are models of governance that have arisen in response to the major economic crises around the world that have emerged periodically during the last century (Abramovitz 2021).

3.1 Keynesianism

According to the Keynesian school of thought, the amount of overall demand determines how the economy performs. It asserts that periods of weakness in the process of creating aggregate demand can occur in capitalist economies, leading to unemployment. The Great Slump of the 1930s, which was a time of severe economic downturn in the U.K., was an example of how this weakness can occasionally be severe and lead to economic depression (Palley 2005). In the U.S., the Wall Street Crash of 1929 caused an economic crisis leading to the Great Depression there, including problems with income inequality, an imbalance in the creation of wealth between farm and industry, and trade barriers, which developed the notion there was need for a new economic paradigm (Harvey 2007). With the collapse of

the economy in the U.S., the U.K. and some of the European countries began shifting away from the welfare state by implementing Keynesianism policy changes.

In the 1930s Great Depression era, the world faced many problems in the economic and social welfare sectors as well as with the new experiences of the industrial revolution. Consequently, governments needed a change in basic assumptions in the economic and political sectors to address the problems and manage the society (Arnon 2022). Until the 1930s, most economists believed that the steady progression of capitalism's forces of production would provide economic stability, prosperity, and full employment. As a result, Keynesian economics became the preeminent economic theory of the postwar period and ruled the intellectual scene until comparatively recently. The predominant framework for comprehending how economic activity is determined is Keynesian theory. Modern monetary and fiscal policy instruments were established during this period. In accordance with this new economic philosophy, it was widely thought that by carefully manipulating monetary and budgetary policies, the level of effective demand could be increased to the point where all involuntary unemployment could be eliminated (Pilling 2014). Union membership reached record highs during this time, and 'New Deal'-style institutions for social control and protection were created (Palley, 2005). Thus, Keynesianism exerted a significant effect, if not as an economic policy, then at least as an ideology (Pilling 2014).

Most scholars believe that the welfare state that assists citizens evolved and became a key component of Western statehood after World War II. The welfare state changed conventional aid programs that exclusively helped the most vulnerable people into comprehensive, all-encompassing systems of benefits. Social spending rose quickly during this time (Garland 2016; Kus 2006). Keynesian welfare state policies were predominant during the post-World War II era in the U.S., the U. K., and Western European countries which mostly adopted similar approaches to policymaking. Even though the state intervention strategy was adequate for the succeeding several decades, stagflation (i.e., a

simultaneous increase of inflation and stagnation of economic output) rose dramatically in the 1970s (Long 2020). The economists argued that with the problematic situation created by the Keynesian theories, the relationship between government spending and the level of economic activities, affected the government spending on welfare. Kus (2006), believed that the creation of social welfare programs in the 1950s was an unavoidable phase in the evolution of a state's relationship with its population. This point of view quickly took hold as the accepted wisdom on the welfare state.

There were some social, cultural, and geographical barriers in implementing the welfare state in the U.S. because the U.S. welfare state differs throughout the country, with each of the 50 states and many municipal governments implementing their own unique rules and programs (Garland 2016). Programs in welfare states often cater to basic human needs to make the system seem equitable to everyone (Abramovitz 2021). There are five institutional sectors in the welfare sector, some of which depend on the government funds from taxation as a mode of income redistribution. For instance, in national insurance schemes in the U.K. and the U.S., employees are obliged to pay the regular amount of contribution while social assistance benefits are funded by the general taxpayers' money. Therefore, the welfare state needs government intervention for the welfare policy development and funding. However, according to Ward (2009), the 'New Deal' brought about breakthroughs in Catholic social welfare, the establishment of a new state-society connection, and the ideological and institutional growth of the American welfare state. The foundation of European social welfare systems was made up of social programs including old-age pensions and insurance, health insurance, and unemployment insurance. However, until the New 'Deal era' or later, these programs were not adopted as social welfare policy in the U.S. (Ward 2009). Most of the welfare programs were introduced in the later part of the welfare state era and because of the state revenue expenditure on the welfare assistance, government must implement taxes

accordingly. Later, when the government faced financial hardships, greater priority was given for the development projects over the social welfare programs.

3.2 Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism consists of specific policies, such as privatisation, deregulation, austerity, control of unions, tax breaks for the wealthy, and trade agreements, which are meant to stimulate private sector investment and productivity while also enabling not-for-profit charitable organisations (NFPs) to engage in welfare support (Garland 2016). On the other hand, it is possible to understand neoliberalism in terms of its ideas of income distribution and employment determination (Clarke 2005).

Some scholars believe that when governments face economic deficits in their budgets, most will respond by limiting expenditure. In contrast, when there is a surplus in the budget, the government will increase spending on development and social welfare. However, many economists believe that increasing inflation and unemployment with the introduction of the full employment policies and Keynesian economic policies on the reduction of government expenditure caused the substantial collapse of the economic theory of Keynesianism. The distinguishing failures of Keynesianism paved the way for neoliberalism. Conservatives in the late 1970s and 1980s in the United Kingdom and the United States embraced neoliberalism, which was first expressed in the eras of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party in the U.K., and of President Ronald Reagan and the Republican Party in the U.S. (Cerny 2008). Neoliberalism arose as a powerful anti-Keynesian development to demolish important Keynesian institutions and programs. The welfare states and the institution of Keynesian economics were seen as the cause of the current economic woes, while neoliberalism was seen as the solution (Kus 2006).

3.3 Reaganomics and Thatcherism

In contrast to many other neoliberals, Reagan and Thatcher were steadfast in facing political danger and inconvenience to uphold their neoliberal ideas of advocating for tax reform, privatisation, and regulation of trade unions. For instance, President Reagan seriously thought not to seek re-election if it meant having to undo his signature tax cuts (Steger 2010). Although they were determined to implement neoliberalism, Reagan and Thatcher lacked pragmatism and did not make meaningful political concessions when it was essential to achieving their economic policy initiatives. As they would later be known, the Reagan and Thatcher Revolutions were characterised by the strong expression of very specific neoliberal ideas and claims and the effective conversion of those concepts and claims into tangible policies and programs (Steger 2010). Moreover, both Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher attempted to combine the economic neoliberalism of their respective administrations with the more conventional conservative goals of their respective parties (Steger 2010). Reaganomics prioritised lowering marginal tax rates above everything else while in 1981 introducing the supply-side-focused program for economic recovery (Steger 2010). Though there was pressure to address the deficit by adhering to the laws, Reagan introduced tax reductions while increasing military expenditure, which created revenue problems for the government (Steger 2010). By forcefully introducing neoliberalism to the U.S. economy, Ronald Reagan believed he could confront the Carter-era legacy of stagflation and rising unemployment (Steger 2010). However, Reagan's economic approach created problems in employment and income redistribution.

Reagan contended that tax cuts encouraged economic development, generating enough money to pay for current government expenditures (Steger 2010). Economists believe that reducing the marginal tax rates and continuously increasing military expenditure created financial difficulty for the government, which resulted in a reduction in social

welfare expenditure by the government. For instance, the 1981 Economy Recovery Tax Act, popularly known as the Reagan Tax Cut, had a significant impact throughout the 1980s (Taggart 2018). Over three years, the provision sought to reduce individual income tax rates by 23%. The highest marginal tax rates were reduced from 70% to 50%. The inflation rate was close to 10% (Taggart 2018). President Reagan promised to reduce the top marginal tax rate, which he accomplished, and during his eight years in power, the highest marginal tax rate was reduced from 73 per cent to 28 per cent on earnings exceeding only \$29,750, the lowest it had been since 1925 (Tax Foundation, 2021). After introducing the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981, revenue decreased by 6%. The initial tax reduction cost the U.S. roughly \$200 billion in 2012 chained dollars during the first four years, while the second tax cut cost around \$1 billion (Kessler, 2015). Moreover, the Reagan administration accelerated the decline in federal social assistance as a percentage of overall federal expenditure that had begun in the mid-1970s, as can be seen in Figure 6 (O'Conner 1998).

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Figure 3. U.S. federal social welfare expenditure 1976 to 1989 as a percentage of total welfare spending. Source: O'Conner (1998).

Federal welfare spending decreased from 54.4 per cent to 49.5 per cent during the fiscal years 1980 and 1989, reaching a low of 48.6 per cent in 1986 (O'Conner 1998). The Reagan administration effectively lowered federal welfare outlays as a proportion of total federal government expenditures across its two terms, despite raising military spending and debt repayment. The Reagan administration was also influential in lowering the federal percentage of federal welfare spending as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) while concurrently enforcing a rise in the state and local government contribution. Federal welfare expenditure decreased from 11.4 per cent in 1980 to 10.9 per cent in 1989 as a percentage of GDP (Bixby 1992). A rise in the percentage of state and local government countered this little decrease (0.5 per cent) in federal welfare spending (7.2 per cent in 1980 to 7.6 per cent in 1989) (O'Conner 1998). Furthermore, although federal welfare spending as a percentage of GDP and total federal spending declined under the Reagan administration, actual welfare spending for specific program categories increased throughout the 1980s (O'Conner 1998). For instance, federal spending on social welfare programs increased by 14 per cent between 1980 and 1987, from \$439 billion to \$502 billion in 1987 (O'Conner, 1998). Meanwhile, expenditures for health programs included a 68 per cent increase in Medicare and retirement and disability benefits, and 26 per cent increase in social security. However, between 1980 and 1987 expenditures for unemployment insurance and education, training, employment, and social services (ETESS) decreased by a combined one-third (O'Conner 1998). Figure 4 shows there were significant reductions in social welfare sector expenditure, lower investment in education, and reduced unemployment support during the period 1980 to 1987 that resulted in rising rates of underemployment and poverty among the U.S. population.

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Figure 4. Change in U.S. outlays for categories of social welfare programs from 1980 to 1987. Source: O’Conner (1998, p. 50)

Reagan believed that the government was too big, and the minimal government concept introduced in New Public Management (NPM) was better to reduce the government's unnecessary expenditure to enable more spending on state welfare (Garland 2016; O’Conner 1998). Therefore, Reagan's substantial tax cuts diminished the government’s revenue stream resulting in a budget deficit, which was exacerbated by increased defence expenditure (Day 2012). This budget deficit then led to the need for government austerity measures and marginal tax cuts.

3.4 Bill Clinton

The next stage of neoliberalism began with U.S. President Bill Clinton and U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair adopting more moderate positions in the 1990s. They supported much neoliberalism, but they also tried to include parts of a socially progressive agenda that was usually associated with parties on the democratic Left (Steger 2010). This era represented the new reforms of the public sector with the privatisation and deregulation while implementing the NPM theory and opening up to increased international trade.

According to O'Connor (2002), in the 1992 presidential election campaign, Bill Clinton promised that, if he were elected, he would develop a system for 'end of welfare as we know it' because he believed that the welfare dependency in the society was a burden on the economy of the country that was holding back its economic progress. After the election, governments started implementing initial changes that were straightforward cutbacks, such as benefits reductions, decreases in the range and quality of social services, and tightening of eligibility requirements (Garland 2016).

For instance, President Clinton signed the Welfare Reform Act in 1996, which introduced demanded employment in return for benefits, replacing the Federal Aid to Dependent Children program established in 1935 as a component of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Social Security Act (Garland 2016). The Personal Responsibility Act (H.R. 4) articulated a significant change in welfare policy, which was first presented in 1995 (Stern 2017). For instance, food stamps, federal child welfare spending, and Medicaid were all converted into a block grant to the states, ending the federal entitlement to welfare. As a result, welfare recipients would have to work, and their benefits would be limited in duration (Stern 2017). Several groups of mothers and children, including teen mothers, those who refused to work, immigrants, and drug felons, were deemed ineligible for welfare assistance (Stern 2017). In this era, government expenditures favoured tax credits for the working poor above help for the unemployed, leaving people without jobs in severe poverty to rely on food banks and other survival techniques.

Therefore, the food bank and other charitable food organisations strengthened their organisations to face the new challenge in the neoliberal era (Steger 2010). As a result of the rise of food charity efforts, proponents of neoliberalism found it difficult to justify the persistence of poverty and inability of policy initiative to rectify the social problems (Stern 2017). As a consequence of the government's departure from the welfare solutions addressing poverty, food banks and other charitable food agencies were

encouraged to take over the responsibility to address the poverty and hunger among the disadvantaged and marginalised people in society. Thus, neoliberalism changed the government's role from acting as an insurer of welfare and providing a safety net for citizens in need, allowing the state to absolve itself of moral and ethical responsibility, while charitable NFPs were expected to fill the gap.

3.5 Who stepped in to compensate?

Poverty and hunger are not a single country's problem. Poverty and hunger are interrelated global problems that the United Nations organisation is trying to address through Agenda 2030 (United Nations 2022). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development shared framework for world peace and prosperity was introduced by the United Nations (UN) to address 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which needed urgent action from all developed and developing nations. The UN understood that measures to improve health and education must coexist with efforts to eradicate poverty and other forms of deprivation (United Nations 2022). Accordingly, international and national organisations, government and non-government organisations, agriculture organisations, religious organisations, supermarkets, and charitable food organisations have worked as an extensive safety network to support the marginalised people and buffer them from neoliberal welfare austerity measures (Bazerghi 2016). Food aid programs, including food banks, community kitchens, soup pantries, and subsidised community markets, have been formed in high-income nations to narrow the gap in food security when governmental assistance falls short of meeting community needs (Bazerghi 2016). However, developing and developed countries are still facing increasing issues of poverty and hunger, as world population growth and declining resources impact the welfare of people in many nations, which needs to be addressed by public and private partnerships finding new ways to address the problem through innovative and sustainable programs.

According to Garland (2016), although Canada, Australia, and New Zealand practise welfare state strategies, the U.S. welfare state is different. In the U.S., welfare is implemented throughout the country, with each of the 50 states and many municipal governments implementing their own set of rules and programs. Similarly, the U.S. has not implemented neoliberalism as a pure neoliberal theory, whereas many other developed countries have. Therefore, Garland (2016) states that the U.S. has followed a program of expansionary macro-policy predicated on significant budget deficits and counter-cyclical interest rates, along with policies eroding social security, which left the non-government organisations as the only means to address poverty and hunger. The U.S. government, after the collapse of Keynesianism, transferred to neoliberalism to stabilise the economy with austerity policies that encouraged the reduction of welfare facilitation while inviting non-government and charitable religious organisations to intervene in the food assistance programs (Bazerghi 2016; Steger, 2010). Moreover, according to Riches (2014), almost all assistance programs for disadvantaged Americans, not just food assistance, were drastically reduced, causing immense suffering. One outcome was the growth and multiplication of private, charity food aid in the form of food pantries and soup kitchens, known in the U.S. as 'Emergency Food Providers' (Riches 2014). According to Transparent Hands (2017), a number of national and international organisations, as shown in Table 1, operate food assistance programs and poverty reduction programs throughout the U.S. to form a strong safety net.

In addition to these emergency food providers, several leading social welfare programs are operating under the government, while widespread non-governmental charitable organisations are working on poverty reduction in the U.S. Six major welfare programs are operating under the U.S. government umbrella with eligibility criteria based on income and local poverty level, while a large number of private charity organisations are working on 'Feeding America' (Amadeo 2021; Riches 2014). In addition to the major welfare programs,

Table 1. Local and international charity organisations in the U.S. Source: Transparent Hands (2017).

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there are four entitlement programs operating under the U.S. government, as shown in Table 2. However, only persons who have paid into entitlement programs are eligible to access any of these programs.

Table 2: Major welfare and entitlement programs. Source: Transparent Hands (2017).

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According to the office of the management and budget that issued the budget for the U.S. government fiscal year 2022, the government expected to spend \$5,251 billion in the social welfare programs, including \$1,196 billion for social security programs, 766 billion dollars for the Medicare, and an estimated \$521 billion for Medicaid, while an estimated \$1,486 billion would be spent on the other mandatory social welfare programs. Despite the size of U.S. government spending on food aid, the great bulk of the country's food assistance is provided by charity NFPs or corporate philanthropies. Although there are several giant, warehouse-style food banks in the U.S., they are relatively few compared to the public supply of food aid provided by thousands of food pantries and soup kitchens which are part of the national network (Riches 2014). Moreover, U.S. government welfare programs were primarily created in the 19th and 20th centuries to help jobless, sick, disabled, aged, and families with dependent children; hence, in the modern era, approaches to welfare can be outdated and less effective. Currently, the U.S. government administers several successful social programs, including the well-known Food Stamps and Medicaid schemes (Transparent Hands 2017). In contrast to almost every other OECD country, the U.S. relies heavily on food aid rather than income transfers to help those in need. In contrast to the elderly and disabled, non-disabled individuals and their dependent children receive little financial aid (Riches 2014).

The food bank network is an essential organisation spread around the U.S. to feed hunger and poverty. Charitable aid organisations believe that neglecting public welfare issues, such as unemployment, poverty, and homelessness, is not acceptable. Furthermore, Transparent Hands (2017) believe that instead of relying on government services, society must depend on private welfare groups, which wealthy and stable citizens must sponsor through donations and volunteer work. Due to their flexibility in making policy changes as needed, private welfare systems such as food banks can better satisfy the food requirements of those in need because of their reduced bureaucracy and ability to monitor all aspects of their

operations and reach out to people in local communities. This flexibility has enabled some food banks to introduce new programs, innovations, and efficiencies aimed at eradicating poverty and hunger in the same way that international NGOs like the UN are also working toward that global aim (Transparent Hands 2017).

3.6 Innovations for addressing poverty and hunger

In modern society, challenges are everywhere, especially in the social welfare field, and facing today's challenges as well as those of the future requires new solutions in the modes of innovation and creative solutions. There are several reasons to believe that social service innovations are the solution, including that they may address a variety of drivers and obstacles (Eurich 2016). Innovations in social services, even if there are no direct correlations between ageing populations, individualisation, austerity measures, or technical advancements, can be linked to solutions for these social drivers (Eurich 2016). Designing and implementing fresh approaches that call for conceptual, procedural, organisational, or product change with the ultimate goal of enhancing the welfare and well-being of people and communities is referred to as 'social innovation' (OECD 2022). The welfare state structure of social services, which naturally varies from country to country for historical and political reasons, is a crucial component in the concept of social services (Eurich 2016). Furthermore, for social policy in the world's developed nations, the issue of how social services may be more effectively and efficiently tailored to consumers' requirements will continue to be of utmost importance (Eurich 2016).

For instance, the organisation of social services in Europe is changing to meet new demands and circumstances, such as complicated shifts in social norms relating to gender, family, ethnicity, and culture combined with higher societal expectations of social improvement (Eurich 2016). Moreover, regulation of social services came after the introduction of markets and quasi-markets, innovative communication methods, information transmission

technologies, and data or knowledge of technologies. There has also been the movement of people inside and between European Union nations, a longer life expectancy, and the European financial crisis which has had the effect of decreasing social service investments (Eurich 2016). According to Gentilini (2009), social protection and social safety nets are spread around the world, with international social welfare and food safety organisations working in different contexts with different definitions for social safety. Therefore, they have identified the social safety net, social sector policies, labour policy, and insurance as the components of the social protection system (see Figure 5). The social safety net consists of different means of distributing cash to welfare recipients; food and services transfers, such as non-contributory cash transfers, vouchers or food hampers; unconditional (school feeding) or conditional (food for work and cash for work) cash transfers; price subsidies; and the availability of food and other necessities (Gentilini 2009). The social security sector therefore needs constant change and improvement in the service delivery to provide a quality service aiming to eradicate poverty and hunger.

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Figure 5. Components of Social Protection Systems. Source: Gentilini (2009).

In the modern world, innovations are needed in the social welfare sector, including social safety nets worldwide. New ways to finance, organise, provide, and deliver social services using sustainable innovations are required to enable adequate support of the social and economic order of changing societies (Gentilini 2009). For instance, a European research project on innovation in social services, the social welfare project used a bottom-up methodology to gather opinions regarding social service innovation in several European nations from stakeholders (user groups or those working in social services). This approach created a model for innovation in social services that combined essential characteristics of sustainable and effective innovations with drivers of innovation (social and technical developments and obstacles) (Eurich 2016). Most research found that the social welfare sector's innovations are developed with neoliberalism and free market economic concepts. Some studies were developed to understand the concept of social welfare innovations, current trends in social welfare sector innovations, and the importance of the social welfare innovations. According to Eurich (2016), innovation in social services comprises the implementation and diffusion of new ideas in the form of four dimensions:

- service product as a new service
- service process: supplementing services as influencing process factors
- social value dimension as the contextual framework of the service
- social framework dimension: culture, concepts as a social framework for services

These dimensions are essential to understanding the selected innovations used by the food banks. In addition, understanding the current trends in the social welfare sector is essential to frame the picture of the case study. Furthermore, Eurich (2016) described current trends in the social welfare innovations, which are essential to understand the modern changes in the social welfare sector while understanding the effort to address poverty and hunger. Bazerghi (2016) stated that food banks are more capable than government in managing physical resources and human resources with their extensive private management network

and donor network. The food bank network is the largest network that delivers emergency food relief programs all over the U.S., which tries to improve the service to address poverty and hunger by understanding the root causes of poverty and hunger. According to De la Salle (2016), 'social innovation' as it relates to food security is defined as the re-strategising of the food bank model for increased impact and efficiency toward improving community food security, which the author describes as being characterised by a number of potential approaches, as follows:

- The re-thinking of existing models to try to increase the spread of benefits from the process to encompass environmental, social, and economic sustainability and justice.
- Addressing root, or systemic, causes of hunger and food illiteracy.
- Sometimes social innovation is a small part of a more extensive 'non-innovative' system.
- Often incremental.
- It may involve the adaptation of old ideas to new contexts as well as new ideas.

Furthermore, De la Salle (2016) introduced essential findings of the social innovations introduced by U.S. and Canadian food banks after researching the innovative core functional areas and dimensions introduced by food banks for food security. These thirteen innovative core functions and dimensions are necessary to address poverty and hunger in both countries; therefore, this study takes a particular interest in and discusses these concepts for deeper understanding.

This chapter has presented a discussion on the nature of government which acts as the most important influence in the state because government conducts critical activities on behalf of the people and for the support of people (Brown 2020). However, government does not always act in the best interests of all of the people, particularly when government sees

the state's economy as the priority and government's role as manager of the economy, rather than that of serving the citizens. Hence, the economic policies of the U.S., and globally also, have undergone a series of radical changes since the Second World War, and there have been significant impacts on the welfare of the population as a consequence. Keynes essentially called for the active participation of the state in all facets of economic policy. Economic liberalism and welfare economics both held the view that capitalism markets would generally naturally recover from external shocks or crises and revert to market-clearing equilibrium, so ensuring profits, growth, and employment (Garland 2016).

However, the role of the government has changed with altered economic and political paradigms. For instance, according to neoliberalism, government facilitates the private sector to perform in the free market system (Eagleton-Pierce 2016; Steger 2010). With the neoliberal economic changes that arose from the neoliberal paradigm in the U.S., how those government role changes affected the social welfare sector activities in U.S. has been broadly discussed. As the U.S. government withdrew from its role in providing for social welfare, it influenced non-government, food bank organisations to step into the gap to address the poverty and hunger among the poor. Some of these organisations have introduced innovations in the social welfare sector to help eradicate poverty and hunger. Their story is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE STORY OF ALABAMA

This chapter focuses on the innovative initiatives implemented by three Alabama food banks to address poverty and hunger. The U.S. has a diverse political background and unique administration pattern. Therefore, to understand the role of government during the neoliberalism application, it is necessary to understand the effect of that change and how it encouraged food assistance organisations to introduce innovations that would assist in addressing poverty. Food banks can fill the gap between the cost of food and food assistance benefits to needy people who receive support. However, organisations that provide food assistance are having trouble keeping up with their programs because of the government's decreasing level of financial assistance. Over the past few years, there has been a downward trend in services of The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) which is a federal aid program that provides no-cost nutrition support to supplement the diets of low-income Americans (Popielarski 2010). For example, in 2004, Delaware received \$771,385 for TEFAP from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). However, in 2008, this amount had decreased to only \$490,000, with similar declines in funding occurring elsewhere throughout the country (Popielarski 2010). As a consequence of funding cuts and the nation's poor economic situation, many individuals and communities have been adversely impacted.

Social entrepreneurship and enterprise is one strategy for assisting food assistance organisations in overcoming challenges. Because the federal government was giving less money to national food programs, food assistance agencies were struggling to meet demands (Popielarski 2010). Furthermore, though the U.S. became a pioneer in some areas like universal public education, the government gave fewer additional social benefits than other wealthy countries. For example, the U.S. was the only developed nation with neither universal health insurance nor a national child allowance until 2020 (Curran 2021). During

the recession in 2008, the U.S. government decreased the money allocated for welfare assistance; therefore, to meet the demand of the people and reduce hunger, charitable organisations needed to find new ways to achieve their aims. Thus, the idea of NFPs such as food banks rising in importance to support individuals and communities in crisis became critical.

4.1 Food insecurity, poverty, and hunger in the U.S.

In the United States, over 20 per cent of households with children are thought to experience food insecurity, which affects close to 1 in 6 households. Therefore, food insecurity is regarded as a significant problem for public health in the U.S. (Swales 2020). In addition to negative health consequences from food insecurity, a person's sense of identity and dignity can suffer because of a lack of food access (Mook 2020). According to Feeding America (2022), 38,287,000 people face hunger, approximately one in eight people face food insecurity, and 11,722,000 children (or one in six children) are facing food insecurity.

Food insecurity is defined as the economic and social condition of having limited access to food at the household level in the U.S., where the majority of research on the topic has been conducted (Mook 2020). Additionally, many people have difficulty providing for their basic needs, which raises their risk of food insecurity with complex root causes. Among the factors contributing to food insecurity in the U.S. are rising unemployment, increasing levels of poverty, and low income, particularly among the disadvantaged groups, are the most critical factors (Feeding America 2022).

There are two levels of food insecurity identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and they are 1) Low food insecurity, and 2) Very low food insecurity. According to the USDA, low food security refers to the families who has decreased diet quality, diversity, or desirability of diet. According to Coleman-Jensen (2021), the USDA have categorised the food insecure households when the interviewers indicate 'some' or 'often' to some selected

questions about how often they are able to have meals consisting of nutritional, quality foods. However, among the food insecure households, they have identified the low food secure and very low food secure households using data that shows the number of meals reduction by the one or more members of the family. The very low food security category describes homes where one or more individuals' food intake was lowered and eating habits were disturbed due to a lack of funds or other means of accessing enough quality food (Coleman-Jensen 2021). However, according to the research findings of Coleman-Jensen (2021), 10.5 per cent of the households were food insecure in 2020, while 3.9 per cent among them were in the very low food security category.

In 2020, an estimated 89.5 per cent of American households had access to enough food to maintain an active, healthy lifestyle for all household members. According to estimates, 3.9 per cent of households had very low food security, while 37.2 million people, or about 3.3 million more than in 2019, lived in poverty in 2020 (Coleman-Jensen 2021; Shrider 2021). Furthermore, in 2020, the official poverty rate was 11.4 per cent, with 37.2 million people living in poverty. Moreover, this is an increase of 1.0 percentage points from the 2019 rate of 10.5 per cent, which was the highest poverty rate observed since estimates were first published in 1959 (see Figure 6). This was the first annual increase in the poverty rate after five years of moderately improved results (Shrider 2021). The increase occurred concurrently with the 2020 economic recession largely attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic of 2019-present. During the Great Recession between 2007 and 2009, the poverty rate increased from 12.5 per cent to 14.3 per cent, which was greater than the increase associated with the recession of 2020 (1.0 per cent) (Shrider 2021).

However, the most recent increase in the poverty rate suggests that the needy communities are most disadvantaged and vulnerable to economic shocks and crises that arise from time to time in any nation. Therefore, the results of studies show that food insecurity and poverty

in marginal populations require special consideration to ensure they do not suffer catastrophic outcomes.

Research has shown that several categories and groups of people in the U.S. face food insecurity, poverty, and hunger (Loopstra 2018). There are high rates of persistent poverty and food insecurity in a number of particular populations and subgroups. These include low socio-economic families with children, single parents, adults with less education, families receiving welfare benefits, members of Indigenous groups, and those who experience severe mental illness, as well as racial and ethnic minorities (Loopstra 2018). Additionally, many vulnerable populations, such as the homeless, those who use food banks, those with addictions, and those living with HIV/AIDS, have high rates of severe food insecurity (Loopstra 2018).

For instance, 7.6 per cent of American households with children (2.9 million households), up from 6.5 per cent in 2019, experienced food insecurity at some point in 2020. Children in these households with food insecurity reported going without food, skipping meals, or going an entire day without eating due to a lack of money. For all households with children, food insecurity increased from 13.6 per cent in 2019 to 14.8 per cent in 2020 (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2021). Additionally, food insecurity increased and was more prevalent in the southern states of the U.S. for households with Black Americans, Hispanic and other minority Americans, or reference persons (an adult household member in whose name the housing unit is owned or rented) (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2021).

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Figure 6. Number of persons in Poverty and Poverty Rate from 1959 to 2020. Source: Shrider (2021).

According to Feeding America (FA 2022) and (Shrider 2021), more than 38 million people in the U.S., including 12 million children, are living with food insecurity, while 37.2 million people are living in poverty. Furthermore, Feeding America (2022) identifies Alabama as the third highest food insecure state in the U.S., with an estimated 788,250 people, or 16.1 per cent of the population, suffering from food insecurity. Alabama is in the southern part of the U.S. and has four central food banks, with three introducing innovative programs which have been in addition to food distribution and other traditional food bank activities. The U.S. government projected the future food insecurity rates and states for their future planning, which shows Alabama as one of the highest-ranking states for levels of food insecurity (see Figure 7).

Figure 7 also shows that the government expects a small decrease in Alabama's food insecurity rate in 2021 following the impact of COVID-19 in 2020. However, the overall trend in food insecurity is increasing across all states measured. Poverty, rather than scarcity of food, is a primary reason millions of Americans seek emergency food each year (Ahmadi, 2004). According to OECD data (Co-operation & Development 2011), some nations,

including Australia, the U.K., and the U.S., have seen their inequality gaps widen while others with increased poverty levels have narrowed the inequality gap. Four leading food

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Figure 7. U.S. States with the highest projected food insecurity rates showing comparisons between 2019 actual and 2021 projections. Source: Feeding America (2021)

banks are working with the Feeding America program that operated through the Feeding America food banks, three of which were underperforming according to the progress measures (Strickland, 2020). However, the FA organisation found that though these food banks had underperformed in the traditional food bank activities, they are more popular among the members of the food bank beneficiary community. This popularity is based on the food bank management having introduced several new social innovations to improve and expand quality service to the beneficiaries (Strickland 2020).

4.2 Social innovation in food banks

To meet the increasing demands for food and poverty alleviation in Alabama communities, charity food banks have begun moving in new directions beyond the traditional field of social welfare and food redistribution to embark on social innovation programs (Garland 2016). After the collapse of the welfare state, the U.S. government introduced austerity measures to limit social welfare expenditure. Due to tax cuts and low revenue collection under neoliberalism policies, the government found it could not spend much on social welfare

(Ferejohn 1991; Steger 2010). Consequently, inequality and wealth distribution gaps began to emerge after introducing tax reforms, austerity measures, and socio-economic policy changes to reduce government intervention under the neoliberal context (Ferejohn 1991). However, there have been and continue to be significant contradictions and ambivalence in U.S. government policy development and how the policies are implemented.

In terms of state intervention, the U.S. government has always been at odds with neoliberalism. It continues to heavily subsidise its agriculture while advocating neoliberalism for the rest of the world. Additionally, it selectively uses trade protectionism for some of its industries and sectors, such as agricultural products while at the same time advocating for free trade (Otero 2015). Thus, the state can be seen to intervene where it sees fit to bolster production and the economy, but remain at arm's length from seemingly more essential services for its citizens and communities in need.

As a consequence of neoliberal policies of the state which abrogate responsibility, it has become normal expectation that networks and organisations from the civil society assist in distributing recoverable food surpluses to people who are either permanently or temporarily marginalised (Galli 2019). Food bank networks have therefore proven effective to supply, store, process, and distribute surplus food in a secure environment. In order to address food insecurity and poverty, non-profit actors have played a particularly significant role in the U.S. and most other developed nations (Galli 2019). Though the government subsidises food production, distribution and surplus management of food for the needy is relegated to charitable organisations. Therefore, the food bank mechanism intertwines with agricultural production and the food distribution to narrow down the gap between surplus food, food waste, and access to nutritious food for the needy (Galli 2019). In developed economies, public social safety nets and the emergency food aid system are becoming more institutionalised as charitable food banks are used to address the problem of food access.

The public and politicians believe hunger is being solved thanks to its institutionalisation and corporatisation (Riches 2011).

Food banking is a sensitive and delicate subject; accessing food banks for people living in poverty is frequently a story of psychological distress, family bond erosion, and economic collapse. It might also represent a decline in the very trust that supports the social contracts between citizens and their governments (Gentilini 2013). Although government programs account for nearly 90% of all food assistance provided in the U.S., there is a complex network of private food assistance programs run by national, state, and local NGOs, including churches. More than 200 food banks across the country work together to collect, store, and distribute food to organisations that run 60,000 food pantries, emergency kitchens, and shelter-based feeding programs. Feeding America is one of the food bank networks operating in the U.S. to address poverty and hunger. The organisation's mission is 'to advance change in America by ensuring equitable access to nutritious food for all in partnership with food banks, policymakers, supporters, and the communities we serve' (Feeding America 2022).

According to many scholars, after the 1980s, the government and non-government sector organisations had to play a significant role to cater for the marginalised people; therefore, they needed to be innovative to provide an efficient and effective service for the needy people (De la Salle 2016). According to the Centre for Social Innovation (2022), 'social innovation is defined as the creation, development, adoption, and integration of new and renewed concepts, systems, and practices that put people and planet first'.

According to the literature and information from food banks, charitable food organisations have introduced thirteen core functional areas or dimensions (De la Salle 2016). Social innovation can occur in single or all the core functional areas at different levels (see Figure

8). Many activities that food banks carry out have not been recognised as social innovation until recent times, but are now seen as extremely important to the aim of eradicating hunger.

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Figure 8. Dimensions of social innovation in food banks. Source: Greater Vancouver Food Bank (2016)

Most food banks in the U.S. are attempting to address food insecurity while eliminating hunger through the provision and distribution of food to needy people. However, some food banks are attempting to go beyond the core boundaries of the food bank; the story of Alabama is an example of targeted innovations designed to meet the broader welfare needs of individuals, families, and communities so they can be assisted to rise out of poverty.

4.3 Alabama: Beyond food distribution

Alabama state has four main food banks working under the Feeding America program to innovate critical changes beyond the food bank (Feeding America 2022). According to Strickland (2020) three creative food banks introduced critical innovations to address poverty and hunger, such as an advocacy group, revolving loan fund, neighbourhood food hub, mother's milk bank, and benefits enrolment centre. Additionally, most of these innovations were uncommon or exclusive among food banks in the United States and involved collaboration across boundaries of service areas. Moreover, in 2008, there was an

increasing urgency to meet the rising demand for food during the recession; this inspired some food banks to go beyond food distribution and address the root causes of poverty and hunger (Strickland 2020).

4.4 Case One: Food Bank of North Alabama

In the U.S., national food banking began in 1967 with the establishment of St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance in Phoenix, Arizona, by John van Hengel. The concept grew in popularity and in 2008 was rebranded as Feeding America (Strickland & Whitman 2020). Today, Alabama north food bank is one of the 200 food banks networked as part of FA to serve needy people (Feeding America 2002). The Food Bank of North Alabama (FBNA) was established in 1984 by a small group of volunteers. Today, they tackle the problem of hunger from two angles. Firstly, they prioritise providing food for those who lack the means to purchase enough food to eat (FBNA 2018). Its mission is to 'feed the hungry today and create solutions to end hunger' (Food Bank of North Alabama 2022). To fulfil this mission, they distributed 10,994,774 pounds of food to 260 charitable feeding programs in the 11-county service area to help feed the estimated 145,590 food insecure people. They increased the number of mobile pantries, including weekly distributions at a Title 1 elementary school (i.e., a public school with students from lower-income families that is eligible for federal assistance), to reach those in need of food assistance (Food Bank of North Alabama 2022). In addition to food provision and distribution, FBNA is active in working toward longer-term solutions in cooperation with other organisations and the community. This is done to respond to the underlying causes of hunger through extensive partnerships and regional food projects that support entrepreneurship and easy access to healthy food in the area (Food Bank of North Alabama 2022). It has 27 staff members, including the Chief Executive Officer and 13-member board of directors, to perform accordingly to fulfil the mission (Food Bank of North Alabama 2022). According to Strickland (2020), Feeding America used a tool to measure the performance of the member food banks called The Meals Per-Person in Need County

Level Compliance Indicator (MPIN). According to that performance measurement, FBNA is an underperforming organisation in comparison to three other food banks, but they have innovated unique programs to deliver quality service beyond the boundaries (Strickland 2020). According to (Strickland, 2020), FBNA introduced five critical innovations to address the root cause of poverty and hunger: grassroots organising, advocacy, worker cooperatives, financial credit, and local food systems. The FBNA's long-term goal is to help find solutions to end hunger in the region, and they state that all of these initiatives work together to achieve that goal (Food Bank of North Alabama 2022).

4.4.1 Grassroots organising

Grassroots organising activity does not necessarily connect with the food bank, food security, or distribution. However, this organising activity is directly connected with the security and welfare of the people. According to Strickland (2020), this innovation is based on the residents' need for housing security (e.g., solutions for homelessness) that is beyond food bank emergency food assistance. Strickland (2020) described how Richard Hiatt, executive director of FBNA, attended a meeting of public housing residents in the late 1980s and quickly realised that residents' needs were far beyond emergency food. Their housing units were scheduled for demolition to make way for a park. The residents faced homelessness without there being provision of relocation plans from the housing authority (Strickland 2020). After the discussions and listening to the residents describe their dilemma, the executive director of FBNA realised that people needed a more systematic way to present their case to the government (Strickland 2020). Therefore, residents were assisted in filing a successful class action lawsuit by a team of members from FBNA, Legal Services of North Central Alabama, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, and others. As a result of this lawsuit, 200 families were prevented from becoming homeless, existing housing conditions were improved, and national fair housing laws were advanced (Strickland 2020). The residents moved out of the cinder block housing from WWII and into a more

contemporary apartment community. One resident said, 'If it were not for the Food Bank, this day would never have happened' (Strickland, 2020, p. 556). Furthermore, thanks to the significant contributions made by FBNA, a second federal ruling compelled the United States government to carry out the provisions of the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act and grant homeless service providers access to unused or underutilised government properties (Strickland 2020). Though addressing the needs of the citizens in this case was beyond the customary boundaries of the food bank, FBNA was able to organise the grassroots level movement to win their rights with the help of other NGOs and stakeholders.

4.4.2 Advocacy

With few exceptions, food banks have not traditionally worked as advocates. Advocacy, particularly in the anti-poverty space, has become a new area of practice with the change in the food bank model as food banks start to identify strategic areas of advocacy intervention (De la Salle 2016). Thus, food banks are joining forces to advocate for affordable housing, liveable wages, and increased support for social services for those in the greatest need. Some food banks employ a strategy to concentrate their advocacy efforts on enhancing the voice and capacity for people to advocate concerning these issues (De la Salle 2016). Identifying strategic areas of advocacy intervention is one of the approaches introduced by De la Salle (2016), explaining the advocacy with several other strategies. Saez (2016) pointed out that Richard Hiatt and other FBNA executives recognised the power of public policy to meet their clients' needs. They collaborated with others across the state to establish Alabama Arise, an advocacy group dedicated to promoting 'state policies to improve the lives of low-income Alabamians'. Since then, legislative victories Alabama Arise have included the repeal of judicial override in capital cases, the passage of a landlord-tenant law that defines a habitable dwelling, and the increase of Alabama's taxable income threshold from \$4,600 to \$12,600 (Strickland 2020).

4.4.3 Worker cooperatives

Creating a workers cooperative is not normally a related activity for a food bank; its primary intention is to reduce food insecurity via emergency food assistance. However, FBNA gained the legal validity for the workers cooperative to generate job opportunities with the cooperation of the Alabama food bank. Interestingly, Strickland (2020) stated that FBNA and Alabama Arise saw worker cooperatives as a strategy to create jobs that pay living wages. Alabama, however, did not recognise worker cooperative corporations as legal entities. FBNA and Alabama Arise advocated a bill allowing cooperatives in the state, and in 1997 the Alabama legislature passed the Alabama Employee Cooperative Corporations Act.

However, Strickland (2020) described how attempts by FBNA to institute worker cooperatives and worker-owned businesses have been frustrated by the bureaucracy and lack of funding. For example, in 1998, FBNA ended its plans to establish a processing plant for shiitake mushrooms due to funding and development application constraints. In 2008, the Terry Heights Hillandale Neighbourhood Association and the FBNA worked together to build an employee-owned grocery store (Strickland 2020). According to Strickland (2020), by the end of 2009, the initiative had successfully collected \$1.2 million to cover start-up costs, negotiated a long-term lease for 1.25 acres, and finished the architectural drawings. In 2010, following unsuccessful attempts to secure funding from forty different lenders, the group decided to end their efforts. However, Food Bank North Alabama (2022), evaluated the situation they were facing with getting a loan and understood the need for a special fund because conventional banks often refuse to lend to farmers because of the seasonal nature of their business. Even with the help of the City of Huntsville and the USDA, the Huntsville Food Bank and its partners postponed efforts to open a worker-owned grocery store in 2010. The project would have provided jobs, access to healthy food options, and support for local farmers in an underserved area.

4.4.4 Financial credit

As a result of the difficulties food banks faced in raising loans to support entrepreneurs in the development of cooperative programs, FBNA took steps to establish their own credit arm of the organisation (Food Bank North Alabama 2022). With their previous experience failing to acquire loans to complete the worker-owned shiitake mushroom processing plant, FBNA had learned the essential need for access to capital to support business development. They also researched the entrepreneurs to determine essential support that they needed. Food Bank North Alabama (2022) realised that if they wished to have access to credit for forward-thinking businesses that contribute to improving the regional food system, they needed to generate that credit themselves. In response to this need, the Hiatt Fund was established in partnership with the charity, Neighborhood Concepts, as a revolving loan fund providing access to credit for entrepreneurial ventures, such as small business owners, local farmers and ranchers, and other potential start-up companies. As these companies grew, the fund assisted them in developing relationships with traditional lenders, which was beneficial to them in sustaining and growing their businesses. For instance, in 2010, FBNA allocated \$300,000 to Neighborhood Concepts to establish the North Alabama Revolving Loan Fund (NARLF) as a limited liability company by investing the money previously designated for the grocery store construction. Since then, NARLF has disbursed 33 loans totalling \$1.2 million, 63.3 per cent of which went to women-owned businesses and 48 per cent to people of colour. The short-term goal of NARLF includes lending money to businesses that promote access to healthy food or create jobs in communities where there is high unemployment (Strickland 2020).

In a further development, Neighborhood Concepts has been transformed into a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), which serves the region of North Alabama (Food Bank North Alabama, 2022). The CDFI makes investments in neighbourhoods that are experiencing economic hardship. Thus, the Food Bank of North Alabama's proactive

strategy of partnering with other NGOs in support of innovative programs such as the revolving loan fund have been quite successful (Food Bank North Alabama 2022).

4.4.5 Local food system

The FBNA is continuously researching the food system of Alabama and plight of people there living with poverty and food insecurity. They found that with the 2008 crisis, the number of agricultural producers decreased due to low profits. For instance, a five-year study by FBNA found that over half of the region's remaining farms had reported net losses, and over 2,000 farms had been lost due to incomes from agriculture shrinking (Strickland 2020). Moreover, the study found that farmers were not capable of competing with the international market and consequently were dependent on local or U.S. domestic markets (Strickland 2020). A significant number of farmers either sold their land or went bankrupt during this period, yet many individuals and communities in the area were suffering from inadequate or overly expensive food supplies. According to the findings of the FBNA research, consumers were spending a \$2.2 billion annually importing food products from outside the north Alabama region instead of buying the local produce. FBNA held meetings in 2012 to discuss potential strategies for replacing food imports with purchases of fresh, locally grown produce and recapturing food dollars that were leaving the region. Therefore, The Farm Food Collaborative (FFC) was established by FBNA as a local food hub to assist small-scale family farmers in selling their produce to schools, distributors, and supermarkets.

The Farm Food Collaborative, based out of the Food Bank of North Alabama since September 2014, is the region's first local food hub. The three goals of the FFC mission to create a robust local food system are 1) to support flourishing family farms, 2) a robust local economy, and 3) sustain a healthy population (Food Bank of North Alabama 2022). Additionally, the FCC provides members with services that can assist them in increasing their capacity to sell locally grown foods (Strickland 2020). For instance, FBNA found that

Alabama farmers could not sell their produce to public schools and distributors because they lacked a certification verifying that their food was safe to consume (Food Bank of North Alabama 2022). The FBNA has achieved one of the highest food safety scores possible, placing it among the top food banks in the country, and FCC makes use of this expertise by providing farmers with technical assistance in food safety and helping farmers to obtain food safety certifications. Once certification is achieved, FCC works at coordinating the flow of farmers' produce to school districts, childcare centres, supermarkets, and restaurants (Food Bank of North Alabama 2022). As local food dollars and farm jobs are recirculated throughout the community, the economic, social, and food security benefits are multiplied many times. Fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables are now more readily available to everyone, from schoolchildren to grocery store shoppers (Food Bank of North Alabama n.d.). According to Strickland and Whitman (2020), only two farms had the necessary food safety certification when the FCC was launched in 2012. However, by June 2016, there were 29. The FCC has helped Alabama farmers sell \$1.2 million of commercial products since its inception in 2012. Along with commercial sales, the program assisted the Alabama Department of Education to purchase 2,156,840 pounds of regionally grown apples, satsumas, sweet potatoes, grape tomatoes, and watermelon in 2016–17.

4.5 Case Two: Community Food Bank of Central Alabama

The Community Food Bank of Central Alabama (CFBCA) states 'Our mission is to feed people in need today and foster collaborative solutions to end hunger tomorrow' (Food Bank of Central Alabama 2022). Accordingly, in 2021, CFBCA assisted 260 charitable feeding organisations by providing 14,154,883 pounds of food and 11,795,736 meals to help the estimated 283,945 food insecure people in the 12-county service area. (Food Bank of Central Alabama 2022). According to the 2021 CFBCA annual report, 229,190 individuals and 66,789 children in are food insecure (see Figure 9). The service area of CFBCA includes a variety of

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Figure 9. General statistics of hunger in Central Alabama 2021. Source: CFBCA-Annual-Report-Digital.pdf (2021).

communities, from Birmingham's urban core to tiny, rural towns like Nauvoo (population 200).

From 2018 to 2020, CFBCA increased its annual food distribution by 69 per cent from 13 million pounds of food in 2018 to 21.9 million in 2020 (Food Bank of Central Alabama, 2022). Furthermore, 126 per cent of individuals were served in 2020, which was over 189,000 in 2019 and more than 428,000 in 2020. However, in the past, CFBCA has had difficulty reaching the MPIN threshold set by Feeding America in all counties. In one to four counties in its service area, CFBCA has consistently failed to meet the MPIN Index over the last three years. Despite its inadequacies in conventional food bank services, Feeding America found that CFBCA also introduced several unique innovations to meet its mission, which have included the Mothers' Milk Bank and the Hospital Pantry program.

4.5.1 Mothers' Milk Bank of Alabama

According to the Human Milk Bank Association of North America (HMBANA) (2022), Mothers' Milk Bank of Alabama (MMBA) provides excess mothers' milk to provide nourishment to babies in need and sick or premature infants to help mothers of newborns

who cannot supply enough of their own breast milk due to medical reasons (Mothers' Milk Bank Alabama). According to Strickland (2020), the CFBCA is the only food bank in the U.S. to have established a human milk bank, which collects, examines, processes, and distributes donated human milk using a prescription.

Mary Michael Kelley, a former executive director of the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama, had the initial idea for Mothers' Milk Bank Alabama (MMBA). With the food bank's thirty-year history of receiving, handling, and delivering donated food, she realised how closely the role of a milk bank for babies matched that of a food bank for people experiencing food insecurity. Furthermore, according to Strickland (2020), the idea arose when she faced a tragic situation with her own baby's illness and subsequent death following the birth. Kelley had pumped and kept her breast milk on hand for the duration of her daughter's illness. A bereavement nurse asked Kelley what she wanted to do with the remaining milk in the hospital's freezer after her daughter passed away. The nurse told Kelley if there was a milk bank, she could donate the milk to the milk bank. When her newborn son was diagnosed with a life-threatening illness a year later, Kelley once more spent time in the hospital. Kelley gained a thorough understanding of how breastfeeding lowers the risk of sepsis, infection, and other health conditions for newborns who are born prematurely (Strickland 2020). After researching a milk bank, Kelley found information about a hygienic milk banking system for the mothers to donate their milk to infants needing milk.

In 2013, she then spoke with the CFBCA organisation's board of directors about starting a mothers' milk bank. Kelley convinced the Board of Directors to give her permission to pursue funding for the establishment of the MMBA after a Texas milk bank trip strengthened her self-belief in the idea (Strickland 2020). MMBA started as a depot housed inside the Community Food Bank in 2013. Up until November 2015, when the first batch of breastmilk that had been pasteurised in Alabama was sent out, donations were accepted for the Mothers' Milk Bank of North Texas. MMBA distributed more than 19,000 fluid ounces of

pasteurised donor milk in 2016, their first full operating year. The MMBA has expanded since its inception to include 15 partner hospitals, 11 drop-off locations, and more than 800 milk donors (Mothers' Milk Bank Alabama 2022). According to Strickland (2020), MMBA can maintain a staff of four and is no longer reliant on CFBCA for financial support due to the renewable processing fees accounting for sixty per cent of the organisation's total revenue. The momentum of 2016 led to MMBA membership in the HMBANA, and since then the organisation has been instrumental in overcoming the difficulties brought on by Alabama's high infant mortality and preterm birth rates. By giving those infants donated breast milk, their likelihood of survival is increased along with improvement in intellectual development, growth, and resistance to illness.

4.5.2 Hospital Pantry

The Hospital Pantry project is another new concept introduced by Mary Michael Kelley, who introduced the Mothers' Milk program to the Central Alabama food bank. When the CFBCA launched the MMBA, it also launched a charitable hospital pantry that offers high-protein meals to families of hospitalised infants in the intensive care unit who cannot afford to eat at the hospital. The CFBCA now has three more medical clinics where it provides food to patients.

Kelley attributes the MMBA project to CFBCA's early adoption of collaborations with healthcare providers. She believes that the community health sector is one of the areas that rarely considers the need of increasing food security (Strickland 2020). Through the health sector's involvement with the CFBCA and MMBA, health providers suddenly became part of NGO social welfare groups which enabled them to perceive both the greater needs of people as well as the benefits that could be provided by innovative charitable organisations.

4.6 Case Three: Feeding the Gulf Coast

Feeding the Gulf Coast (FTGC) serves 24 counties in southern Alabama, southern Mississippi, and the panhandle of Florida. In 2021, the food bank distributed 27.5 million meals to over 400 church pantries, soup kitchens, and other non-profit organisations in its service area. Through its community partners and kitchens, FTGC addresses hunger with targeted programs for the needy, including nutrition programs for children and seniors (Feeding the Gulf Coast 2022). The mission of the FTGC is to work through member organisations and special programs to provide nutritious food that will assist people who are hungry as a result of systemic poverty, personal crisis, or disaster (Feeding the Gulf Coast 2022). The Gulf Coast region is prone to natural disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and man-made disasters, such as the Deep Horizon oil spill in 2010, making the population particularly vulnerable to food insecurity in these types of events. Hence, active monitoring, public education, and preparation for disasters is a commitment of FTGC which stockpiles disaster relief food aid, enabling the organisation to respond to the needs of its communities in an emergency. Furthermore, FTGC is more than just a warehouse; for every population, food need, and nutritional requirement, FTGC provides hunger-relief programs, each offering a different approach to bridging the meal gap along the Central Gulf Coast. The service area of FTGC encompasses 24,000 square miles and includes four urban cities, however, most of the region is rural. The total number of employees is 61; the average number of employees at U.S. food banks with a comparable level of distribution is 60.5 (Strickland 2020). FTGC increased its annual food distribution from 16.3 million to 22.4 million pounds between 2012 and 2017, which was a 37 per cent increase. Throughout its history, FTGC has had difficulty satisfying the requirements of the MPIN Indicator. One to six counties included in FTGC's service area did not meet Feeding America's MPIN Indicator requirements during any of the three most recent years for which data is available (Strickland

2020). However, despite this shortcoming, FTGC also has been active in initiating an innovative program for children's nutritional support in the Gulf Coast region.

4.6.1 Child Nutrition Programs

Even though FTGC falls short of expectations according to the MPIN Indicator, the company has created the most extensive summer and after-school meal program in Alabama. This program serves children meals at locations outside of FTGC's service area (Strickland 2020). According to Strickland (2020), FTGC also innovates some special programs, which are unique for the U.S. food banks as the other two innovative food bank programs in Alabama. For example, the Child Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) were used by FTGC to provide free meals and snacks to children not only in Mobile county's suburbs but also in rural, outlying areas (Strickland 2020). Furthermore, food banks in the north and central Alabama were trained to replicate this model to reverse the state's low summer meal participation rates.

According to FTGC (2022), several programs serve nutritious meals to kids to address the issue of child hunger. To provide meals to kids and enrichment activities, such as nutritional education classes, in a secure setting, they collaborate with parks and recreation facilities, schools, and neighbourhood community resource centres. According to Strickland (2020), late in 2010, FTGC launched an outreach program for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) based on its experience with federal programs. This new program deviated from the norm of charitable food distribution by assisting residents in applying for SNAP benefits (formerly known as food stamps). After obtaining permission from three other Alabama food banks, FTGC was awarded a contract by the Alabama Department of Human Resources to conduct state-wide SNAP outreach. Furthermore, it established a regional, toll-free call centre in Mississippi to assist SNAP-eligible residents in a two-state region. Six

SNAP coordinators are employed by FTGC, of which three are stationed at food banks outside of FTGC's service area (Strickland 2020). Moreover, because these coordinators are integrated into other food bank teams, they can use their local food bank connections to reach more residents. These other Alabama food banks can now offer SNAP outreach services without additional personnel expenses.

Three programs have been established under the child nutrition program: the Backpack Program, the Afterschool Meals Program, and the Summer Meals Program (Feeding the Gulf Coast 2022). The Backpack Program helps address the requirements of hungry students by providing nutritional, easy-to-prepare food parcels to take home for the weekend and during school vacation when no other resources are available. The food in the backpacks is sufficient for six meals and two snacks, including protein and fruit juices (Feeding the Gulf Coast 2022). This program has different party engagement, such as teachers, counsellors, and volunteers. Backpack Program students are selected by their teachers and school counsellors. The food bank is then informed of the number of students at the school who are in need. Neither the food bank, donors, nor their fellow students know the children's real names. The food bank prepares the bags of food, which are then discreetly placed in children's backpacks with volunteers' help on Friday afternoons so they can take them home for the weekend (Feeding the Gulf Coast 2022). The Afterschool Meals Program offers free snacks and meals to children at Kids Clubs, churches, and public schools, among other community locations. This program also encourages an environment where children can engage in educational, leisure, and community activities in a safe environment (Feeding the Gulf Coast 2022). During the summer school holiday break when backpacks and afterschool support is not available, some needy children may miss meals and experience food insecurity. The Summer Meals Program, which the USDA funds, helps bridge the food insecurity gap among children. This program offers free summer meals to

children under the age of 18. This program provides two daily meals (breakfast, lunch, and snacks) to children in the community (Feeding the Gulf Coast 2022).

4.6.2 Benefits Enrolment Center

After the establishment of SNAP, Beth Finch, FTGC's SNAP Program Manager, recognised the potential for the SNAP Outreach Program to assist mature-age residents in applying for benefits other than those available from SNAP. Finch utilised the existing SNAP Outreach Program as its staging point and, in January 2017, opened a full Benefits Enrolment Center (BEC) (Strickland 2020). This is a service added to the food assistance programs though BEC is neither a food distribution nor an education program. The BEC initiative is important for the adults who are eligible for the benefit programs to get advice and assistance to launch applications for the assistance programs.

Furthermore, BEC assists seniors (i.e., older adults and adults with disabilities) in applying for SNAP, the Low-Income Home Energy Support Program, the Medicare Savings Program, the Low-Income Subsidy Program, Lifelines (free cell phones), and Alabama senior farmers market vouchers. Between January 2017 and October 2017, BEC forwarded 2,355 benefit applications for senior citizens. According to Finch, FTGC is one of the few food banks in the U.S. that operates an enrolment centre for senior benefits.

4.7 Analysis

The post-World War II era in the United States was marked by Keynesian welfare state policies which were implemented to prevent a further economic crisis. The state intervention strategy was successful for several decades; however, inflation and stagflation rates continued to increase in the 1970s (Long 2020). Consequently, by 1979, there was general consensus in government and the financial sector that the neoliberal economic policy was the ideal solution to the escalating inflation crisis. Therefore, Margaret Thatcher in the U.K.

and Ronald Reagan in the U.S. ushered in the neoliberal transformation and began remaking the economy, government, and civil society in line with capitalist neoliberalism (Long 2020). As government policies failed to address economic and social realities, governments introduced austerity measures that impacted many individuals and communities of middle and lower-income groups and widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Since 1980, neoliberal economic policies in the advanced capitalist world have led to increased poverty, food insecurity, and income inequality, making the poor poorer while concentrating wealth in the hands of a few wealthy individuals and powerful corporations.

The Great Recession between 2008 and 2009 brought to light the inadequacies of neoliberal economic policies and the issues of inequality and poverty in the developed capitalist world. The failure of neoliberal capitalist financial institutions across the developed world disproportionately negatively impacted middle- and lower-income people, who bore the brunt of the repercussions (Long 2020). A combination of food aid and charitable contributions by NGOs has been the most common response to food insecurity in neoliberal advanced capitalist countries. Therefore, food banks, community kitchens, soup vans, and subsidised community markets have been established as the solution in high-income countries where government assistance has failed to meet community needs (Bazerghi 2016).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research project sought to answer two critical research questions: 1) How has neoliberalism changed the role of government in addressing hunger and poverty, and 2) How has this change affected the role of food banks in advanced economies? The research was based on a comprehensive review of secondary sources in the existing literature, with a specific focus on case studies of three innovative food banks in the U.S. state of Alabama.

The role of government in providing social welfare service to citizens has changed over the course of the past two centuries due to the shifting nature of the political and economic paradigms upon which capitalist society has been based. With the emerging dominance of the industrial revolution in the 1800s came sustained growth in the economy and population leading to a new socio-economic background and new social classes. Macroeconomics became increasingly important as governments sought to maintain an equilibrium between supply and demand for goods and services, prices, wages, and level of employment of its citizens. Classical economic theories were popular until they failed to account for shocks and crises. The adoption of the Keynesian regulated market economy in Britain and the U.S. and many other developed nations after the Great Depression and post second world war economic expansion led to government taking a more prominent welfare role and active intervention in society and economy. By the 1970s, the welfare burden on the government presented challenges of inflation and unemployment which caused the economic collapse of governments economically and materially, leading to widespread poverty and famine. With the damaged economic condition and massive unemployment, people could not support themselves successfully, and governments were unable to provide welfare to citizens. Therefore, the next generation of economists began to apply the free market and individuals' personal responsibility-based neoliberalism.

The government's role in the neoliberal concept emphasised the importance of encouraging the private sector intervention to control the society and economy. By the mid-1970s, the new public management that developed under the neoliberal economic theory encouraged minimal government and directed government to steer the market instead of controlling the market. Thus, the government's role dramatically changed by withdrawing from active management of the economy and from provision of welfare services. In the U.S., President Ronald Reagan championed neoliberalism and introduced a number of government austerity measures, including welfare cuts that greatly impacted citizens' lives, plunging many into poverty and food insecurity at a time when manufacturing had slowed, and unemployment was high. Reagan's tax cuts eroded government income leading to further withdrawal from its responsibilities for the individual and social welfare of its citizens, which increased inequalities, poverty, and widened the gap between the rich and the poor.

The second wave of neoliberalism during the presidency of Bill Clinton continued the welfare restrictions effectively removed welfare dependency, and sought to remove welfare mentality from the society. As the government withdrew from providing social welfare support, non-government charitable organisations including food banks formed a second layer to assist people living in poverty and food insecurity. Therefore, in the context of the U.S., this study concludes that neoliberalism policies have dramatically changed the previous role of government in that it no longer plays a leading role in addressing hunger and poverty; rather, it acts as a silent partner encouraging the private and non-governmental welfare organisations to step into the welfare sector and provide services to citizens in need.

Given the changes in the role of government under the neoliberal concept of minimal government intervention and restricted involvement in the welfare sector, this study has examined how this change has in turn affected the role of food banks. The case of food banks in the U.S. state of Alabama was selected to examine how food bank activities have responded to the increasing needs of the individuals and communities in their areas for food

supply and distribution. The research found that these Feeding America food bank networks have been active in implementing critical innovative programs beyond the normal scope of food supply and distribution that the charities have previously been engaged with. In addition to feeding people in need, these innovations have been important initiatives to support and empower the citizens to rise above poverty; gain self-reliance, self-confidence, and independence; and become more resilient in meeting the daily challenges in their lives.

The food bank networks in the Alabama case studies have ventured into entirely new and innovative approaches to address the underlying causes of poverty, hunger, malnourishment, marginalisation, and low socio-economic status that have prevented people from achieving their potential as productive members of society. Innovations by the food banks selected for this study, such as grassroot organising, advocacy programs, benefit enrolment centres and workers cooperatives, mother's milk bank and hospital pantry, have served the peoples' needs and health requirements. These programs have been key initiatives that have had widespread benefits for local individuals and communities and have greatly helped address poverty and hunger while also providing longer-term solutions to the deep-rooted causes of these persistent social and economic problems. Programs have had a particular focus on helping disadvantaged sections of society, such as minorities, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, who can no longer rely on social welfare to sustain their lives due to the changes in government welfare policies. In addition, food banks have introduced loan programs to assist business entrepreneurs and technology introduction programs for educating farmers about necessary agricultural practices to obtain certifications to produce and sell quality local food and increase income. Most importantly, food banks have introduced the community markets enabling farmers to sell locally grown food, therefore, improving access to the quality and affordable food and helping to redistribute the surplus so that people do not experience hunger.

Therefore, this study concludes that the changing role of food banks in an advanced economy like the U.S. has caused these organisations to evolve in ways not easily imagined in the pre-neoliberalism periods when government was responsible for addressing poverty and hunger. The operations of food banks have expanded in response to the needs of people and have met the challenge to be innovative in addressing needs far beyond basic provision of food to the hungry, by reaching out to address longer-term and fundamental aspects of social welfare that will have far-reaching benefit.

Recommendations

This research holds the view that the combination of welfare state philosophies and neoliberal concepts can be the solution for the economic and political crises around the world, which can help overcome the currently high levels of poverty and hunger in many countries, including the advanced, developed nations. Social welfare is an important investment in the field of health and education, but governments must aim to help people so they can help themselves. This case study of the food banks of Alabama has shown the way those aims can be accomplished. Most of all, governments must understand the necessity of supporting the welfare for the marginalised people before implementing economic austerity measures, and must also recognise the value of the cash transfers and food distribution among food insecure people.

Food insecurity is a sensitive and compelling problem worldwide, and more research based on the more progressive and innovative food bank activities is needed to motivate and guide governments, NFPs, and NGOs in forming partnerships that will help eradicate poverty and hunger. The following are several recommendations for future researchers: The research field lacks studies on social empowerment and its effect on reduction of poverty and hunger, especially the effectiveness of the food banks to distribute the federal cash transfers and food distribution. In this field of study, research is needed in the improvement of the business

and farm entrepreneurs, who are keys to effective food production and distribution and surplus redistribution, since agriculture and food security are essential for maintaining welfare and people's living standards.

This study has shown how throughout the neoliberalism era to present day, the state has withdrawn from many of its responsibilities for securing the welfare and nutrition for those in need. However, the state still holds a moral, ethical, and democratically-based human rights responsibility for the wellbeing and prosperity of its citizens from which it cannot abdicate simply by vacating that role. Governments, particularly those in developed nations, need to lead by example in taking responsibility to provide adequate and equitable support for all citizens. This role and responsibility should become the mandate for all governments, and they should be held to account for their policies and actions by the whole of each nation's population and the rest of the free world.

The government has to introduce the new policies to improve the interactions of the NGO's and the government sector towards addressing the poverty and hunger through different new ways. For instance, the government can introduce new development programs for poor people to come up with the economic activities to develop their income while developing the GDP. On the other hand, the government can develop new policies to implement PPP programs to address poverty and hunger. This research suggest Feeding America program to introduce innovations to the other food banks which are operating around the most poor states in the US.

Finally, the three food banks in Alabama that are the focus of this study have developed and implemented innovative programs to help food-insecure people by going beyond their core mission to distribute food. This creative and humanitarian act has contributed to the policy and social discussion regarding the future role of food banks. It is therefore recommended and hoped that these examples of compassion and benevolence will inspire other food bank

leaders in the U.S. and worldwide to investigate and develop innovative environments within their organisations to eradicate poverty and hunger.

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