Cocreating Value Through Relationships:

An Exploration Of Snap-Ed And The Base-Of-The-Pyramid

Service User

by

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ABSTRACT

In the delivery of a public service, meeting the needs of its users through cocreation has generated considerable research. Service users are encouraged to engage with public services through dialogue, sustained interaction, and equal partnership, wherein the role of the user changes from passive to active. As the relationship between service provider and service user evolves, researchers have sought to explain how resources, time, accessibility, and bandwidth may affect such relationships, specifically concerning the economically disadvantaged. While many researchers have focused on the logistical barriers that inhibit cocreation among the economically disadvantaged presented by such factors as cost and transportation, limited research has examined the relationship between the service provider and economically disadvantaged service user. Combining previous research, this study examines what economically disadvantaged service users actually do when they cocreate value with a public service by conducting 12 in-depth interviews with participants of SNAP-Ed, nutrition education for persons eligible for government assistance. The study's findings suggest that cocreation exists through relational characteristics of collaboration, isolation, acceptance, connection, and guidance that help in the development and maintenance of relationships, and that a relationship between service provider and user could be further typified by equality. This finding suggests that equality is an independent construct not necessary in the process of cocreation—a departure from previous research—but rather a way to approach the service provider/user relationship. This study is intended as a step toward examining cocreation through the development of organization-public relationships.

DEDICATION

For educators of public school districts who tirelessly work to encourage, motivate, and inspire kids everyday to strengthen their minds and feed their spirits; resources are limited, but passion and commitment, and the relationships that grow as a result, are boundless.

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A childhood devoted to countless hours of play takes a whole lot of commitment. Is anyone more committed than a child is to his or her playtime? I know I was committed. Encouraged by my loving mom and dad, entertaining creative ideas by playing and allowing the goofy define my childhood followed me into adulthood. I call it a commitment: a commitment to fun, a commitment to inspire my spirit. But a commitment to fun only gets you so far. I should mention it is my parents' commitment that guides my journey.

My mom and dad perfected commitment, not only to each other, but a commitment to carry out life's work, passions, and expectations. There are no two better role models than Kim and Steve, due in part to their commitment to respect me as an individual, listen to my struggles and strengths, and the two people who were committed early on to giving me autonomy. Commitment brought me to where I am today. Without it, my personal and professional successes would remain unknown and 200-some words would go unwritten. For that, I am truly grateful for my parents' commitment.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

She struggled to focus. Maria's attention was divided between her family and the person trying to keep her family from falling victim to one of poverty's many ills: inadequate diet. But her twin girls were winning as one pulled on her coat jacket and the other swayed back and forth to the sound of her own voice. At the local community center, I sat tucked away in the corner from the group of five women, and 3-year-old twin girls, while a SNAP-Ed instructor began a 45-minute lesson on nutrition and basic recipes. As a result of federal and state funding, the women were here to learn how to feed their families on a tight budget and with government support. A predicted snowy forecast prohibited many of the women from making it out, as public transit is often their mode of transportation. The weather was not the only distraction. The distraction from Maria's daughters was palpable. Troubled glances toward the direction of the disruption made that clear. The session was only 20 minutes old and already I feared Maria was inhibited by the distraction and unable to engage the group and instructor. I thought about how this might affect Maria and her ability to learn. Would she have the opportunity to ask questions? Express her concerns? What troubles her most? Would Maria be able to engage the instructor and the group and contribute to the development of ideas? In other words, could she engage in the process of cocreation? Cocreation provides an opportunity for Maria to play an active role in the learning process. When people agree to engage with one another, they bring with them their preexisting experiences, abilities, behaviors, and resources to engage. For this study, resources refer to a supply of something, i.e., money, transportation to make face-to-face interaction possible, or technology. At a time of public engagement (Edelman, 2010) and hyper connectivity, it is common practice for people to engage with organizations and governments to cocreate meaning, knowledge, and value. Cocreation is the practice of developing products and services through the collective creativity that is experienced jointly by two or more people (Sanders & Simons, 2009); however, when one of them is torn away by the routines of the everyday, the struggles to make ends meet, or in Maria's case, an inability to concentrate as attention is divided, an opportunity to cocreate value is potentially lost. Cocreation is intended to create work through collaborating with the ones who need the interaction or service most. Individuals taxed with the reality of living below the poverty line may struggle to engage; however, a service is the application of knowledge and skills, by one entity for the benefit of another (Vargo & Lusch, 2006), regardless of economic inequalities.

Maria is a service user of a public service. A "public service" is a service that is provided by government and supports those with a particular personal need (Gash, Panchamia, Sims, & Hotson, 2013). Indeed, pooling the resources of Maria and her public service provider, which may be a counselor, administrator, instructor, or other service users, through cocreation targeted at lifting constraints in terms of knowledge and tangible resources effectively benefits the most disadvantaged groups (Jakobsen & Anderson, 2013).

Like Maria, families and individuals living at or below 130% of the poverty line in the U.S. are eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).[1]

[1] SNAP is often referred to by its former name, the Food Stamp Program. States differ with their own usage of the term. For purposes of this study, SNAP will be used.

SNAP offers nutrition assistance to millions of low-income individuals and families and supports local communities. It has been argued that the most desirable strategy for fighting poverty and its related problems is developed through efforts that depend on the emotional commitment of dedicated individuals helping other individuals, and by relying on volunteers to support, organize, and deliver services to those in need. Such efforts, it is argued, foster more innovation in the sphere of public services while producing more desirable results for those receiving help, as well as those providing help (Reingold & Liu, 2008). Thus, cocreation is dependent on the development of relationships; it is the relationships that help facilitate the development of value. That is, value for both parties involved in the process: value for Maria and for her public service provider. In this perspective, value creation is a process through which a person becomes better off in some respect (Gronroos, 2008). Value is not created by a service, a business, or an organization, but is cocreated by people as they integrate resources (Vargo & Lusch, 2008) in order to help develop or codevelop solutions to problems. To be truly user-centric, the service provider has to think not only about optimizing the service and its activities, but about how to support service users in their resource integration and value cocreation activities. Stated alternatively, SNAP-Ed should be an effective and efficient support system for helping Maria and all stakeholders become effective and efficient value cocreators (Lusch & Webster, 2011).

Public service providers and users can only cocreate value together through relationships. A “good” relationship is one that creates positive value for both parties and leaves each wanting to continue the relationship in some form (Lusch & Webster, 2011). A service provider must be informed about and use knowledge relating to a user’s changing definitions of value. Such knowledge includes the service user's definition of the problem he or she is trying to solve. For example, Maria wants to learn how to cut back her children's sugar intake, so the service provider must be informed about her available resources and how best to engage (Lusch & Webster, 2011).

Therefore, if the value cocreation process is considered a function of relationships, it can be argued that the value cocreation process between public service providers and users is central to, and can be explained by, the field of public relations. Indeed, a public relations practitioner is an integral actor in understanding and fostering these symbiotic relationships. Grunig, Grunig, and Ehling (1992) argued that the concept of relationships among stakeholders is central to an organizations' effectiveness; however, few public relations scholars have studied relationships (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000), and there is little agreement on the essential nature of relationships in other fields of study (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). A number of fields other than public relations also use relationships as a central concept. Interpersonal relations, labor management relations, organizational studies, international relations, and marketing are but a few of the many domains of theory and practice based on understanding and observation of relationships. Some of these fields are challenged with the problem of explication that include the absence of a precise and widely used definition of relationships, as well as a paucity of systematic theory construction based on a commonly accepted definition of relationships (Ledinham & Brunig, 2000; Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997).

At its core, cocreation is a form of marketing or business strategy that has been explicated through the building blocks of interactions between the parties involved with facilitating the cocreation experience. Dialogue, access, risk-benefits, and transparency (DART) have emerged as the basis for these interactions (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Dialogue is an important element in the cocreation view. It implies interactivity, deep engagement, and the development of a shared solution where service and user become equal and joint problem solvers. But dialogue is difficult if service users do not have the same access to information. Because of connectivity, it is possible for an individual user to get access to as much information as he or she needs from the community if he or she knows what to look for. Both access and transparency are critical to have a meaningful dialogue. But the marketing literature falls short of explicating what these concepts look like. What do service providers and service users actually do in order to interact? Understanding the behaviors, needs, and nuances of what public service providers and users do to develop and foster relationships is a critical component to understanding how to engage and foster cocreation between parties.

The formation of relationships occurs when parties have perceptions and expectations of each other, when one or both parties need resources from the other, or when there is a voluntary necessity to associate (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). Alford (2002) offered a social-exchange perspective for government services—similar to the public service offered by SNAP—to adopt when working with service users, but this type of perspective viewed as an "exchange" has yet to be tested. The idea of involving people outside government in producing services as well as using or otherwise benefiting from them has attracted sporadic attention (Thomas, 1999). The central purpose of this dissertation is to suggest an entry point for the public relations discipline to help explicate the process of cocreation and exchange.

The Private Sector to the Public Sector

In the 1970s, social policy recognized how users can make a difference to the quality of service they receive when they participate in the delivery of a public service themselves (Realpe & Wallace, 2010). First conceptualized by Ostrom, Roger, and Gordon (1978), coproduction means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, and their families. Vargo and Lusch (2008) changed 'coproducer' to 'customers as value co-creators' to account for the integration of customer-owned resources to aid in the cocreation process (Ordanini & Pasini, 2008). In the initial iterations of cocreation, cocreation was solely about involving customers in a company's ideation phase of new product or service development. It can be understood that customers are not only an important source of information, they are also an important source of competence, given the fact that customers learn while using a product or service (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000). Since 2000, cocreation has been relevant in business contexts where consumers can help generate ideas a company may not have thought of. The work by C.K. Prahalad and Venkat Ramaswamy (2000), *Co-opting Customer Competence* have guided marketers to use fluid and iterative techniques to connect with willing consumers to develop creative solutions for brands. For example, a platform developed by Starbucks called mystarbucksidea.com invites consumers to become involved with developing product and brand solutions for the company and to better the customer experience (Peters & Olsen, 2013). But now cocreation has been embraced as a reform strategy for the public sector (Voorberg, Bekkers, & Tummers, 2013). Yet, it is important to note, that in contrast to the private sector—a corporation marketing with consumers—the public sector relies on the involvement of service users in order to create new public services. Because of this dependence, Bason (2010) argues that the public sector needs to continue to focus more on cocreation, including encouraging an open collaborative process and active user involvement. When citizen participation is considered as a necessary condition, what do we know about the conditions under which participants [or the service users] are prepared to embark in cocreation (Voorberg et al., 2013)? Because public services cannot be mass-produced, standards cannot be precise, and while service procedures may be standardized, their actual implementation will vary from person to person (Rathmell, 1966). Thus, the ability to cocreate may be tested if a service user, like Maria, is economically disadvantaged, or is a member of what Prahalad and Hart (2005) define as the "Base of the Pyramid (BoP)": a socio-economic designation for individuals living below a given income or spending threshold (IFC, 2013).

Over the past four decades, the United States has seen large increases in economic inequality (Smeeding, 2008) in terms of income (Fletcher & Wolfe, 2014); however, only in the past 5-10 years have businesses, governments, and donor agencies begun to experiment with new models and services aimed at the BoP; indeed, even in the U.S.—one of the world's richest countries—low-income individuals represent a huge and growing market (The Economist, 2011). Since 1980, the poverty rate has increased steadily. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 16% of the U.S. population lives in poverty up from 14.3% in 2009 and to its highest level since 1993. Understanding how the public sector thinks about those individuals at the base of the economic pyramid can provide insight into how to innovate and receive funding through taxes, policies, and legislation, particularly as it relates to new models of public services. Yet, in the rush to capture the people at the base of the pyramid something may have been lost – the perspective of the poor themselves (Simanis, Hart, & Duke, 2008). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) propose that the poor should no longer be looked at as victims, but as resilient and creative entrepreneurs as well as value-adding participants. From a private sector (marketing) perspective, Landrum (2007) posits that there needs to be a greater focus on a BoP consumer's needs from the consumers' perspective. Indeed, what started as "selling to the poor" (Simanis, Hart, & Duke, 2008) has evolved into "cocreating with the poor." This means crafting a strategy that relies on the existing resources, expertise, and social infrastructure already present in the informal market (London & Hart, 2004). For example, a local Los Angeles artist Ron Finley led an effort to transform South-Central Los Angeles' health and eating patterns through urban farming that brought local fruits and vegetables to the neighborhood. From a public sector perspective, Voorberg et al. (2013) argues that the BoP person needs to be aware of his or her ability and potential of actually influencing public services.

In the public sector, public services not only consume high levels of government resources and political attention, but also maintain hierarchical relations between central policy and local service delivery, and employs staff both with and without professional qualifications to provide services to individuals or groups. For instance, it is determined at the state level whether service users will work with SNAP-Ed instructors who are registered dietitians, social workers, or who themselves were once on food stamps with no certification in nutrition education. Public services have also witnessed an emergence of significant discourses around the importance of evidence in shaping policy and practice (Davis, 2004). For example, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Federal

Reserve, and National Institutes of Health (NIH) are powerful examples of public institutions that have changed public expectations and the way research informs public policy (Hess, 2008).

Who is at the Base of the Pyramid?

President Lyndon B. Johnson set a broad agenda when he said in 1964, “This administration today, here and now, declares an unconditional War on Poverty in America.” As a result of this declaration, several programs were created to significantly help the poor, including Medicare and Medicaid, food stamps, low-income housing, minimum-wage improvements, aid to education, and beneficial tax-law changes; however, from its inception, the War on Poverty has had its critics. Take Ronald Reagan’s famous words in 1988: “We fought a war on poverty and poverty won” (Burke, 2014). With the number of people in the U.S. living in poverty in 2012—46.5 million—being the largest number seen in the 54 years for which poverty estimates have been published (US Census Bureau, 2014), Reagan’s words seem to resonate even 30 years later. Since its initial articulation (Prahalad & Hart, 2002), interest in the base-of-the-pyramid perspective on poverty alleviation has grown (London & Hart, 2004). That is, selling to the poor—base-of-the-pyramid—can simultaneously be profitable and eradicate poverty (Karnani, 2009). For example, since 2006 McDonalds has generated an annual increase in sales of 4% despite rising food prices and has hired 50,000 full-and part-time staff in the U.S. Even the poorest Americans are rich by the standards of many other countries, so companies like McDonalds, Walmart, and Target recognize that money is to be made by serving them (The Economist, 2011).

Although this study is not positioned to answer questions about the economics of working with the poor or eradicating poverty, the term BoP is a designation used in marketing literature to define a population and is transferable to the present study as such.

The BoP is part of a socio-economic class known as working class. This differs from the poor of “an emerging professional class” where one’s current social and economic situation is changeable over time (Rubin, Denson, Kilpatrick, Mattews, Stehlik, Zyngier, 2014). Other terms used more or less synonymously in research are “bottom of the pyramid,” “subsistence markets,” and “low-income” (Nakata & Weidner, 2012). According to U.S. Census Data (2012), 15% of the U.S. population lives in poverty. The highest poverty rate by race is found among Blacks (27.2%), with Hispanics (of any race) having the second highest poverty rate (25.6%). Whites have a poverty rate of 9.7%, while Asians have a poverty rate at 11.7%.

Poverty in the U.S. is determined by the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG) that, as of 2013, is set at $11,490 annually for an individual and $23,550 for a family of four. "Family" is defined as persons living together who are related either by blood or marriage. A worker as the sole earner in a four-member family would need to earn $11.32 an hour and work 40 hours a week to top the FPG. Many of the jobs created in the wake of the recession barely reach this hourly rate, and occupations expected to see the most growth in the coming period will pay even less. More than 14% of the estimated 25 million part-time workers currently in the labor force are classified as working poor compared to 4.2% of full-time workers. Working women, African Americans and Hispanics, as well as young workers and those with lower levels of education, are also more likely to be poor. Families with children under age 18 are about four times more likely to live in poverty than those without children (Randall, 2013).

The Base of the Pyramid: Illuminating Government's Role

How the base of the pyramid is defined is consistent across academic disciplines, but how and for what purposes are the individual at the BoP encouraged to cocreate varies greatly. The phrase "bottom of the pyramid" was used by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt in his April 7, 1932, radio address, The Forgotten Man, in which he said "these unhappy times call for the building of plans that rest upon the forgotten, the unorganized but the indispensable units of economic power…that build from the bottom up and not from the top down, that put their faith once more in the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid" (Works of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1938). Several decades later, the term was coined as a strategy for tapping the vast market of the world's poor (Prahalad & Hart, 2002), and has been used when discussing the process of cocreation in the private sector (Simanis & Hart, 2008). Mainly research under the umbrella term BoP has stressed that marketing to the world's poor is a profitable endeavor for multinational companies. However, Karnani (2009) argues that by focusing on the private sector, we ignore the role of government to fulfill its traditional and accepted functions such as basic education, public health, infrastructure, and attending to basic needs of the poorest of its citizens, as well as the role government can play in BoP partnerships, such as providing benefits, grants, and financial aid. Karnani (2009) argues that we need to go beyond increasing the income of the poor and we need to improve their capabilities and freedoms along social, cultural, and political dimensions as well.

The role of the government is critical in some of these dimensions. For instance, Tiehen, Jolliffe, and Gundersen (2012) examined the effect of SNAP on poverty from 2000 to 2009 and found an average decline of 4.4% in the prevalence of poverty due to SNAP benefits, while the average decline in the depth and severity of poverty was 10.3% and 13.2%, respectively. SNAP benefits had a particularly strong effect on child poverty, reducing its depth by an average of 15.5% and its severity by an average of 21.3% from 2000 to 2009. SNAP's anti-poverty effect peaked in 2009, when the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act authorized benefit increases. Tiehen et al. (2012) argue that the findings indicate that SNAP significantly improves the welfare of low-income households.

About SNAP-Education

In 1974, Congress required all states to offer food benefits to low-income households that became known as SNAP. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers the program. Under current federal guidelines, state SNAP agencies have the option to provide nutrition education for state residents eligible for SNAP benefits. The goal of the educational offering of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is: "to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the USDA Food Guidance System" (USDA, 2010). Collectively, these programs teach families, youth, and seniors' skills that demonstrate increased knowledge of healthy lifestyles. Service users are taught how to prepare more healthy and tasty meals for their families at home on a budget. Additionally, the program intends to increase user awareness of how to determine the nutritional value of food products in order to encourage increased consumption of healthful options and to discourage consumption of highly processed and refined products. Combined with eating better and eating less, users are encouraged to move around more and to limit sedentary activity (Seibel, 2012).

Engagement of the BoP

According to Follman (2012), 10 years of research have rapidly advanced the definition of BoP, away from multinational corporations selling to the poor to how collaborative networks – including local firms and NGOs – engage with the poor to design, produce, distribute, and sell goods and work with services. In 2002, the term BoP was used to denote “serving the poor, profitably” (Prahalad and Hammond, 2002). In 2011, the term was used to denote “shared value” (Porter and Kramer, 2011). This focus on shared value has become the new form of engagement with the BoP population, referred to as the second-generation BoP or BoP 2.0. Research on second-generation BoP has revealed that local, regional, and national organizations (NGOs, government, businesses) have experience, connections, and understanding of BoP contexts, needs and possibilities that outside multinational corporations do not (Follman, 2012). Second-generation BoP calls for cocreation of products and services with communities and calls for sustainable and innovative technologies in meeting those needs (Nambiar & Phadnis, 2011). This means that engagement must generate self-sustaining solutions that build capacity and empower people living at the base of the pyramid (Mohr, Sengupta, & Slater, 2012); thus, connecting the BoP service user is no longer just a business strategy to make a profit. The central idea in this application of cocreation is that people who use services are hidden resources, not draining on the system, and that no service that ignores this resource can be efficient (Boyle & Harris, 2009). An example of such efforts is the Nurse-Family Partnerships, which support first-time mothers and children in low-income families by partnering them with registered nurses until the child is two, with a core purpose of coaching them into a sense of capability and encouraging them to support each other (Boyle & Harris, 2009). This example illustrates that most of the research on the BoP population has focused only on particular public issues that provide a rallying point for people to connect rather than understanding what the relationship looks like when people actually have connected. There has been very little examination of the base of the pyramid from the perspective of the BoP population (Follman, 2012). In addition, what influences people to cocreate in the public sector has attracted relatively little attention (Alford, 2002).

Relationship between BoP and the Public Sector

At the start of the 1980s, the concept "cocreation" or "coproduction" generated a flurry of interest in public administration thinking (Alford, 2002). Since then, as Thomas (1999) found, the idea of involving people outside government organizations in producing public services has seen sporadic attention (Thomas, 1999). As a result of cocreation opportunities, the relationship that forms between service users and the public sector may ignite misconceptions; that is, a set of systematized beliefs, shared by the people involved, about the nature of their relationship (Papp & Imber-Black, 1996). In fact, both the service user and service provider enter the process with pre-existing beliefs about what relationships should be like (Sousa & Eusebio, 2007). Will the service provider appreciate my input? Will I be respected given my circumstances? These may be questions asked by a service user. Sousa and Eusebio (2007) found that public service providers tend to underestimate services as a collaborative process and negotiation of strategies, and tend to adopt a traditional clinical approach, where service users should obey the providers' instructions.

When the public sector focuses efforts on developing long-term relationships, there are mutual benefits for both the service provider and its key publics (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). Various authors such as Trujillo and Toth (1987) have suggested there is a need to integrate concepts from organizational communication, management research, and public relations to bring greater clarity to the area of relationship building (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). Indeed, public relations scholars, in particular, have begun to explicitly connect the profession and discipline with interpersonal communication (Ferguson, 1984). The rationale for this link is to understand the nature of relationships so that the construct could be used for organizational advantage. Herein lies the important connection: the study of service users and the public sector should be positioned within the context of relationship management. The view that publics or service users emerge and respond partially through their own constructions advances the field of public relations beyond the view that publics and service users simply respond to issues (Vasquez, 1995). By understanding how service users engage in and participate with the public sector, practitioners and service providers are better able to connect. For example, service users may be asked to provide their expertise on a certain subject matter or offer their own experiences from traveling abroad. But what formed the foundation of the relationship to elicit such sharing between the service provider and service user to begin with?

Cocreation through Public Engagement

In crossing the social sciences, complexity-based approaches encourage a search for holistic solutions rather than seeking for success in disciplinary silos. Working as part of an integrated but not heavily-hierarchical team, public relations as a practice has strategic assets vital for the successful management of contemporary challenges (McKie & Willis, 2012) such as taking into account the importance of tailored communication for diverse audiences in language, education, gender, and race, and the multiplicity of voices. Such virtues as connectedness, engagement, and relationship building link an organization or public service to a wider stakeholder universe essential for organizational leaders, and marketers, to develop learning and responsive processes that are fit for individuals within a particular segment of the population (McKie & Willis, 2012). Indeed, cocreation is advocated as a means to expand the value creation capability of an organization, while nurturing relationships (von Stamm, 2004). Given that a growing number of public relations practitioners and scholars have come to believe that the fundamental goal of public relations is to build and then enhance on-going or long-term relationships with an organization's key constituencies, this study argues that the public relations discipline can contribute to the theoretical framework of cocreation, which realizes that the public sector, for example, has an interdependence with its publics (Hung, 2005), and can offer a relationship strategy to engage, connect, and create value for its service users.

Study Purpose

This study then explores the relationships and interactions that make up the cocreation process established between a selected cohort of service users and public-sector service providers. Employing relationship marketing, public management, service management (Engstrom, 2012), public relations, and interpersonal communication (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998)-inspired vocabularies and perspectives, this study also aims to contribute to cocreation theory by integrating conceptual insights from the public relations literature concerned with public engagement and the relationship management perspective.

Summary

This introductory chapter served to provide background information that supports the purpose of this study. Over the past 30 years, cocreation has evolved from being solely about involving customers in a company’s ideation phase of new product or service development to being embraced as a reform strategy for the public sector (Voorberg et al., 2013). It involves the active involvement of those who use a service in the service-delivery process by agreeing to engage in a sustainable relationship with a public service provider. As Rathmell (1966) posits, because services cannot be mass-produced, standards cannot be precise, and while service procedures may be standardized, their actual implementation will vary from person to person. Thus, the ability to cocreate may be tested if a service user is economically disadvantaged; these service users are also known as those living at the base of the pyramid. The public sector then catering to the economically disadvantaged must effectively create value through building relationships. Over the last decade, cocreation in public service delivery has become a major theme among researchers. In particular, interest in service user input to the provision of public services has been growing (Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013); however, research has only just begun to explore the ways in which interpersonal relationship-building strategies can be incorporated into a service-public relationship context (Bruning & Lambe, 2008). To consider the value cocreation process as a function of relationships developed through interactions, the process between public service and service user may be explained by examination of public relations constructs concerned with public engagement and the relationship management perspective.

CHAPTER 2

COCREATION AND THE RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

> More personalized solutions, in which the user takes responsibility for providing part of the service, should enable society to create better collective solutions with a less coercive, intrusive state, a lower tax burden, a more responsible and engaged citizenry and stronger capacity within civil society to find and devise solutions to problems without intervention.
>
> - Leadbeater, 2004

In recent years, there has been a radical reinterpretation of the role of service delivery in the public domain (Bovaird, 2007). Several researchers have recognized the service user as an *active* rather than passive recipient of service (Payne, Storbaka, & Frow, 2008; Baron & Harris, 2008). Thus, service users no longer play a secondary role in the delivery of services, but are significant contributors in the way services are developed, implemented, and delivered, and the expectation for engagement has fostered opportunities to narrowly examine how service providers engage with its users so as to cocreate value. A review of the literature found that there are two key approaches—cocreation and coproduction (Chathoth et al., 2013)—which could be used by service providers to meet the expectations of service users and engage with them in significant ways. This review of the literature points to those studies that map the development of cocreation as influenced by coproduction. While some scholars argue that the two concepts are interchangeable (Voorberg et al., 2013), the review of the literature suggests that coproduction precedes cocreation (Ordanini & Pasini, 2008), and that is it cocreation that emphasizes the joint effort between provider and user. As such, the research on cocreation draws on both scholarly and professional areas of public administration, public health, relationship marketing, public relations, and interpersonal communication. Considerable attention is paid to strategic uses, particularly with regard to engaging people within the public sector (Alford, 2002). Examples of strategic uses include: improving public transportation (Gebauer et al., 2010) and initiating a large number of projects for a particular community (Schafft & Brown, 2000) in order to improve the wellbeing of its community members, such as nutrition and health outcomes.

New in the literature is the recognition that service providers are only providing partial inputs into an individual's value-creating processes, with input coming from other sources (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012). Therefore, literature has largely focused on the characteristics that play an important role in whether there is a willingness to participate, such as education and family composition (Voorberg et al., 2013; Sundeen, 1988; Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013). Thus, a stream of literature is focused on the increased disparities between the economically disadvantaged and the service provider due to socio-cultural and economic differences (Bentancourt et al., 2003; Bade et al., 2008; Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013). It has been argued that disadvantaged individuals may be constrained in their contribution to engage by a lack of knowledge and by a lack of materials that facilitate input efforts (Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013). While previous research has determined cocreation as being a factor on service outcomes among those who are economically disadvantaged, less attention has been focused on the strategic engagement of those who are economically disadvantaged, or also described in the literature as individuals at the base-of-the-pyramid (BoP).

Over the last decade, the research on cocreation focuses on the notion of exchange or as Alford (2002) proposed cocreation through the social-exchange perspective. Within the relationship marketing literature, some researchers have argued that there is need to emphasize exchange as a concept played out through interaction (see Ballantyne & Varey, 2006). Interactions can be understood as part of the customer [service user] relationship development process (Christopher et al., 2002), and relationships are seen as always present wherever there is an interaction between two or more parties. These relationship perspectives are not new in the relationship marketing literature (Ballantyne & Varey, 2006); however, less is known about the relational perspective on the cocreation process. As such, drawing upon the public relations literature, the relational perspective not only is increasing in popularity with academics but with practitioners as well (Hon, 1999), and it has been demonstrated that relationship quality could serve as a predictor of public behavior. The literature suggests there is a need to better understand the linkage of organization [service] structure and style with differing types of publics (Ledingham, 2009), including the economically disadvantaged.

The focus of this study then is on how value is cocreated between service providers—within the public sector—and service users who are economically disadvantaged. The chapter begins with a literature review on cocreation, including a review on cocreation of value, which is the theoretical lens for this study. Followed by a discussion of research on the following contextual categories: the base-of-the-pyramid population; public services, followed by the first set of research questions; health outcomes;

and relationships at the base-of-the-pyramid, which concludes with the second set of research questions that address the possible application of a relational perspective from the public relations literature.

Cocreation

Cocreation is not just a form of marketing strategy that emphasizes the engagement of consumers in order to enhance market performance drivers for a company. For example, Lawer (2009) argues that there is also a form of cocreation that is largely independent of markets, where individuals and publics willingly come together to create and share self-generated information, knowledge, and content independent of any mechanisms of market exchange. In a non-market context, there is no economic mechanism or price exchange and no ownership of information or goods. In a co-creation sense, such environments are characterized by the collaborative creation and sharing of knowledge and information by individuals in decentralized communities (see Alford, 2002; Bovaird, 2007; Brandsen, 2006; Davis, 1991; Jakobsen, 2013; Joshi & Moore, 2004). Furthermore, Lawer (2009) sees the "value" derived by individuals in such communities as not moderated by an economic price but by social factors, i.e., community needs; meaning; learning; attention; and shared values. Importantly, the cocreation that occurs here is independent of any desire for ownership by any party. The quality of the experience becomes the focus for the public service provider and requires an increased awareness of the emotional and societal contexts that are part of the interaction. Through information collected by a project of a telecommunication company, Giraldo and Zambrano (2010) found that cocreation as a social process require norms, conventions, and the appropriate use of relevant resources, skills, and productivity, in order for the process to work properly. They argue that research focused on understanding the interactions that take place in the social construction of knowledge helps to advance the state of cocreation. Ostrom (1996) takes a similar view in that rather than separating out the consumption and production of government services, cocreation emphasizes the role that service users play in both the consumption and production of public services. Voorberg et al (2013) argue that cocreation has been introduced over the past few years to modernize the public sector and to find a new balance between the responsibilities of service users and public services.

The existing research on cocreation and coproduction relies to a great extent on single case studies (Voorbeg et al., 2013). Much of the literature reviewed here examines the process of cocreation and coproduction as seen in varying areas of public administration.

Coproduction and cocreation. Input from citizens in policymaking, policy implementation, and service delivery processes can help governments understand universal needs, and some scholars believe cocreation developed as a result of citizen's demands for more adaptive public policies (see Voorberg et al., 2013). While other scholars believe cocreation as a construct flourished because of the needs of the private sector. For example, Vargo & Lusch (2004) argue that significant advancements to the public sector co-creation perspective derive from the so-called service-dominant (S-D) logic, which is the general paradigm about the interaction of companies and consumers.

A central construct stemming from S-D logic is *coproduction.* As seen in the literature, coproduction and cocreation have been used as the same concept, but with different histories. Lusch & Vargo (2006) describe coproduction and cocreation as two aspects of the service-oriented production process. Following this notion, some scholars, such as Voorberg et al (2013), see both concepts as interchangeable. Other scholars see that coproduction precedes cocreation (Ordanini & Pasini, 2008). What follows is an overview of the concept of coproduction, its use in the literature, and the shift toward cocreation.

A term used by scholars in the late 1970s (e.g. Ostrom & Ostrom, 1971; Kleinau, Isball, & Doyle, 1977; Mansfield, Teece, & Romeo, 1979), Fuchs (1968) cited coproduction as a model of service delivery that rests on a pivotal distinction between the production of goods and the production of services: In the former, the characteristics and behavior of consumers are independent of the product, whereas in the latter, consumers and producers interact to determine jointly the level and quality of services provided.

The coproduction literature has expanded into three distinct directions. First, at the start of the 1980s, the concept of coproduction generated a flurry of interest in public administration thinking (see Brudney & England, 1983; Sharp, 1980; Whitaker, 1980). Brudney (1985) claimed that researchers elaborated the ways in which citizen actions can and do affect the provision of municipal services, including public safety, health, and educational services. By tracing the concepts and arguments in the literature, Percy (1984) concluded that citizens are actively engaged in several types of private efforts to fight crime and increase safety as it relates to coproduction of public safety and law enforcement. Similarly, Whitaker (1980) found that citizens help to coproduce service by requesting assistance from service agencies, cooperating with service providers in carrying out agency programs, and negotiating with service providers to redirect agents' activities. Rich (1981) identified active as well as passive forms of citizen coproduction and showed that the concept can be applied to the provision of not only "soft" services, such as health, educational outcomes, job performance, and income, but also "hard" services, for example, streets and sanitation.

Second, Brudney (1985) found that coproduction researchers have been quite straightforward in advocating implementation of the model in the provision of services. For example, Percy (1983) examined the assumption that coproduction will improve service delivery and reduce costs. While coproduction has positive service delivery outcomes, there are costs that need to be recognized by government managers, such as the commitment of service providers to coproduce with citizens. Sharp (1978) examined citizen participation in crime prevention and proposed a three-part typology of incentives for participation: material, solidary, and expressive. Sharp found that *material incentives* are tangible benefits such as money, goods, or services. *Solidary incentives* are the rewards of associating with others, such as socializing, the sense of group membership and identification, being well regarded, and fun and conviviality. *Expressive incentives* are "intangible rewards that derive from the sense of satisfaction of having contributed to the attainment of a worthwhile cause," for example, environmental conservation, exposing corruption, or the support of the needy.

The findings from Sharp's examination indicate that effectiveness of each of these motivations depends on the form of coproduction being promoted. Individualist forms (such as citizens marking their property) are prompted more by material and solidary incentives, whereas collective action (such as block watching, in which all neighbors share benefits regardless of contributions) is encouraged most by solidary incentives and least by material incentives.

Whitaker (1980) suggests that service user as "co-producer" has been viewed as a way to influence the formulation of public policy. Scholars and public officials argue that citizens as co-producers receive more effective and efficient services (Ostrom, 1999). For example, Ostrom (1999) studied police services in several metropolitan areas and did not find a single instance where a large centralized police department was able to provide better direct service, more equitably delivered, or at a lower cost to neighborhoods located in surrounding jurisdictions than those instances that involved public engagement. The production of a service, as contrasted to a good, is difficult without the active participation of those supposedly receiving the service. As a result, Brandsen and Pestoff (2006) argue that the term coproduction has been used to describe the potential relationship that could exist between the 'regular' producer (street-level police officers, schoolteachers, or health workers) and 'service user' who want to be transformed by the service into safer, better-educated, or healthier persons. As a result, the authors claim that coproduction was one way through which synergy could occur between what a government does and what citizens do.

The third distinct strand of coproduction literature represents a central construct in the service literature (see Zeithaml et al., 2006), such that the customer always plays an active role in a service offering. Vargo and Lusch (2004) stated that a service user is always a coproducer who participates in value creation through coproduction. Coproduction follows the goods-dominant (G-D) logic and is part of the process of the service-dominant (S-D) logic. For both G-D logic and S-D logic, consumers are included in the process of value addition, however, only to the extent where the consumer has to either purchase (G-D) or consume (S-D) the product to conclude the value-adding process. The interaction is limited to the physical exchange of goods and services, in which the value extraction may be mutual, but not sustainable. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000) believe that since consumers started to demand greater levels of personalization in the consumption experience, companies had to rethink engagement models.

According to the S-D logic, Ordanini and Pasini (2008) cite that a service offers an application of knowledge and competencies for the benefit of another entity, which makes it the basis of any economic or social exchange. Similarly, Vargo and Lusch (2004) argue that services and goods are mere appliances to perform a service and can be considered, respectively, the direct and the indirect ways to transfer knowledge and skills during the coproduction process. Moreover, Edvardson and Olsson (1996) believes the S-D logic places the customer center stage, such that the customer is always a co-producer, and the enterprise delivers not value, but value propositions. The first proposition means that the firm integrates its own set of resources and competencies into any service process (i.e. service co-production). The second proposition relates to the first, but specifies that the value of a service exchange emerge because it is not the service itself that is produced but the pre-requisites for the service. As a result of an in-depth qualitative analysis of two firms, Ordanini and Pasini (2008) discovered too that only when the customer integrates his or her own resources may the process be completed (i.e. value co-creation).

Here, the literature reflects an increased usage of "cocreation." For example, Vargo and Lusch (2008) have changed 'coproducer' to 'customers as value co-creators.' Since the 1980s, companies have typically been in charge of the overall orchestration of the process and its outcome; however, since the transition to 'value co-creators,' the meaning of value and the value creation process have been rapidly shifting from an organization-centric view to consumer experience (e.g. Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004), and Ojasalo (2010) suggests that consequently the distinction between the term "coproduction" and "cocreation" has been discussed in the literature. For example, Vargo and Lusch (2006) view the term "co-producer" as somewhat tainted with connotations of a production-oriented logic in which value is understood to be embedded in products and services. They point out that the customer is always a co-creator of value. In addition, Ballantyiie and Varey (2006) differentiate "coproduction" and "cocreation." According to Ballantyiie and Varey, coproduction follows pre-specified guidelines and the results are specified in advance, but cocreation aims to create something new and unexpected. Thus, similar to Ojasalo's (2010) view, cocreation inherently includes learning something new together.

While the literature involving service users in policymaking, policy implementation, and service delivery processes use coproduction consistently, Needham (2007) argues that the concept *cocreation* has also been used to explain *coproduction*.

Lusch & Vargo (2006) described cocreation and coproduction as two aspects of a more service-oriented production process. Following that notion, some authors see that both concepts as interchangeable. Other records define cocreation as such that there is no distinction with the used definitions on coproduction. Voorsberg et al. (2013) found that authors vary in their definition of cocreation or coproduction. Some authors do not present a specific definition of cocreation. Cairns (2013) found that some authors present the topic of cocreation merely as an explaining factor to understand policy effectiveness and not how policy affects cocreation with users.

The definitions of cocreation and coproduction show some similarity. First, in both bodies of literature the similarities remain with the active involvement of citizens in public service delivery. Ordanini and Pasini (2008) extracted definitions of coproduction and cocreation used by scholars. Table 1 shows cocreation defined as an active agent or having shared resources. Table 2 shows coproduction defined as active partnerships or integrating resources and knowledge. According to Voorsberg et al. (2013) authors within both bodies of knowledge consider the concepts of cocreation and coproduction as interchangeable or at least subsequent to each other. Hence, Voorberg et al (2013) argues that the results from the coproduction literature can also help to understand how valid the cocreation assumptions are. For this study, cocreation is used to describe the involvement of service users in the process of production (Cassia & Magno, 2009) and to account for the service users own resources that complete the process of value cocreation (Ordanini & Pasini, 2008).

Table 1

Diversity in definition on cocreation

Definitions of cocreation	References
Value creation with consumer at multiple points in the production process	Briscoe et al. (2012); Diaz-Mendez (2012); Bowden & D'Allessandro (2011); Kerrigan & Graham (2010); Wise et al. (2012); Fuglsang (2008)
Consumer as active agent	Cairns (2013); Gebauer et al. (2010); Gill et al. (2011); Mesi (2010)
Cocreation by shared resources	Elg et al. (2012); Feller et al. (2010)
No definition	Kokkinakos et al. (2012); McNall et al. (2008)
Collaboration with other partners	Baumer et al. (2011)

Table 2

Diversity in definition on coproduction

Definitions of coproduction	References
Rearranging (sustainable) relations between government and citizens and distribution of power	Maielloa et al. (2013); Roberts et al. (2012 [1]); Roberts et al. (2012[2]); Ryan (2012); Varmstad (2012); Evans et al. (2012); De Vries (2008); Joshi & Moore (2004); Reisig & Giacomaazi (1998)
Introducing users in the production of knowledge	Cornwell & Campbell (2011); Edelenbos et al. (2011); Poulliot (2009); Corburn (2007); Mitlin (2008); Karim- Aly et al. (2003)
Partnership between institution and the community/users/patients	Glynos & Speed (2013); Meijer (2012); Carr (2012); Sharma et al. (2011); Li (2004); Alford (1998)
Both the customer and the firm's contact employee interact and participate jointly in the production and delivery of a good or service	Leone et al. (2012); Pestoff (2012); Gillard et al. (2012); Groeneveld (2008)
Active participation during the various stages of the production process	Cassio & Magno (2011); Vaillancourt (2009); Trummer et al. (2006)
Joint responsibility of public professionals and citizens in public service delivery	De Witte & Greys (2013); O'Rourke & Macey (2003)
The public sector and citizens making better use of each other's assets and resources to achieve better outcomes or improved efficiency	Bovaird & Loeffler (2012); Pestoff (2006)
Service users as co-producers of service oriented culture	Hyde & Davies (2004)
Co-production may be defined as the mutual evolution of social activities with knowledge and discourse	Forsyth (2001)
No definition	Andrews & Brewera (2013)

Service user as cocreator. As discussed earlier, Vargo & Lusch (2004) focuses on the role of the service user as a 'cocreator' of value. This is due in part because, as Vargo and Lusch (2006) claim, in marketing traditionally the 'goods-centered view' prevailed: value is added to products in the production process and this value is articulated in the exchange of a good (consumer buys the product). With the emergence of the S-D logic, value is then defined by and cocreated with the user that leads to two forms of participation. Either the users (or other partners) are involved in the co-design of a new product and/or the users are involved in the co-production of the good (Vargo & Lusch, 2006).

As a result of one-to-one qualitative interviews with companies in the U.K. and Italy, including traditional companies, dot.coms, and brand consultancies, Ind and Riondino (2001) found that during the cocreation process, the company acknowledges that consumers are no longer passive recipients, but able to accept or reject claims based on their own experience and knowledge. Therefore, early on in the development of cocreation as a concept, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) argued that the cocreation process follow a model referred to as DART: Dialogue, Access, Risk assessment, and Transparency, as discussed in Chapter 1 and elaborated here. *Dialogue* implies that a company needs to build a loyal community of publics before engaging in cocreation. Then cocreators must have *access* to a certain amount of company data, meaning that firms have to be honest about their intentions not to mislead consumers and jeopardize the company-consumer relationship. This stands in direct relation to *transparency.* After all, companies should be open and objective.

Conversely, risk assessment describes the issue of responsibility of decisions made in accordance to the co-creation process.

Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) believe that the DART model represents factors which make it possible for companies to cocreate with informed and trustful consumers, who are not only genuinely interested in the company/brand/product, but also make potentially rational decisions based on their knowledge. However, this model falls short of explaining how interactions are created and what takes place through the process of these interactions. In response to this shortcoming, Payne, Storbacka, and Frow (2008) developed the Cocreation of Value Framework, that recognized the centrality of processes in cocreation, and elaborated that the process of what cocreation looks like between company and consumer should be examined more closely. Payne et al. (2008) base their conceptual framework on interactive research proposed by Gummesson (2001), which recognizes the importance of combining different qualitative approaches in pursuit of knowledge. Payne et al (2008) argues that the foundation of this conceptual framework is based on recognizing the importance of processes when examining or implementing cocreation.

Value. Value has a rich literature behind it (Rabindran, 2010). Payne and Holt (2001) identify three streams of value literature. The first is rooted in consumer behavior and marketing; the value derived from augmented product concept, and customer satisfaction. The second stream is built on developments such as creating and delivering superior customer value, and where the organization performance is linked to whether customer needs are met. And the third stream relates to new literature that incorporates a multifaceted view of value, that is, relationship value. The first two streams of literature stem from scholarship borne out in the late 1980s and 1990s where value results form an interaction between a subject and object, but different perspectives place value on a continuum of subjectivism and objectivism (Holbrook, 1999). The new kind of value is referred to as relationship value, which is influenced by the customer, employee, and shareholder (Payne & Holt, 2001). Berthon and John (2006) posit that joint value cocreation occurs through interactions, and this value may be delineated into interactive and noninteractive value between a firm and its customer. From the firm's point of view, the content, process, structure, and sequence of interactions can determine this interactive value and from the customer's point of view, seven dimensions of content, control, continuation, customization, currency, configuration, and contact can determine the interactive value (Rabindran, 2010). Woodruff and Flint (2006) raise several questions on the processes of value creation, such as is value coproduced; who is the beneficiary of value; and what would motivate customers to coproduce and what goes on during coproduction.

Cocreation as a process. Payne, et al (2008) then believe that, in general, the "processes" view accentuates the need to view the relationship between the service and user as a longitudinal, dynamic, interactive set of experiences and activities performed by the parties, within a context, using tools and practices that are partly overt and deliberate, and partly based on routine and unconscious behavior. Taken from the private sector, they continue to argue the need for a practical and robust process-based value co-creation framework consisting of three main components: customer value-creating processes, supplier value-creating processes, and an encounter processes. From a theoretical perspective, Payne et al.'s (2008) framework highlights the roles of customer and provider, how, together, they create value, and the importance of core competences such as learning and knowledge. The framework also points to the heightened importance of communication in the cocreation process. Communication needs to be focused on all relevant channels and careful thought as to which types of encounters support action-based learning within them. This, Payne et al (2007) believes, along with the S-D logic can provide a useful framework for advancing cocreation in the public sector, that seeks value for everyone involved, not solely markets. As a result of the S-D logic literature, an important next step in cocreation is to examine user-created content and the role of intermediaries in cocreation.

Cassia and Magno (2009) argue that despite recent advancements in the co-creation literature as a result of the development of the S-D logic, the public sector is still lagging behind. The application of cocreation in the public sector is highly emergent (Bason, 2013). Disciplines such as service design, which focuses on (re)designing service processes, or experience design, which focuses on designing a particular user experience, are being tested out in settings from hospitals and public services to strategic policy development. Bason (2013) argues that research has focused on the shifts in the underlying business model of many public services, from a model that is largely designed around the delivery of services to people, towards a model that is designed to better enable collaboration of services with people.

Voorberg et al. (2013) found three different levels of participation between service provider and user. First, the user is considered as a co-implementer of a public service. For example, through a case study of a garbage disposal scheme in a Japanese city, Ben-Ari (1990) described the need for participation of citizens in garbage disposal services. In order to effectively divide garbage, assistance of citizens is required to already divide garbage at their homes. Second, the user is seen as co-designer of how the product or service should be delivered. In this case, the initiative for the cocreation lies with the public institution, but users decide how the service is being delivered. Wipf et al. (2009) described how users in France participated in the design and maintaining of an outdoor recreation space. Citizens got to codecide how the outdoor recreation space would be designed. Third, the user is an initiator and the government as supporting actor. For example, Rossi (2004) described that because of civil initiative and engagement from citizens, the historical center of Naples reopened for the public and Naples' monuments were restored.

Similar to Voorberg et al.'s (2013) findings, Bason (2010) found that the literature indicates there are specific roles the service user assumes, but since the application of cocreation within the public sector is recent, there is not yet much hard evidence of how the design-thinking process works. For instance, there seems to be no consensus on when and how to most appropriately bring end-users into the mix. The optimal configuration of trans-disciplinary collaboration between various public professions, as part of the design process, is not very well understood (Bason, 2010). But Bason (2010) argues that what has been determined is that cocreation is an iterative process overall (see appendix a).

Bason (2007) argues that the process starts with framing. Innovation does not start with an idea. It starts with thinking in a different way about the problem or by identifying a new opportunity. This means that the framing of the problem has to start with people—the service user—their needs and the outcomes being sought. However, the culture and practice in many public sector organizations readily accept that "the top" – whether that is a politician or top management—defines the problem or the task. The critical challenge as discovered by Bason (2010) is that in the public sector, the idea of cocreation is not implemented in the same organization that created it in the first place. A classic example is the department that formulates a new policy initiative that some dozens or hundreds of institutions must take up and turn into reality.

The cocreation processes provided by Bason (2010) illuminates the process of cocreation; however, barriers remain to orchestrating the process, including *lacking consciousness* (public service providers are sometimes not even aware that there is a different way to develop new solutions), *lacking tools* (people are not trained in how to conduct cocreation in practice) and lack of *enabling resources of platforms* (there's no one to help overcome the barrier of trying it for the first time). Opportunity to address these barriers exists.

Cocreation in the public sector. Voorberg et al (2013) represent the scholars who believe that the idea of cocreation in the public sector has been borrowed from the private sector literature and practice. Indeed, it has been argued that during the last few years, cocreation has been embraced as a new reform strategy for the public sector. Kelly (2005) found that there has been a focus on developing tools to increase the participation in service planning. One reason for the recent attention to cocreation is its potential to deal with a range of factors inhibiting effective public service provision (Needham, 2007), such as cutbacks and losses in service provider jobs. Cocreation is seen as an approach that can make services more efficient and effective, while also enhancing the morale of bureaucrats and U.S. citizens. Needham (2007) argued that, in particular, cocreation offers three advantages over traditional bureau-professional models of public service development: First, in the cocreation model, the service providers on the frontlines of public services are recognized to have a distinctive voice and expertise as a result of regular interaction with service users. Second, cocreation can transform citizen attitudes in ways that improve service quality. Third, by emphasizing user input into the productive process of cocreation allocated efficiency improves, making frontline providers and their managers more sensitive to user needs and preferences. For instance, President Obama founded a Social Innovation Fund. This fund is a policy program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), which combines public and private resources to grow promising community-based solutions that have evidence of results in any of three priority areas: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development. Programs such as these balance out what Bason (2013) argues to be ineffectual large, complex and politicized public bureaucracies that are rarely high-performing innovators. However, creating new solutions, with people holds significant potential to drive the kinds of radical societal change that could help the public sector. Bason (2013) argues that adopting cocreation as an approach to innovation in government means supplementing the discipline imposed by bureaucracy with the discipline of systematic innovation. That is, by cocreating with people to find new public solutions offers advantages, such as: connects bureaucracies with an outside-in perspective on current practices, opens public servants' eyes to the experience of their users, and promotes creativity; helps public servants to see how service could be made more valuable to people, while utilizing people's own networks and resources. This can enable the coproduction of service with citizens and business, reducing costs; and builds on rapid, design-driven ideation, essentially de-risking the innovation process. In other words, cocreation provides an alternative way to conduct the business of government and public services.

Building relationships through cocreation. Examining a set of case studies, Bovaird (2007) argues that partnerships are now so normal in public services, thus Joshi and Moore (2003) define a narrower form of cocreation as the "provision of public services (broadly defined, to include regulation) through regular, long-term relationships between state agencies and organized groups of citizens, where both make substantial resource contributions." Cocreation does not simply involve managing relationships between one service provider and a set of service users. For example, Bovarid (2007) posits that in the public sector, a user such as a heart attack patient may coproduce with health care providers (e.g., by adopting an improved diet and exercise regime to assure rehabilitation) and, at the same time, coproduce in the community (e.g., by serving as an "expert patient," counseling and encouraging other suffers to make similar changes). Once users and community activists become engaged in the coplanning and codelivery of public services alongside professional staff, the networks created may behave as complex adaptive systems, with very different dynamics from provider-centric services. Bovarid (2007) found that professional service providers are initially resistant to cocreation, but a conceptual framework that maps how cocreation among public service professionals, service users, and their communities can take place through the stages of service planning, design, commissioning, management, delivery, monitoring, and evaluation can help reduce this resistance. Yet, Bovarid (2007) attests that traditional conceptions of professional service planning and delivery in the public domain are outdated and need to be revised to account for the potential of cocreation by users and communities. In addition, Bovarid believes what is needed is "a new public service ethos with which the central role of service providers is to support, encourage, and coordinate the cocreation capabilities of service users and the communities in which they live."

Alford (2002) posits that there are two sets of differences between publics of public services. In the public sector, *who performs* the primary functions is asymmetrically divided between two categories of actors—the citizenry[2] and the clients [service users]. On the one hand, the value delivered by public services is "consumed" both by citizens and by clients. On the other hand, the citizenry through the democratic political process primarily carries out the function of expressing preferences about what value should be produced. Put another way, the citizenry has the dominant say not only about public value but also about the private value that the service users are to consume. As a result, the nature of relationships in the public sector is very different from those in the private sector, and thus must form certain constructs applicable to the public sector.

Osborne and Gaebler (1992) found that proponents of market and customer-focus models for the public sector attempt to overcome this reality by calling for service users who currently do not pay for services to be transformed into paying customers by giving

[2] The citizenry is a collectivity. It is as citizens that individuals relate to the society they are inescapably a part of (Pollitt 1990). It is the determination by the citizenry of what government and its agencies should do, and hence the public domain is a collective choice. For example, we, as part of the citizenry, voted for the federal government to fund SNAP.

them vouchers or other discretionary funds, with which they can act as purchasers in the market for their services. Disagreeing with this approach, Alford (2002) argues that even if vouchers work, they do not eliminate the role of the beneficiary or service users; all they do is displace it. Alford offers this example: when public-housing tenants receive vouchers instead of directly provided housing, they are still just service users. In short, the private-sector customer model has limited validity in the public-sector context; therefore a customer-focus based on economic exchange is of doubtful usefulness in the public sector. Kettl (1995), however, argues that to reject a focus on exchange would be to turn away from the useful ways of thinking about relations between the public sector and their service users. To focus on the relationship as an exchange, acknowledges the wishes of the service users of public services.

Diversity of voices in relationships. A diversity of perspectives and backgrounds is important for the development of cocreation strategies. After an examination of companies based in Japan, Nonaka, Toyama, Hirata (2008) believe that although people are different they still need the motivation, knowledge, and creative thinking skills to cocreate. Research has investigated how the minority status or diversity of individuals relates to cocreation. For example, Ojha (2005) distributed questionnaires to software developers to examine the impact of organizational, group, and individual characteristics on the sharing of knowledge among individuals within software project teams and found that individuals who considered themselves a minority based on gender, marital status, or education were less likely to share knowledge with others. A few studies have examined the role of social connections with other group members in the process of cocreation (see Phillips, Mannix, Neale, & Gruenfeld, 2004; Thomas-Hunt, Ogden, & Neale, 2003).

These studies suggest that socially isolated members are more likely to disagree with others and contribute their unique knowledge within a heterogeneous team. Based on an experimental design, Thomas-Hunt et al. (2003) found that the acknowledgement of individual's expertise helps increase participation by the service user in the cocreation process. But in their assessment of psychological insights to anti-poverty policy, Bertrand, Mullainathan and Shafir (2004) asked how do these interactions change when service users' preferences and lifestyles are affected by a lack of resources, accessibility, scarcity or the "stigma" attached to being poor?

The ability to cocreate can be compromised if service users suffer from a scarcity of resources; as explained in chapter one of Maria and her twin girls, cognitive focus was the scarce resource. Shafir and Mullainathan (2013) argue that scarcity is not just a physical and economic constraint it is a mindset. When scarcity captures an individual's attention, it changes how he or she thinks. When an individual functions under scarcity, he or she represents, manages, and deals with problems differently. When preoccupied by scarcity, an individual has less capacity to give to other areas of his or her life. This availability is called mental capacity or *bandwidth*. Scarcity reduces bandwidth—it makes us less insightful, less forward-thinking, and less controlled. The experience of poverty reduces bandwidth. And because bandwidth affects all aspects of behavior, it has consequences. The challenges of sticking to a plan, finding time to exercise, signing up for preventive health care, making healthy dietary choices, or the possible inability to cocreate with services, can all happen because of a shortage of bandwidth. In addition, the lack of bandwidth can affect relationships as well. Throughout the interpersonal communication literature, the definition of relationships includes both behavioral and cognitive elements. For example, Millar and Rogers (1976) examined relational-level measurement of the rules that characterize interpersonal relationships. As a result, the authors cast relationships in a symbolic interaction perspective: "People become aware of themselves only within the context of their social relationships. These relationships, whether primarily interpersonal or role specific, are bestowed, sustained and transformed through communicative behaviors." All of which may become impaired by a shortage of bandwidth. This potentially provides a very different explanation for why the poor stay poor, and from examining public service engagement from this lens may help yield more effective ways to cocreate with service users at the base of the pyramid.

Base of the Pyramid (BoP)

Jenkins and Ishikawa (2009) have identified efforts to understand those at the BoP or the economically disadvantaged and have noted that this area of study has attracted recent attention by academics as well as marketing executives from major global communities; however, Martin and Hill (2012) claim that the depth of knowledge of societal consumption, impoverishment, and outcomes is currently lacking. Based on ethnographic data, Hill and Gaines (2007) examined consumer behavior research across poverty subpopulations that included homeless individuals and families, poor children, rural poor, and aboriginal people. This work showed that impoverished consumers often are unable to raise above their circumstance, and that they experience negative reactions with long-term consequences. In addition, Martin and Hill (2012) found that relatedness and autonomy improve poverty's negative influence on life satisfaction. Based on in-depth interviews and focus groups with low-income individuals, Barki and Parente

(2010) found that the poor have “a stronger need to compensate for a dignity deficit and low self-esteem” and “a high level of aspiration to feel socially included in society.” These psychological traits make them vulnerable to market transactions that can undermine their wellbeing by reducing their ability to consume basic goods. Wilson, St. George, and Brown (2013) conducted focus groups with low-income adults and found that interventions require ongoing community involvement in underserved communities.

When it comes to federal assistance services, Veenhoven (2000) conducted a comparative study of 40 nations and examined whether there was a correlation between welfare expenditures and services and average life satisfaction and found no correlation. Furthermore, in their review of the economic literature, Dolan, Peasgood, and White (2008) found that empirical evidence on the impact of the welfare state is limited.

Consistently, research examining low-income people demonstrates that the poor seek psychological and material restoration through their own resources, yet Hill (1991) argues they often find this task impossible. Similarly, data gathered from more than 77,000 individuals, Martin and Hill (2012) found that individuals in higher socio-economic segments are more likely to share with each other in order to create a critical mass of needed goods and services, whereas individuals in extreme poverty receive little benefit from enhanced relatedness or greater community. This is, perhaps, an indication that outside services and ongoing involvement from those services is often necessary for the BoP population.

In general, Anderson, Kupp, and Vandermerwe (2010) found that BoP consumers are often (1) disadvantaged, especially in terms of expertise and knowledge needed to make decisions about services that bring about consumer and community welfare; and (2) vulnerable, lacking control, and agency.

Engagement of the BoP population. Laczniak and Santos (2011) argue that engagement with the economically disadvantaged as a distinct strategy option has been rarely considered until recently, as this segment has been typically evaluated as having little to contribute to the service-exchange process. Therefore, the authors developed a normative model for working with the economically poor, labeled the Integrative Justice Model (IJM) for ethically engaging impoverished segments. Laczniak and Santos (2011) claim that service benefits are often derived from "coproducing" with economically challenged individuals because these individuals can provide expertise, yet this has received little attention in the literature. Furthermore, individuals—from all economic segments—need to practice what Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) have called the "customer-centric view" in which value is created through dialogue, collaboration, and partnership with others.

The BoP population and health outcomes. Nee (2011) believes that the public sector plays an essential role in providing services like public education, basic scientific research, and health care. And it is within the public sector that Levine and White (1961) suggested that there is an excellent opportunity for exploring patterns of relationships among its service users, and within any community setting, varying kinds of relationships exist concerned with health and welfare; however, Alford (2002) argues the factors provoking service users to cocreate with public services have received relatively modest consideration.

Berry and Bendapudi confirms that research on health and well-being of the poor is encouraged by both scholars and policy makers. Furthermore, evidence indicates that socioeconomic inequalities in health in industrialized nations are increasing (Krieger, Williams, & Moss, 1997). For example, using data from a series of nationally representative medical expenditure surveys, Weinick, Zuvekas and Cohen (2000) found that disparities have been observed for access to quality health care and use of public services. This, in turn, compromises the ability for low-economic segments to co-create value within the public sector. Indeed, Donohue (2004) found that inequalities in opportunities, power, and voice exist. Yet, Badcott (2005) argues that signs of progress are evident and that research on the public sector has seen a trend in favor of increased cocreation. In fact, service users are always in the position of creating value or co-creating value in collaboration with public services; this highlights the role that service users also play in their own well-being (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). However, McColl-Kennedy (2012) posits that few researchers and practitioners to date have examined *what* cocreation actually looks like when considering situational and personal factors; situational and personal factors might include poverty and food insecurity of service users.

The BoP population represents the largest and fastest growing base (Nakata & Weidner, 2012), yet experts continue to debate whether market-based mechanisms or governmental aid can alleviate the problems of this population (The Economist*,* 2008). By understanding the experiences and needs of the individual at the BoP, resources can be developed to better connect, collaborate, and build relationships with this population. Moreover, by understanding what the BoP service user actually *do* when they cocreate value, the public sector can be better equipped to engage and provide resources.

In a longitudinal study of respondents' relationship with institutions, Bruning and Lambe (2008) found that researcher's need to assess their own worldview, i.e., socioeconomic or sociocultural factors, when building relationships with the public. Generally, researchers have reported that individuals who view the world similarly are more likely to develop relationships. The public sector then catering to the economically disadvantaged must effectively create value through relationship building. In addition, Bruning and Lambe (2008) found that research has only just begun to explore the ways in which adaptations of interpersonal relationship-building strategies can be incorporated into an organization or service-public relationship context.

The BoP population and public services. The health and social science literature is replete with studies of the impact of income, poverty, and social policies on the health of individuals (see Macinko, Shi, Starfield, & Wulu, Jr., 2003). Much of this research applies methods that include the use of administrative data, claims data, secondary analysis of national surveys, and key informant interviews; all of which Devoe, Graham, Angier, Baez, & Krois (2008) believes to be several steps removed from the actual life experience of poor and underserved families. Therefore, Devoe et al. (2008) conducted a mixed-methods investigation using surveys and qualitative narratives from low-income adults about the importance of health insurance and other possible factors affecting access to health care for their children and found that health insurance instability, lack of access to services despite having insurance, and unaffordable costs were major concerns. To improve access to public services for low-income people, Felland, Ginsburg, and Kishbauch (2011) examined seven communities where a health service provider collaborated with other providers and organizations to achieve better results for service users. The researchers found that clinicians and service providers participation was inadequate. In addition, as a result of one-to-one interviews with 12 experts on poverty and health, Bloch, Rozmovits, and Giambrone (2011) found that the quality of interactions between services and people living in poverty is more complex than simple utilization rates suggest. Indeed, in their quantitative study, Stirling, Wilson, & McConnachie (2001) found that when people living in poverty access public services, they are more likely to have shorter consultation times than their wealthier peers, and Willems, De Masesschalck, Deveugele, Derese, and De Maeseneer (2005) found that they are less likely to be involved in treatment decisions. Moreover, in a qualitative study of 35 patients, Barry, Bradley, and Britten (2000) found that despite their complex care needs, low-income service users may be reluctant to disclose social problems due to stigma and/or discrimination while services may be reluctant or feel ill-equipped to probe for these issues. Bloch et al (2011) argues that further research is necessary to directly elicit the views and experiences of a range of health and public services, particularly among the low-income population.

Cocreation with the BoP population. Bovaird (2007) argued that a service user becoming a coproducer or cocreator is complex. Mulgan (1991) said, “it is hardly progressive to distribute responsibilities to the powerless," and Taylor (2003) made the point that excluded communities should not have to 'participate' in order to have the same claim on service quality and provision as other members of society have. However, Bovaird (2007) points to Gustafson and Driver (2005) who found that participation in "Sure Start" by parents in deprived areas had beneficial effects in helping them exercise power over themselves. In addition, Joshi and Moore (2004) found that cocreation might offer the only realistic hope for improved quality of life in many poor communities. Joshi and Moore (2004) asked how are services actually delivered to poor people and found that 'diversity' is a big part of the answer. According to Joshi and Moore, the following are different ways in which services are used or delivered to poor people:

(a) Self-provisioning through collective action, independently of external agencies. Poor people often get together on a local basis to provide their own basic education, security, funeral expenses, or small-scale savings systems.

(b) Direct social provision through private associations. There is a long tradition of providing basic services through private associations, notably religious organizations.

(c) Direct market provision, on a commercial basis. High proportions of basic services, especially health, are simply purchased on the market from local providers, formal or informal.

(d) Direct social provision through state agencies. There is a substantial government apparatus that is dedicated, at least formally, to the widespread provision of, at a minimum, health and education, and often a much wider range of services.

(e) Indirect state provision, through sub-contracting of delivery responsibility to other agencies – religious organizations, NGOs, private for profit companies, user groups, etc.

In the research about people who live at the base-of-the-pyramid, the concept of cocreation has a rather wide meaning in terms of its objectives and depth. The need to cocreate new mindsets has been highlighted by London and Hart (2004) in an exploratory analysis, involving interviews, archival materials, and case studies. Poor people are very rarely seen as potential co-creators, partners, or resourceful entrepreneurs. This mindset, London and Hart believes, can change, when a company engages in cocreation with individuals at the BoP. Indeed, there is a growing movement that seeks to reduce the role of the state and to marketize all public sector functions. In particular, Prahalad (2005) offers the "BoP proposition." This proposition argues that the private sector should play the leading role in poverty reduction. Thus, it was critical to include cocreation from the perspective of the marketing discipline in order to account for the current argument between the private and public sectors in the fight against poverty. Focusing on the private sector for poverty reduction is a dangerous delusion as argued by Karnani (2009) because it grossly underemphasizes the role and the responsibility of the state in poverty reduction. Contrary to the BoP proposition, Karnani (2009) believes the empirical evidence supports a larger role for the state in providing public services.

In general, Simanis and Hart (2008) have found that research on the processes and practices of cocreation within the BoP population is very scarce. As borrowed from the private sector, Simanis and Hart proposed a way to engage with the BoP population. This proposal states that the process evolves via three partially overlapping phases: Opening up: The company immerses itself in the community to develop deep dialogue, local entrepreneurship and a project team. This culminates in business concept co-creation. Building the ecosystem: The new business organization is formalized, capability and commitment strengthened and eventually a business prototype is created. Enterprise creation: The business prototype is tested, with the objective of further strengthening local entrepreneurs, management capacity and markets (see appendix b).

Nahi (2012) argues that there are almost no studies on how this co-creation process has played out in practice, and certainly not within the public sector. Tappe (2010) argues that value cocreation represents the next step for consumer engagement. It relates to the rising empowerment of the individual, the democratization of the marketplace, and finally makes systematic use of communication tools; however, there remain opportunities to examine what value cocreation looks like within the BoP population who lack the resources to engage.

Public Services: Opportunity to Cocreate

In the research on organizational learning and knowledge, Rashman, Withers, Hartley (2009) stated that the aim of a public service is to add value to the public sphere, provided by government—through the public sector. And Moore (1995) believes that public services aim not to produce profit but 'public value' and to impact citizens. The state’s capacity to deliver better and better services, with limited resources, depends on it encouraging people to become more adept at self-assessing and self-managing their health, education, welfare, safety, and taxes (Leadbeater, 2004). Tested by using a field experiment on educational services, Jakobsen and Andersen (2013) claim that over the last decade, cocreation in public service delivery has become a major theme among researchers. In particular, interest in service users’ input to the provision of public services has been growing. As stated by Alford (2009), in most public service delivery, citizens, in the form of service users, play an active role in the provision process. Examples include services such as health and education. Indeed, cocreation and coproduction has been studied quite extensively in the health care and educational sectors (Voorberg et al., 2013).

The research on public service delivery and cocreation includes studies on different ways in which citizens [service users] contribute to the design and delivery of services (Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013). In reviewing existing legal infrastructure authorizing public managers to use new processes, Bingham, Nabatchi, and O’Leary (2005) found that existing quasi-legislative and quasi-judicial new governance processes provide ways to engage individual citizens, the public, and organized stakeholders in the work of government and public services. Alford (2009) examined the service user of government organizations and found that while the individual service user has little power, collectively service users have significant power, because the organizations need certain things from them.

Leadbetter (2004) posits that demands for direct citizen participation in issues of basic welfare and quality of life expanded in the last two decades of the 20th century. Leadbetter suggested that a confluence of voices from working and middle-class whites, government workers, environmentalists, feminists, and consumers amplified the movement. According to Berger and Neuhaus (1977) participation in services can be particularly beneficial in low-income neighborhoods, in particular. As a result of a survey of service managers, Hardina (2011) too agrees that participation can strengthen neighborhood ties and help ethnic minorities defend themselves from the effects of discriminatory practices. Furthermore, Kinard and Capella (2006) suggest that research indicates that participants, in general, perceive greater benefits from service providers requiring high levels of involvement and point out that to customize a service, the participant must be willing to exchange specific information with the service provider, which in turn allows the provider to understand the participant and their needs. Participant involvement is not a new concept. Campbell (1979) argued that involvement by the public in planning public service programs is vital to both the participant and to the public service delivery system itself. Campbell found that the involvement of participants in services, in particular, overcomes apathy and estrangement and facilitates the realignment of power resources in the community through which users of services can define their own goals and negotiate on their own behalf.

In their study of 180 social workers given a questionnaire, Itzhaky and Bustin (2005) found that in public services, the term “client participation” is often used to describe explicit efforts to involve service recipients in organizational decision-making, planning, and evaluation. However, Lipsky (1991) found early on that in organizations in which users are not consulted about service preferences, the manner in which services are delivered could contribute to feelings of marginalization and stigmatization among low-income service users precisely because staff members have the power to decide whether individuals are worthy of assistance. Leadbeater (2004) argues that personalized public services could have at least five different meanings. First, personalization could mean providing users with a more customer-friendly interface with existing services. Second, personalization could also mean giving users more say in navigating their way through services once they have access to them. Third, personalization could mean giving users more direct say over how money is spent. Users would be given more power to make their own decisions about how to spend money allocated to their education or operation. Four, personalization could mean users are not just consumers but co-designers and co-producers of a service; they actively participate in its design and provision. And fifth, personalization could mean self-organization: the public good emerging from within society, in part, through the way that public policy shapes millions of individual decisions about how we exercise, eat, smoke, drink, save for our pensions, read to our children, and pay our taxes. Corroborated by Gutierrez, Parsons, and Cox (1998), in general, participation can reduce feelings of marginalization, increase the power of low-income clients vis-à-vis the organization's staff and administrators, and help to facilitate improvements in service delivery.

Delivery of public services to the BoP population. Using examples from three federal social programs, Arnstien (1969) argued that the War on Poverty encouraged the empowerment of consumers in the management of services. References to this approach for delivering services to members of marginalized groups first appeared in social work and social psychology literature in the 1970s and ‘80s (Rappaport, 1984). Bowen and Lawler (1995) believe that during the 1990s, *empowerment* came to encompass both nonprofit and for-profit management approaches. Empowerment-oriented management is thought to improve the quality of service, increase worker productivity, stimulate innovation, and improve interpersonal relationships between staff members and administrators. Littell (2001) examined whether variations in participation affect outcomes of intensive family preservation services in child welfare. Based on data gathered during a large-scale evaluation of family preservation services in Illinois noted too that increases in feelings of self-efficacy among people served by organizations that utilize an empowerment-oriented approach to the delivery of services. In addition, a number of studies indicate that involving users in organizational decision-making is effective in increasing personal feelings of self-efficacy and empowerment (see Itzhaky & York, 2002; Speer & Hughey, 1995). For example, Hardina (2011) conducted a survey of service providers and found that most respondents indicated that they preferred to use participatory approaches in their own day-to-day practice; however, their employing organizations seemed unlikely to utilize approaches to actually increase user access to organizational decision-making or the power of low-income people served by the organization. Prior to Hardina (2011), there had been little empirical evidence that services actively sought to empower service users by involving them in decision making.

Therefore, Hardina (2011) recommended that research is needed to examine how providers can effectively implement empowerment-oriented management models in a manner that is empowering for service users and that fosters the creation of empowered organizations that can advocate for social change.

Engaging service users. Putnam (2000) argues that there is little empirical evidence that organizations actually engage individuals in participatory activities. Many public service administrators adopt management approaches that incorporate principles associated with for-profit businesses such as cost containment, finding low-wage alternatives to paying good salaries, and concentrating decision-making authority to a handful of top managers (Bobic & Davis, 2003). Furthermore, many researchers have explored the reasons lower-income populations do not use or collaborate with services, but primarily focused on the logistical barriers presented by such factors as transportation, child care, and the cost of services (Anderson, Robins, Greeno, Cahalane, Copeland, & Andrews, 2006). In an ethnographic analysis of in-depth qualitative interviews with low-income mothers, Anderson et al. (2006) found that low-income individuals anticipate negative ramifications for seeking and collaborating with services, including being labeled unfit. Maynard, Ehreth, Cox, Peterson, and McGann (1997) claim that service use patterns can be only partially explained by a relative lack of services and resources in lower-income communities and the instrumental challenges (e.g., finances, transportation, affordable child care) that add to the difficulties in accessing them.

According to Hardina (2011), future research is needed to examine such factors as demographic characteristics of managers, service type, management education, or organizational funding of service delivery.

The public sector: health and human services. The service discipline developed from the fundamental belief that services are different from goods and require novel ideas, approaches, tools, and strategies (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1994). Baker, Fisher, and Wennberg (2008) believe that within the public sector, health and human services are arguably the most personal and important services that affect participants, yet Adams and Biros (2002) argue that many studies document wide variation in the quality of care and services delivered and in users' ability to evaluate that quality. The health and human services industry, in particular, illustrates just how much services can differ.

Donabedian (1980) identified the importance of the interpersonal process in the delivery of health and human services. Traditionally, users have been viewed as a "passive recipient" (Payne & Frow, 2008), and this view has been prevalent in health services too (Berry & Bendapudi, 2007). However, Michie, Miles, and Weinman (2003) argue that there is now growing acknowledgement in these services that treatment plans and related activities can extend beyond interactions to include broader aspects of the user's life such as lifestyle and beliefs. Health professionals are increasingly encouraged to involve users in treatment decisions, and Say and Thomson (2003), conducting informal interviews with doctors from a range of specialties, found that involvement of the user is essential to the experience. Therefore, user centeredness is becoming a widely used, but poorly understood, concept in service practices. Stewart (2001) argues that it may be most commonly understood for what it is not—technology-centered, hospital-centered, disease-centered, or service-centered. Little, Everitt, Williamson, Warner, Moore, Gould, Ferrier, and Payne (2001) found that users want user-centered care which explores the users' main concerns and need for information, seeks an integrated understanding of the users' world—that is, the users' whole person, emotional needs, and life issues, finds common ground on what the problem is and mutually agrees on management, enhances prevention and health promotion, and enhances the continuing relationship between the user and the service provider.

Anderson et al (2013) argues that although such studies advance understanding of individual services, they do not thoroughly account for the pervasive impact of the sociocultural context on individual experiences and preferences. Therefore, the authors recommend research that examines users' societal circles (e.g., family, community, group membership) and the sociocultural context in which they reside.

Motivation for the BoP to cocreate with a public service. Crawford, Rutter, Manley, Weaver, Bhui, Fulop, and Tyrer (2002) identified 42 research papers on user cocreation that focused on forums, health panels, focus groups, and user interviews. In most studies, the user's role is limited to functioning as a provider of information. Using the diary-based method on 53 patients in three cases of care, Elg, Engstrom, Witell, & Poksinska (2012) claim that prior to their study there were no instances in the literature in which the user had an active role in service development. Elg et al. (2012) found 43 empirical investigations on the role of users in health care in general, but almost all were concerned with individual cocreation, whereas cocreation for and with others is missing.

Users are often not involved in service development, and reactive methods to involve them are used when the user is passive (Elg et. al., 2012). Conversely, Hart, Sherer, Temkin, Whyte, Dikmen, Heinemann, and Bell (2010) found that cocreation can operate both at the collective level with users actively participating in key decisions or resolving ethical dilemmas and at the individual level between user and service provider.

McColl-Kennedy et al. (2012) conducted focus groups and in-depth interviews to examine what consumers actually do to cocreate, the participant's perceived role, and his or her value cocreation activities, experiences, and interactions in the health care setting, and proposed a social practice-based typology from the empirical setting. Since then, little empirical research has addressed the service user's role in value cocreation and its subsequent effect on important user's outcomes (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012). Voorberg et al. (2013) argues still much is unknown about the outcomes of collaboration processes with service users. Future research is required in order to conclude under which circumstances certain outcomes of cocreation may occur. In a study of economically disadvantaged families, Jakobsen and Anderson (2013) found that cocreation/coproduction programs specifically targeted at lifting constraints in terms of knowledge and tangible sources effectively benefits the most disadvantaged group; however, this study was done in a controlled, experimental setting.

Jakobsen and Anderson (2013) believes that despite the recently revived interest in service user cocreation/coproduction in public service delivery, less attention has been devoted to the equity in service outcomes. This arises because disadvantaged service users tend to coproduce less—partly because of resource constraints—than advantages service users. The authors found that reducing inequities in cocreation programs does not necessarily require extra public resources, just a strengthened understanding as to how to reach the economically disadvantaged. As a result, still much is unknown about how and through what ways do service users prefer to cocreate with service providers in a natural service setting. There remains a gap in the literature that examines how the service user collaborates with the service provider during the process of cocreation. Therefore, an aim of this study is to answer the following:

RQ1. How do service users at the base of the pyramid (the SNAP-Ed user) cocreate value with the service provider?

RQ2. How do service users at the base of the pyramid view themselves in their role as a value cocreator?

Cocreating for better health

The process of cocreation has been examined within the private sector, with the intention to increase revenue and brand loyalty, and the public sector in order to increase the likelihood of an informed citizenry. Cocreation can also help in improving health outcomes. However, making an impact on health status in a community involves examining a larger system than just the individual (Green & Kretuer, 1999; Warnecke et al., 2008). Warnecke, Oh, Breen, Gehlert, Paskett, and Tucker (2008) argue that there are determinants that directly or indirectly impact health related outcomes, one of those determinants may be classified as proximal. Proximal determinants are individual factors such as demographic factors-socioeconomic status (SES), race/ethnicity, gender, etc., level of acculturation, cultural beliefs, and behavioral aspects, such as diet, exercise, tobacco use, etc. Individuals at the base of the pyramid, who may be afflicted because of proximal determinants, could be considered a part of the “medically underserved population.” The U.S. Health Services and Resource Administration identify areas and populations in the country that are not optimally served medically, based on an Index of Medical Underservice (IMU). Socio-cultural and economic differences between minorities and low-income individuals and [service] providers, and the way the services are organized can influence the interactions between individual and service provider, decision-making, comprehension of compliance requirements, and navigation of services leading to increased disparities (Betancourt, Green, Carrillo, and Ananeh-Firempong, 2003). In their review of thinking about the causes of unequal health, the effects of unequal health care, and the socioeconomically disadvantaged, Reilly, Schiff, and Conway (1998) claim that the priorities of the underserved in terms of fulfilling more basic needs of food, personal safety, and child care tend to add to the misunderstanding between the providers and the underserved, and that the lack of access to resources to enable healthy behaviors and compliance can act as a barrier in maintaining health. This is important to recognize since the perception amongst [service] providers can be that of attributing poor health to attitudes rather than lack of resources. In addition, Gamper-Rabindran, Khan, and Timmins (2009) too believe that lack of access is a strong factor. In fact, Rabindran et al. (2009) found that the lack of availability of expensive and healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables, and the easy availability of cheaper, but unhealthy and convenience foods add to the barriers in maintaining healthy behaviors.

Addressing nutrition with public services. The International Food and Information Council Foundation hosts a blog called, Food Insight. It is a resource to "effectively communicate science-based information on health, nutrition, and food safety for the public good." In 2011, Food Insight stated that while individuals believe that physical activity and family health history are important determinants in maintaining and improving overall health, they consider food and nutrition top determinants. With 85% interested in learning more about foods that can provide benefits, individuals are ready for actionable advice that could improve their overall health and wellness (Food Insight, 2011). The USDA report *Food and Agricultural Policy: Taking Stock for the New Century (2001)* argues that improved diet can be considered pragmatic investments in human capital that yield long-term returns in a better educated, stronger, and healthier workforce, and families. Guthrie and Myers (2002) also agree that nutrition and health outcomes research can help society more wisely allocate its resources by identifying the dietary improvement strategies that are most effective in achieving its goals, and also, by assessing how service users might co-create value in the process.

However, service users come with a variety of experiences and differing levels of knowledge related to food and nutrition (MacLellan, Taylor, & Wood, 2008), therefore providing nutrition education and information is complex and challenging. While nutritionists and scholars agree that nutrition information is an important tool that may help service users make healthier food choices (Drichoutis, Lazaridi, Nayga, Kapsokefalou, & Chryssochoidis, 2008), there is a noticeable inequity of nutrition knowledge and education between those Americans with high socio-economic status (SES) and those with low SES.

Ball, Crawford, and Mishra (2005) believe that the research suggests that focusing on nutrition knowledge and an individual's network of services, family, and friends may be important in reducing socio-economic inequalities; in order to achieve good nutrition for all—particularly among those who are disadvantaged—more comprehensive understanding of the drivers of socio-economic inequalities in food consumption is needed.

Traditionally, individuals with high SES tend to coproduce more than low-SES individuals (Ostrom, 1996), in part because the latter have a lack of knowledge and resources. In addition, the economically disadvantaged are generally vulnerable to economic stresses and plagued with a limited amount of bandwidth. To that end, Dammann and Smith (2009) found that the most common resource that low-income individuals will sacrifice is food. Kelly (2013) found that a study conducted by iHub Research found that an economically-disadvantaged individual's entire meal went forgone, or a family meal was skipped or a cheaper meal was chosen, for instance vegetables instead of meat before giving up anything else. Banerjee and Duflo (2007) found that the poor tend to buy costly items (in terms of cost per calories), and the poor have more limited choice of foods, partly because some communities are food deserts, dominated by vendors of fast and convenience foods (Cottam & Leadbeater, 2004). As a result of a systematic review of qualitative studies that focus on low-income mothers' accounts of managing poverty, Attree (2005) believes access to services reflects inequalities in income. Attree argues that the poorest would benefit least, unless public policy makes sure that programs and services are available in poor areas as well as middle-class areas. From a public health perspective, the government's role is to help low-income families make healthy food choices, and to create the conditions to enable them to make healthy decisions. Arguably, however, current policy on nutrition and health is influenced by behavioral perspectives, which fail to take into account the full impact of structural factors on food choices. Structural factors that may include the accessibility of healthy foods and/or public services for economically-disadvantaged communities.

Health and nutrition at the BoP. Acheson (1998) argues that the relationship between those at the base of the pyramid and poor health due to inadequate nutrition is complicated and is influenced by several factors, including social and community networks. When thinking about SES, income—social status, measured by education; and work status, measured by occupation" (Dutton & Levine, 1989)—are often the measures to determine an individual's status (see Adler, Boyce, Chesney, Cohen, Folkman, Kahn, & Syme, 1994). Drichoutis, Lazaridia, & Nayga (2005) claim that individuals with low SES are more likely to have lower levels of nutrition knowledge. In their exploratory study of interviewed participants and nonparticipants in federal food assistance, McArthur, Chamberlain, and Howard (2001) claim that similar effects have been observed for education levels: Individuals with greater education have reported greater use of nutrition information.

In the research, Campos et al. (2010) found that seven studies targeting socioeconomically disadvantaged populations reported variable rates of nutrition information use, ranging from 20% to 74%. These rates were typically lower than those reported for the general population. Furthermore, Endevelt, Baron-Epel, Karpati, & Heymann (2009) found that health service visits are less frequent among individuals living in lower socioeconomic areas.

While several determinants directly or indirectly have an impact on health-related outcomes (Gamper-Rabindran, Khan, & Timmins, 2010), SES is a strong and consistent predictor of morbidity and premature mortality (Adler et al.,1994). Risk factors including lack of breastfeeding, smoking, physical inactivity, obesity, hypertension, and poor diet are clustered in the lower SES groups (James, Nelson, Ralph, & Leather, 1997). The risk factors are clear, but the dietary contributors are just emerging (James et al., 1997), and socio-economic factors are increasingly being recognized as important determinants of nutrition information use and knowledge (Ball, Crawford, & Mishra, 2005).

Ehrens (2013) suggests that for nearly 50 years, it has been recognized that linking individuals—who buy food, to producers and manufacturers, who grow food—was a means to an end with benefits to both. But the interest of individuals in receiving nutrition education is often underestimated (Nutting, 1986). Nutrition education has an important role in promoting health and reducing the risk of developing chronic disease. [Nutrition education has been defined as "…any set of learning experiences designed to facilitate the voluntary adoption of eating and other nutrition-related behaviors conducive to health and well-being (American Dietetic Association, 1996)]. However, using a cross-sectional descriptive design that used both a qualitative and quantitative design, Charlton, Brewitt, & Bourne (2004) found that various modes of communication disseminate nutrition messages to the public, such as the mass media, health education materials, and books, as well as food labeling and food packaging. These messages are often contradictory, and it is often difficult for individuals to know what information is accurate. For example, Cowburn and Stockley (2005) found that between 1991 and 2007 individuals often reported difficulty in interpreting quantitative information contained on nutrition labels. Furthermore, some individuals report that different nutrition label formats are confusing (Grunert & Wills, 2007). The decision by the FDA to revamp food labels in 2014—to improve disclosure of added sugars and serving sizes—is an important step at improving the information individuals get about the foods they eat (Gottlieb, 2014). Though nutrition education formats have changed, the recommendations are the same: Campos et al (2010) argue that nutrition information must be accessible and understandable. Despite the widespread use of nutritional information, not all individuals rely on this information during decision-making. Indeed, Mohr, Lichtenstein, and Janiszewski (2012) believe it is reasonable to assume that individual differences and context factors moderate the extent to which an individual relies on nutritional information.

Because cocreation allows individuals to help shape or personalize the content of his or her experience (Roggeveen, Tsiros, & Grewal, 2012), considerable research in marketing and management has examined satisfaction with co-creating (e.g. Bitner, Booms and Mohr, 1994; Keaveney, 1995; Ostrom and Iacobucci, 1995), and the process may be useful to the individual who struggles to make the right nutrition decisions. In this next section, literature on service encounters and past studies that have examined the service performed by SNAP educators—also known as Food Heroes within the SNAP-Ed community—in providing nutrition information will be discussed.

Service encounters within the public sector. "Service encounters are first and foremost social encounters" (McCallum and Harrison, 1985). Surprenant and Solomon (1987) define the service encounter as "the dyadic interaction between a service user and service provider." This definition draws on their earlier work suggesting, "service encounters are role performances" in which both users and service providers have roles to enact. This use of the term "service encounter" focuses on the interpersonal element of performance (Bitner, Booms, & Tetreault, 1990). Hollander (1985) provided numerous examples of how the encounter is shaped by social and personal forces, from hostility and antipathy to the piquancy that status differences add to the interaction. All acknowledge that the personal characteristics of service providers have an important effect on their attractiveness to potential service users. Hochschild (1983) described the work performed by service providers as "emotional labor" that requires them to submerge their own feelings to the goals of his or her employer.

As a result of their study of 227 high-risk Hispanic adolescents, Schwartz, Mason, Pantin, Wang, Brown, Campo, and Szapocznik (2009) believes that service providers engage in face-to-face communications with service users in an attempt to elicit behavior change. Furthermore, the authors believe that service providers, who interact with users on a day-to-day basis, are the interface between the user and service. Public services offered by the U.S. federal government include groups such as the Child Protection Agency, Department of Health and Human Services, and the Food and Drug Administration, which act as behavior influencers (Anderson et al., 2006). Unlike the commercial service sector, where the product offering is a good or service, public service industries primary offering is a behavior change (Schwartz & et al., 2009). A behavior change may mean giving up an addiction (e.g., cigarettes, drugs, or alcohol) or being uncomfortable (e.g., mammogram) or even being embarrassed (e.g., family planning). In turn, the service user's perceived price is often excessive compared to the physical (e.g., illness from addiction withdrawal) and/ or psychological (e.g., embarrassment) sacrifice required of the behavior change. Consequently, Sams, Fortney, and Willenbring (2006) argues that the service delivery performance is paramount in the success of the public service encounter in persuading users that benefits exceed the cost. The authors believe that despite the pervasive nature of public services (i.e., affect society as a whole), this segment of services has received only sparse attention in the literature.

Public service: SNAP-Ed's instructor. From a historical perspective, Blank (2000) thinks that one of the characteristics of the public sector is the prevalence of various forms of service-delivery disconnect. In other words, in many public service areas the recipient of the service may have a limited capacity for choice and is often not the actual decision maker. A strategy of cocreation can combine the needs of service user with the direction of the service provider. Certainly, tailoring health and nutrition education is a strategy used to bring individualization and personalization of health messages to members of a targeted group (Brug & Campbell, 2003), which Skinner, Strecher, and Hospers (1994) believe may be an important tool for those individuals at the BoP.

A Registered Dietitian (RD), Food Hero, educator, or workshop leader[3] have a crucial role to play in the field of nutrition (Sahyoun, Akobundu, Coray, & Netterville, 2011) and are valuable resources for the SNAP community. For nutrition education to be effective, these educators must "provide information people want, in a form they want, where they want it" (American Dietetic Association, 1996). MacLellan and Berenbaum

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[3] The titles used to label SNAP-Ed educators vary by state program and are based on the qualifications required by each SNAP program.

(2006) suggests that research indicates that educators express concern that users “may not know why they need certain information and it is the educator’s professional responsibility to determine what is in the best interest of the user.”

In a study of educator’s and user’s, MacLellan, Morley, Traviss, and Cividin (2011) found that because of the complexity of nutrition education and user preference for a spectrum of approaches and delivery methods, users must inform educators on what is needed in order to provide effective nutrition education. Educators have to address user’s concerns without causing information overload, and have to translate complex science into information that is meaningful to them. Paisley, Brown, and Greenberg (2008) administered a survey containing both closed-and open-ended questions among women over 20 years old and found that educators aim to use a counseling approach in communicating with users, rather than giving advice or information alone. The authors argue that evidence for this practice is found in the literature, as knowledge transfer alone is not sufficient to produce behavior change. Furthermore, educators aim to develop a working alliance as desired in more collaborative relationships (Larsson, Hedelin, & Athlin, 2003) and get to understand what type of service user SNAP-Ed often services. For example, RD Suzy Weems (2013) says, “specific individuals who benefit from seeing a RD include: parents of small children and adolescents and individuals planning meals on a limited budget.” Indeed, many of the SNAP-Ed service users are mothers of small children, often coping with single-parent situations and a lack of child support or employment in addition to limited education and knowledge of health-related issues.

Therefore, educators try to develop curriculum that are relevant for these types of service users.

Through in-depth qualitative interviews with community-based peer educators with a state-level family nutrition program, Seibel (2012) found that program educators must also consider the cultural nuances unique to each community, and that cultural belief and practice systems are not limited to issues merely of race and gender, but are also influenced by SES, attitudes toward education and employment, perceptions of those from “outside,” and interest in altering any of these factors. Gehrt (1994) found it is essential that those who reach these users are able to relate to them, without contributing to his or her feelings of isolation and disenfranchisement, and are able to build immediate rapport and long-lasting trust. The potential for such positive interpersonal relationships serves to empower and protect these individuals.

In a study of adult learners, McFerren (2007) found that learners in limited-income, community health programs have cited negative experience with formal, expert-novice-type educational settings, and have expressed an interest in non-formal, interactive, and participatory approaches to learning. SNAP-Ed service users learn from educators with either formal educations and/or those who have already lived with a limited-income. Aside from the experimental design of Jakobsen and Andersen’s (2013) examination of economically disadvantaged individuals, little has been done to examine the relationship between service providers and service users who are economically disadvantaged, and how value is cocreated between these relationships.

Relationships at the Base of the Pyramid

Jensen (2006) argues that individuals who live in poverty are more likely to have impaired emotional-social relationships. Mullainathan and Shafir (2013) argue that the feeling of scarcity can make people feel “poor” with respect to relationships with others. One of the effects of being low income is that disadvantaged individuals have a severe strain on their mental and emotional health (Jordan, 2013). Mani, Mullainathan, Shafir, and Zhao (2013) argues that poverty imposes a psychological burden so great that the poor are left with little mental bandwidth with which to perform everyday tasks, including building relationships. Yet, Furler and Palmer (2010) claim that building and maintaining relationships with services can ensure that they are tailored according to a service user’s context, including social connections, which account for the needs of the person.

An important claim made by Zainuddin, Russell-Bennett, and Previte (2013) supports the rationale for this study. The authors state that understanding value cocreation in services requires an understanding of the interaction that occurs between parties. Part of this interaction is the development of a relationship between the service provider and its users. The Relational Models Theory (Fiske, 1992) provides a framework to describe relationships by recognizing that people use just four fundamental models for organizing most aspects of sociality most of the time in all cultures. These models are Communal Sharing, Authority Ranking, Equality Matching, and Market Pricing. People use these models to construct, coordinate, and contest social action. The Relational Models Theory (1991) was developed after an extensive review of the research on relationships, and as

Turner (1992) claims, based on massive amounts of data from all the social sciences to buttress Fiske's argument about relationships. Furthermore, Blois and Ryan (2012) posits that Fiske's theory has been extensively tested and validated in both ethnographic and experimental research and is well recognized in social sciences and accepted as a valuable interpretation of social interactions. As a theory, it offers an account of the fundamental forms of social relations and claims that the four models provide the scripts or schemata that allow individuals to relate to the behavior of others. The value of the model shows that different sets of behaviors are associated with each of the four types of relationships (Blois & Ryan, 2012).

Haslam and Fiske (1999) tested the models in a study with 23 participants from different populations, to see if there are unipolar factors in relationship analysis. The participants completed two surveys based on the factors in relationship analysis as well as listed 40 acquaintances to apply the analysis toward when completing the surveys. It was concluded that even though there is a possibility to use the theory in many different social areas, there is a tendency for a person to use the models in the same way each time, no matter context. Blois and Ryan (2012) used the theory in the context of business-to-business exchanges and found that at a particular point in time a relational form may be dominant and thus determines the context within which the other models have to operate. Other findings suggest that people commonly use a combination of models and that people string the models together and nest them hierarchically in various phases of an interaction or in distinct activities of organization.

Sheppard and Sherman (1998) found that in many relationships a predominant relational form exists that serves as a background for all the others.

Boer and Berends (2011) used Fiske's theory to investigate relational dynamics in knowledge sharing behavior. An experimental research design explored the impact of conflicts in knowledge sharing relationships on the willingness to share knowledge and found that the recognition of relational model conflicts strongly depends on the relational models involved. The authors argue that the Relational Model Theory provides a comprehensive relational framework for understanding the complexities of knowledge sharing behavior in organizations. In general, the theory has been applied to psychopathology, family processes, business management, and public policy (Fiske, 1992), and has been used to explain social behaviors. The framework of the Relational Model Theory may help to explain the social behaviors that develop as a result of cocreation.

Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison, and Lesko (1997) claim that the literature of interpersonal relationships, marketing, and psychology demonstrates that relationship management or social relations (Fiske, 1992) have become the focus for many scholars and practitioners, and the attempts to identify which relationships are initiated, developed, and maintained (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998) have been documented. For example, Dominquez and Watkins (2003) found a new source of trust and opportunity for building relationships among the economically disadvantaged: the public service. They found that public services were social support networks. But despite their numerous benefits, Schilling (1987) argued that public services can place users in potentially dangerous positions. First, Dominquez and Watkins (2003) found that mothers count on public services for their often far-ranging needs. As a result of such demands, these services may not always be able to dedicate the time and resources to provide the range of support some mothers have come to expect and depend upon. Second, these service-user relationships raise an issue of reciprocity that may be problematic in the long run. After conducting interviews with low-income, single mothers living in a rural area, Nelson (2000) found that when low-income mothers identified support givers [service providers] as more fortunate than themselves, they saw gratitude, emotional support, and loyalty as not merely vital elements of repayment for goods and services received, but sometimes as the only appropriate form of repayment. Given this, an important area of inquiry would be to examine what the form of repayment or reciprocity is if service user and service provider were engaged in the process of cocreation. Ultimately, Dominquez and Watkins (2003) argued that what seems to matter is the individual's abilities to build the kinds of relationships that will result in shared information.

Relationships through the lens of public relations. Bovaird (2007) found that the delivery of services is no longer just the role of service providers—users and other members of the community are playing a large role in shaping decisions and outcomes, and that coproduction/cocreation means that service providers and users must develop mutual relationships. To that end, in a study of government-citizen relationships, Ledingham (2001) found that public relations could contribute to relationship building and assessing relationship quality. In addition, Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1994) support the notion that public relations can help resolve contradictions and conflict through accommodation, negotiation, and discourse. This thinking is also reflected in what

Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig (1995) call, a “win-win” model in which public relations is seen as bringing together diverse viewpoints.

Organizational-public relationships. Ledingham and Brunig (2000) argue that the field of public relations has shifted to accommodate the growing body of research concerning organization-public relationships (OPRs), a relationship management perspective introduced by Ferguson (1984). Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1985) began centering the study and practice on relationships by defining public relations as “the management function that identifies, establishes, and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the various publics on whom its success or failure depends.” Grunig, Grunig, and Ehling (1992) suggested that reciprocity, trust, credibility, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction, and mutual understanding were the key elements of an organization-public relationship, and recommended that researchers and practitioners use these concepts when measuring the quality of strategic relationships. Brunig, Dials, and Shirka (2008) then suggest that the research that evolved from these preliminary investigations has focused on (a) relating organization-public relationships to important organizational outcomes and (b) quantifying relationship quality.

Given the relational nature of cocreation, the process could benefit from research oriented toward the explication of relationships; the public relations discipline has developed constructs that have helped scholars and practitioners in their own studies. Specifically, Ledingham (2001) suggests four pivotal developments in the emergence of the relational perspective as a paradigm for public relations study and practice, including:

the recognition that the central role of relationships ought to be the central focus of public relations (Ferguson, 1984); the reconceptualization of public relations from its historic moorings in journalism and forced consideration of the field as a management function (Dozier, 1984); the emergence of public relations as a management function followed, not surprisingly, by efforts to bring measurement strategies to the process, to determine the composition of OPRs, to define the role of communication within the management process and to explore the use of OPRs as predictors of public behavior; and an initial model of relationship management to include the antecedents, properties and consequences of OPRs, and later augmented to include direct observation and a much-needed definition of OPRs. Broom, Casey, and Richey (2000) state that definition is centered around patterns of exchange, linkage between organizations and publics, the properties of relationships and the perceptions of those in the relationship. Scholars have advocated social exchange theory as a useful concept for explaining public behavior within the broader framework of relationship management. Social exchange posits that actors in a relationship expect to receive something from what they contribute to the relationship (see Ledingham, 2001; Alford, 2002). Alford (2002) examined four Australian public-sector cases studies, involving government organizations and publics, and found that the relationship between the public and government organization can be viewed as an exchange. Ledingham (2001) found the building and nurturing of OPRs must be grounded in the notion of mutual benefit and that citizens expect mutuality in their interactions with an organization. Furthermore, Grunig and Hunt (1984) posited that normative models of modern public relations are grounded in the concept of benefit both for organizations and publics, generated by a continual process of interaction and exchange (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997). Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (2000) developed a definition of organization-public relationships from the exchange perspective:

> Organization–public relationships are represented by the patterns of interaction, transaction, exchange, and linkage between organization and its publics. These relationships have properties that are distinct from the identities, attributes, and perceptions of the individuals and social collectivities in the relationships. Though dynamic in nature, organization–public relationships can be described at a single point in time and tracked over time.

Furthermore, Coombs (2001) suggests that from an interpersonal communication perspective, a relationship means the interdependence between two or more people. According to this view, relationships start when people are linked in some ways, e.g., morally, economically, socially, emotionally, geographically, or culturally. Indeed, organizations have interdependent relationships with other publics in their environments (Hung, 2005). The concept of interdependence has been widely discussed in organizational literature. Salancik and Pfeffer (1978) contended that, in social interactions, "interdependence exists whenever one actor does not entirely control all of the conditions necessary for the achievement of an action or for obtaining the outcome desired from the action." The authors argued that all organizational outcomes are based on interdependent causes or agents. Based on this, Hung (2005) added to Broom, Casey, and Ritchey's definition and defined ORPs as follows to account for the outcomes that develop from relationships:

> Organization-public relationships arise when organizations and their strategic publics are interdependent, and this interdependence results in consequences to each other that organizations need to manage constantly.

Hung (2005) suggests that when an organization realizes the interdependence with its publics, it either competes or collaborates with its publics in acquiring the resources for its survival. This realization could offer an opportunity for the organization to begin the cocreation process, in which interdependence is created.

It is impossible to deliver services without contributions of time and effort by clients [service users]. Alford (2002) found that the work of the service provider is not only to provide services but also to encourage service users to engage in coproductive work. It is therefore important to understand what motivates service users to cocreate (Alford, 2002) and how relationships inform the cocreation process. Lendingham (2001) argues the notion of relationship management must be made available in operational form to the practitioner community, and the relational model be applied to differing contexts.

While the literature contains examples of differing approaches to the study of OPRs, for example, Wilson (1994) calls for the use of public relations as a vehicle for building responsibility in contemporary corporations, and similarly, Heath (2001) argues for a focus on social responsibility, employing a traditional rhetorical perspective, there appears to be general agreement that public relations is moving away from its traditionally narrow focus on message creation and dissemination, and toward a broader view of the field as a goal-oriented, problem-solving management function and that OPRs can provide a framework for programmatic accountability in the government-citizen relationship. Furthermore, Bruning and Ledingham (1999) found that the relational perspective also has been applied to perceptions of the organization in crisis (Coombs, 2000), notions of globalism, multiculturalism, and diversity (Kruckeberg, 2000), symbolic and behavioral influences of employee volunteerism (Wilson, 2000), and physician-patient relations (Lucarelli-Dimmick, 2000). Likewise, Bridges and Nelson (2000) applied the relational perspective to issues of management in the private sector. Various authors such as Trujillo and Toth (1987) have suggested there is a need to integrate concepts from organizational communication, management research, and public relations to bring greater clarity to the area of corporate communication. More recently, Ledingham and Bruning (1998) found that research suggest that public relations should be considered interpersonal communication behavior because public relations practitioners work in a buffer zone between an organization and its publics.

In the context of cocreation processes within public services, the relational perspective as development within the public relations discipline has yet to be examined. Furthermore, Ledingham (2001) has stated that scholars recommend the composition of OPRs be applied across differing contexts, therefore another aim of this study is to answer the following:

RQ3. In what ways can cocreation between service provider and service user be explained through a public relations lens?

Summary

An examination of the research grounded in cocreation and the relational perspective suggests that cocreation has been introduced to modernize the public sector and must find a new balance between the responsibilities of service users and public services (see Voorberg et al., 2013), so that value is created for all parties involved. This supports Jakobsen and Andersen's (2013) claim that cocreation represents the next step for user engagement and the potential to decreasing the gap in service outcomes between advantaged and disadvantaged service users; however, Prahalad (2006) argued that the ability to cocreate can be compromised if service users suffer from a scarcity of resources or are economically disadvantaged and living at the base of the pyramid. In response, the research reveals that a coproduction [cocreation] program specifically targeted at lifting constraints in terms of knowledge and tangible resources effectively benefits the most economically disadvantaged individuals (Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013). However, less is known on whether "lifting constraints" of the disadvantaged can be explained through the construction of relationships.

The literature suggests that cocreation is a form of collaboration with two or more parties involved—suggesting a notion of exchange (Baumer et al., 2011). To that end, Grunig and Hunt (1984) posited that a continual process of exchange benefiting organizations and publics is a normative model of modern public relations. Ledingham (2001) found that public relations could contribute to relationship building and assessing relationship quality, and that the notion of relationship management must be made available in operational form to the practitioner community, but also the relational model must be applied to differing contexts. Therefore, an opportunity exists in the research to explain the cocreation process and value of cocreation through an application, rooted in a public relations construct of organization-public relationships (OPRs).

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

> Interviewing can inform us about the nature of social life. We can learn about the work of occupations and how people fashion careers, about cultures and the values they sponsor, and about the challenges people confront as they live their lives. We can learn also, through interviewing about people's interior experiences…we can learn the meanings to them of their relationships, their families, their work, and their selves. We can learn about all the experiences, from joy through grief, that together constitute the human condition.
>
> -Weiss, 1994

The purpose of this study is to explore how service users cocreate value with a public service designed to help improve his or her nutrition and health outcomes. This study is guided by three questions: How do service users at the base of the pyramid (SNAP-Ed user) cocreate value with the service provider? How do service users at the base of the pyramid view themselves in their role as a value cocreator? And in what ways can public relations serve the cocreation process between service provider and service user?

Research questions for qualitative research will generally lead to answers that describe, explain, or outline the story of a social process (Saldana, 2011). Luttrell (2010) adds that research questions may also address the social meanings that humans construct and attribute, the contexts of particular phenomena, and the variances that occur within them. A qualitative lens employing semi-structured in-depth interviews examines the SNAP-Ed service user.

A qualitative methodology guides the method of data collection, analysis, and report writing.

Qualitative research is a research paradigm to address "how people interpret their experiences and how they construct their worlds" (Merriam, 2009). Applied, qualitative research—the scaffolding of this study—allows the researcher to investigate the nature of a problem; enables interventions to improve the situation (Patton, 2002); and provides opportunities for the researcher to be closely involved with the participants in order to better understand social processes, the motivations of human beings, and the contexts in which they are situated (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). Such concerns, for instance, resonate well with the current interest within the discipline of public relations, which emphasizes a need to understand the subjective viewpoints of a range of key stakeholders, in order to develop effective, collaborative dialogue (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). Qualitative research provides critical, innovative insights into these communicative processes. For example, Chia (2004) sought to explain the development and maintenance of relationships in public relations through the use of qualitative methods that included questions about relationship attributes such as commitment, trust, satisfaction, power, and control. The findings suggest that relationship management is a dynamic process involving constant change and that the researcher must seek to understand what that dynamic process means and how it is understood in each relationship. Qualitative methods enable the researcher to examine the layers of relationships.

Indeed, these methods can reveal the depth, diversity and complexity of human (societal and organizational) relationships, meanings that are constructed, and aspects that are intrinsic to the study of communication (Daymon & Holloway, 2002).

To understand the complex, contextualized, and emergent nature of relationships, an emic approach is used to examine service users, who are eligible for SNAP—a federal program under the USDA Food and Nutrition Service that offers nutrition assistance to eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities—formally known as the Food Stamp Program. The Food and Nutrition Service works with State agencies, nutrition educators, and neighborhood and faith-based organizations to ensure that those eligible for nutrition assistance can make informed decisions and can access benefits (fns.usda.gov, 2014). To ensure those eligible for nutrition assistance receive the education needed, these service users are impacted by program lessons that utilize constructs of experiential learning in order to increase knowledge and skill in areas of food selection and preparation, food safety, resource management, and the impacts that alter health behaviors. The service users are situated in communities throughout the U.S. from the most rural areas to urban public housing. Despite their geographic location and relative access to other people and resources, most of the service users served by SNAP and SNAP-Ed experience deprivation with regard to social and economic capital (McFerren, 2007). Family breakdown, compromised physical, mental, or spiritual health, cultural differences, and economic insecurity compound issues of social isolation even when in the center of a community (Putnam, 2000).

Therefore, the diversity of issues that may inflict SNAP-Ed service users means that SNAP—as a public service—must encourage the development of user-centered content that addresses a service user's needs on an individual level.

Rationale for Qualitative Design

A qualitative design is the most appropriate approach to answer this study's questions because it is the best for understanding the stories people use to narrate their lives (Tracy, 2013), particularly when exploring sensitive topics. The particular nature of the subject matter and participant population lent itself most naturally to qualitative inquiry (Seibel, 2012). In studies of social processes of complex human systems such as organizations and communities, the qualitative design can be the most appropriate research strategy (Reid, 1987). McRoy, Grotevant, and Zurcher (1988) suggested that many researchers believe that gaining knowledge from sources that have "intimate familiarity" (Lofland, 1976) with an issue is far better than the "objective" distancing approach that supposedly characterizes quantitative approaches (Haworth, 1984). For example, Ellingson (2003) applied the qualitative methods of ethnography and semi-structured interviews to study a geriatric oncology team at a cancer center to reveal the existence and importance of backstage communication that occurs outside of team meetings and was able to derive, inductively, seven categories that illustrate certain practices that occur among the oncology team. The benefits here are that qualitative researchers can isolate target populations and show the immediate effects of programs, interventions, and initiatives on such groups. According to Iorio (2004), all qualitative research is based on inductive examination of collected data. To ensure that the research is fair, balanced, accurate, and truthful, qualitative researchers must conduct their studies in natural settings and consider the background and perspective of the researcher.

The growing body of research dedicated to the discussion of value cocreation frameworks, mechanisms, and processes have focused on the study, discussion, and analysis of a small number of cases using deep description of their practices aiming at conceptualization and categorization of the different types of interactions between recipient and service (Allen, Bailetti, & Tanev, 2009). Indeed, communication between those in a relationship is inseparable from the social and historical contexts in which they occur, and this is reflected in the contextualized nature of qualitative research (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). Therefore, the naturalistic setting of qualitative inquiry allows the phenomenon to be explored in context. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define this as the situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Additionally, the inductive nature of qualitative inquiry offers ways to comprehend cases without imposing preexisting expectations on the research. The specific observations help to build toward general patterns that exist naturally (Patton, 2002). Because qualitative methods tend to be associated with the subjective nature of social reality, they are well equipped to provide insights from the perspective of stakeholders, enabling researchers to see things as their informants do (Daymon & Holloway, 2002).

However, according to Jensen (2002), the past 20 years have witnessed a growing dialogue between qualitative and quantitative researchers. That too exists within the discussion of value cocreation research. Though the discussion is typically focused on the study, discussion and analysis of a small number of cases using deep, ethnographic description of their practices aiming at conceptualization and categorization of the different types of interactions between end users and the firm, Allen, Bailetti, and Tanev (2009) argue that such an approach misses the advantages of an empirically driven quantitative approach that benefits from larger size samples and is more appropriate for theory building through the development and testing of hypotheses. They argue that it is important to seek the development of a research methodology that combines the benefits of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches for studying the nature of value cocreation. For example, in their study of firms that are active in value cocreation, Milyakov, Tanev, and Ruskov (2010) used research methodologies such as web searches and Principal Component Analysis techniques and the comparison of two different classification techniques to identify which firms had the highest level of involvement in value cocreation practices. Jakobsen and Andersen (2013) conducted a field experiment to examine coproduction and equity in relation to education. The experiment focused on publicly provided language support for immigrant preschool children. The authors argue that the experimental design of the field study avoided the methodological challenges associated with investigating causal effects using field data in citizen participation research. Therefore consequently, the authors argue, it can be stated rather confidently that the coproduction program had a causal effect on low-SES children.

In addition, cocreation within the public health arena, researchers have relied on quantitative methods such as surveys to assist professionals. However, according to Lindof and Taylor (2002) critics have noted that such quantitative studies can reproduce the hierarchical authority of health professionals over patients, clients, and users and obscure their experiences. Thus, qualitative methods have sought to restore the integrity of public health and patient [user] subjectivity. Since cocreation is essentially a qualitative process (Simmonds, 2014), qualitative research methods continue to be a useful tool for understanding experiences and worldviews.

Research Design

Qualitative methods allow the researcher the flexibility, in-depth analysis, and the potential to observe a variety of aspects of a social situation (Babbie, 1986). The qualitative research interview seeks to describe the meanings of central themes in the world of the subjects (Kvale, 1996), and is particularly useful for getting the story behind a person's experiences (McNamara, 1999). An interview is valuable because of the "wealth of detail that it provides" (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). Arksey and Knight (1999) stated that qualitative interviewing is a way of uncovering and exploring the meanings that underpin people's lives. McColl-Kennedy et al. (2012) posited that qualitative researchers could get closer to a participant's perspective by detailed interviewing. In addition, Myers (1977) suggested that some members of ethnic groups, low-income populations, or others who may be socially distant from the researcher are more likely to participate in the in-depth interviews characteristic of qualitative research than to complete a structured questionnaire or survey. Therefore, a naturalist approach to semi-structured in-depth interviews—which seeks rich descriptions of people as they exist and unfold in their natural habitat—is used to draw out stories of how SNAP-ED service users engage with a public service.

In-depth interviews are a useful qualitative data collection technique that can be used for situations in which depth of information from relatively few people is required

(Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011). For example, McColl-Kennedy et al. (2012) conducted 20 in-depth interviews to investigate what participants actually do to cocreate value and revealed the participant's perceived role in cocreation. Fisher and Smith (2011) conducted interviews that detailed a consumer's experience of cocreation within the context of a brand community. It was a useful method in order to find that control is rapidly shifting to the side of consumers.

Researcher's worldview

The qualitative interviewing process demands personal engagement rather than formulaic responses. The fully human encounter with participants is what enables people to tell the often-intimate details of their psychological states. Thus, interviewing facilitates the ability to access the perspectives of others while demonstrating respect for the interpersonal encounter (Seibel, 2012). The interview is a shared product of what two people—one the interviewer, the other the interviewee—talk about and how they talk together (Ruthellen, 2013). Therefore, the development of rapport between interviewer and interviewee before and after the encounter is critical to the outcome (Emerson, 2001). For example, the qualitative methodological approach used by Geertz (1972) revealed the cultural symbolism of the Balinese, which required Geertz to be accepted by the villagers as an outsider, developed through rapport building.

The service user's point of view—in this study's case the SNAP-Ed service user—is important while considering the interviewer's background and perspective. After all, in qualitative inquiry the instrument of research is the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Crapanzano (as cited in Clifford & Marcus, 1986) critiqued Geertz's earlier work for mixing his findings with his own viewpoints. Crapanzono wrote: “His [Geertz’s] constructions of constructions appear to be little more than projections, or at least blurrings, of his point of view, his subjectivity, with that of the native, or, more accurately, the constructed native.” Thus, qualitative methods, specifically semi-structured, in-depth interviews call for the researcher to critically reflect on their role, identity, and subjectivities (Roulston & Lewis, 2003). In other words, the self-reflexive interviewer considers how his or her subject positions might impact the interview process and its results. There is a need to be self-reflective of personal socioeconomic backgrounds, and sensitive to the economic disparity between the interviewer and interviewee. For example, since the majority of the interviews for this study took place at a family resource center—catering to low-income people—there must be careful consideration to personal appearance and the use of interview tools. A field journal was used to account for interviewee’s responses and shortly after transcribed to a word document so as not to create a distraction with a laptop. Due to the subjective nature of qualitative research it is important for the researcher to continually engage in self-examination to be certain that his or her own biases and stereotypes are not influencing the interpretation of the findings. Because qualitative analysis allows researchers to explore in depth all factors that might affect a particular issue, this strategy permits sensitive consideration of the complexities of human diversity (Marlow, 1993). Another consideration, according to Tracy (2013), is that interviews are as much about rhetorically constructing meaning and mutually creating a story as they are about mining for data. Interviews are not neutral exchanges of questions and answers, but active processes in which we come to know others and ourselves (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

Therefore, interviews require the researcher to acknowledge the interaction between self and interviewee.

In general, being reflective means to think through and write about personal backgrounds, theoretical perspectives and experiences, and the extent of emotional engagement with interviewees. It means acknowledging the relational challenges of gaining access to sites, people and materials involved in inquiry, how conflicts of friendships could affect how data is collected and how these act as a filter through which the data is read. To that end, the cohort of interviewees was not so dissimilar to me, the interviewer. The 12 interviewees who attended SNAP-Ed sessions did so on their own volition. SNAP-Ed is an optional program offered by the federal government to those individuals eligible for government assistance. In other words, it is not mandatory that a mother of three attends SNAP-Ed classes in order to receive benefits; it is offered to those who wish to participate. This interest to learn does not differ so much from my personal educational experience as an academic. As a researcher, I have chosen to continue to learn and seek education out in all forms. I believe, our interest to learn is what created a synergy between interviewees and me. Education, in this case, transcended socioeconomic or sociocultural factors. Therefore, I was in a position to address insider and outsider status (Emerson, 2001), namely, being accepted well enough by participants to be allowed to conduct the research (Seibel, 2012), but not too closely involved to be considered an authority or decision maker. This particular understanding of the interviewees influenced the decisions made at every stage of the investigation (Daymon, 2011).

Ethically, as the analytical research tool for this qualitative research, the researcher continually practiced critical self-reflection in order to maintain objectivity. The researcher’s socioeconomic status was not discussed or revealed to the participants so that it would not influence her responses, nor was any judgment made to include or exclude data as a result of researcher positionality (Seibel, 2012).

Research procedure

An exploration of how service users cocreate value with a public service warranted a qualitative research design. Plans to conduct in-depth, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were made after approval from the University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) was received. On January 27, 2014, the research protocol and supporting documents were approved. From January 23 – 28, 2014, a partnership was formed with the Oregon Department of Human Services in order to schedule SNAP-Ed session visits and interviews with service users. On January 29, 2014, a pilot interview was conducted to test the interview instrument.

In order to develop an interview guide with open-ended but inclusive questions, the researcher developed questions, to which relevant literature and the study’s research questions were aligned (Seibel, 2012). The aim of the interviews is to investigate what service users actually do to cocreate value, revealing the service user’s perceived role and their value cocreation activities and interactions (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012). Based on the interview guide developed by McColl-Kennedy et al (2012), this study’s interview questions reflect the cultural considerations of working with a highly diverse group of interviewees by inductively reworking questions based on the results of two pilot tests.

Rudestam (2007) argues it is not uncommon for the researcher to modify questions or add questions to a validated instrument to facilitate its use. When modification occurs, it becomes the responsibility of the researcher to justify such changes and make his or her case for the reliability and validity of the instrument in its revised form. For this study, it is the examination of non-English speakers that elicited modification of the instrument.

Pilot testing. The study pilot interview was conducted approximately seven days before individual interviews began with the study's interviewees. The individual with whom the pilot was conducted was a mother of four children, married, and worked part time at a local farmers market. The interviewee was a 39-year-old white woman, who spoke English. Upon concluding the interview, the interviewee was debriefed regarding the experience and was solicited to provide feedback regarding the interview content (Seibel, 2012). No changes to the interview questions, as written and asked, were deemed necessary.

In addition, this study's cohort included Spanish-speaking service users. Therefore, the interview questions were developed and validated not only for English speakers, but also for Spanish speakers. An independent translator performed the translation from English to Spanish (forward translation), and a pilot study was also conducted with one Spanish-speaking service user that resulted in a change in syntax of two of the interview questions.

Making initial contact with service users. Outreach to service users was three-fold. On January 28, 2014, the initial outreach plan—developed December 2013—unfolded to recruit SNAP-Ed service users. Flyers were left requesting participation in the study at four apartment complexes in the surrounding Portland Metropolitan area zoned for Section-8 housing[4]. In addition, SNAP-Ed service users were recruited through solicitation in the waiting area of the Department of Human Services Self Sufficiency Program's main office in Oregon City, Oregon. Individuals eligible for SNAP must sign up and receive benefits at this office. The set up is similar to the DMV: take a number and wait. A grassroots effort to recruitment was coupled with the help of the Oregon Nutrition Education Program and the Department of County Human Services in Multnomah County Oregon directly, who initiated the relationship between SNAP-Ed instructors and me, and provided the opportunity to meet service users for potential interviews.

Participant selection. The cohort consisted of 12 women who currently receive federal assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The selection of the cohort was purposeful and chosen carefully among willing service users who met a range of criteria in a way that offered contrast and consideration for representation of a large group (Weiss, 1994). Purposive selection of a cohort, based on reviews of literature and knowledge of the subject area, was used to select cases under study, rather than as an attempt to observe or collect data from all respondents (Patton, 1990). The purpose of this cohort is not to establish a random representation drawn from a population, but rather to identify specific groups of people who either possess characteristics or live in circumstances relevant to the social phenomenon being studied. Informants [service users] are identified because they enable exploration of a particular aspect of behavior relevant to the research. The deliberate selection of service users

[4] Project-based subsidized units for households earning 50% or less of the area median income. Each property has a waiting list (PHC Northwest, 2013).

depended upon five specific criteria (Mays & Pope, 1995). The inclusion criteria for this study were: (1) all service users must qualify for federal assistance. Men and women were recruited for this study; however women were the only service users in attendance during visits to SNAP-Ed sessions. Natalie, who works at one of the metro Hispanic nutrition offices and Marie, who works at the College of Public Health and Human Sciences at Oregon State University said, “we rarely see men at these sessions;” (2) live within the United States; (3) be 18-to-75-years of age; (4) be the decision maker of food and nutrition for their household; and (5) be a parent of children living at home age 18 or younger. The participants were reflective of the cultural diversity of the geographical location of the Pacific Northwest and who are inflicted the most by poverty, including Latinos, Colombians, Mexicans, African Americans, and Caucasians.

Poverty engulfs a large share of Oregonians, and according to the Oregon Center for Public Policy (OCPP, 2011) it is much worse for Oregonians of color. In 2010, the poverty rate for Latinos was 28.8%, 39% for African Americans, and by contrast 13% for whites.

Each service user received a participant information letter regarding her consent to participate in the study (see appendix c). In addition, each service user was presented with a $20 grocery gift card as compensation for her participation. Table 3 highlights the demographic profile of each service user recruited to participate.

Table 3

Summary of Participants' Demographics

Id	Age	Primary language	Employment	Children	Income	Ethnicity	Education
Meg	47	Spanish	Unemployed	3	$25,000	Hispanic/ Latino	High School
Lola	37	English	Part-time	4	$25,000- $39,999	Caucasian	College 4/yrs.
Sally	51	English	Full-time	1	$25,000	African- American	Some college
Debbie	47	Spanish	Disability	1	$25,000	Hispanic/ Latino	High School
Anne	49	English	Part-time	2	$25,000	Caucasian	High School
Cheryl	55	English	Unemployed	3	$25,000	African- American	Some college
Denise	46	English	Part-time	2	$25,000	Caucasian	High School
Julie	58	Spanish	Part-time	2	$25,000- $39,999	Caucasian	High School
Kim	55	English	Full-time	3	$25,000	Hispanic/ Latino	High School
Amy	49	Spanish	Unemployed	1	$25,000	Hispanic/ Latino	High School
Beth	21	English	Unemployed	1	$25,000	Hispanic/ Latino	Some college
Laura	32	English	Part-time	2	$25,000- $39,999	Caucasian	Some college

About SNAP in Oregon

This study examined SNAP-Ed service users residing in the state of Oregon. This particular selection was a result of the researcher's current residency and in by no means a reflection of seeking a particular representation. An overview of SNAP services in Oregon and the profile of the service user follows.

In Oregon, the Department of Human Services (DHS) Children, Adults and Families Division administer SNAP. In August of 2013, about 808,244 Oregonians in 443,501 households received food benefits. The average monthly benefit was about $235 per household. During an interview with a SNAP-Ed service user, the following quote was documented: "This is not enough to live on. My son is 13- years old and growing, he eats a lot. I can't afford anything with this amount of money. On top of that, they just reduced how much I get by $100 because of a small promotion at work."

The benefits paid to households are paid 100% by the federal government, and the cost of administering the program is paid 50% by the federal government and 50% by the state (Oregon.gov, 2013). According to the USDA, eligibility for SNAP requires that participants [service users] be at or below 130% of the Federal Poverty Level. For a family of three, the poverty line in federal fiscal year 2014 is $1,628 a month. Thus, 130 percent of the poverty line for a three-person family is $2,116 a month, or about $25,400 a year. The poverty level is higher for bigger families and lower for smaller families (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2013).

Participant size. Consistent with recommendations of Steeves (2000)—who wrote that prior studies and empirical knowledge drive sample size selection—the sample size consisted of participants who represented the research topic (Morse, Barrett, & Mayan, 2002). However, the question of participant size is often raised when discussing qualitative research. Qualitative research studies are not supposed to be representative of a larger population (Daymon, 2011). McCracken (1988) posits that less is more, stating that it is more important to work longer and with greater care with a few people than more superficially with many of them. Bowen (2008) argued that adequacy of sampling relates to the demonstration that saturation has been reached, which means that depth as well as breadth of information is achieved. For this study, saturation was reached when each additional interviewee [service user] added little to nothing to what was learned (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Data Management Strategies

The data management strategies include the modes of data collection and modes of data analysis. The modes of data analysis include the description of the management of data, analysis, and the strategies for bias reduction.

Data collection

To fully explore how SNAP-Ed service users' cocreate value through the service of SNAP-Ed, six months were spent collecting data using an iterative inductive approach (Tracy, 2013). The in-depth interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions and probes, which allowed for flexibility and stimulated discussion (Tracy, 2013). The aim of the interviews is to investigate how service users actually cocreate value, which reveals their perceived role and their value cocreation interactions (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012).

Interviews vary according to the interviewer's power, emotional stance, and extent of self-disclosure. All interviewees [service users] were approached with a stance of deliberate naiveté. It requires that all presuppositions and judgment be dropped while maintaining openness to new and unexpected findings (Tracy, 2013). Service users were interviewed either in the same room where the SNAP-Ed sessions took place, scheduled Wednesday (January to April) mornings from 10 a.m. to noon, or at a coffee shop conveniently located for both parties involved. If the service user were to become tired during the course of an interview, the interview would be stopped and rescheduled, but this was not necessary for any of the interviews. Each interview with service user took 45 minutes to 1 hour on average. The interview guide was designed to ensure each question addressed the following characteristics: (1) simple and clear; (2) non-double barreled; (3) promote answers that are open-ended and complex; (4) straightforward and neutral; (5) uphold rather than threaten the interviewees' preferred identity; (6) accompanied by appropriate follow-ups and probes. The interview guide is presented in Appendix D.

Interviews were conducted until information redundancy was achieved (Lincoln & Cuba, 1985). Prompted by open-ended questions, service users were asked to tell their story in their own words (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012). Service users were first asked to talk about their approach to seeking nutrition information prior to the start of SNAP-Ed, what informs their food choices, i.e., health, family, doctor recommendations, and why and how they feel about making healthy food choices now that they have worked with

SNAP-Ed. Following were deeper questions about their use of SNAP-Ed and experiences working with the service provider, level of engagement, and interest in interacting. This generated considerable discussion as to their thoughts, their views of their role, and specific activities and feelings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Findings are reported with the use of pseudonyms for interviewee or the use of the noun "service user" so as to maintain the privacy between SNAP-Ed service provider and service user.

Spanish Interpretation

With Latinos accounting for 28.8% of the population at poverty level in Oregon, this study's cohort included Spanish-speaking service users along with English-speaking service users. Myers (1977) suggested that in order to enhance the validity of results in research with diverse populations, interview questions must be clearly constructed and must not be subject to different cultural interpretations. Therefore, to effectively interview the Spanish-speaking service users, a professional interpreter was hired to translate the Spanish-speaking interviews. A service provider who worked at the Metro Hispanic Nutrition Office in Portland, Oregon provided interpretation services as well as the owner of Portlandia International School of Languages; both provided guidance during and after the interviews at the Hispanic nutrition office where four of the Spanish-speaking interviews took place.

Several studies have found that people who cannot speak English well receive less than optimal health care and are at greater risk of not receiving preventive care and other services (Jacobs, Lauderdale, Meltzer, Shorey, Levinson, & Thisted, 2001). Therefore, it was important to provide the Spanish-speaking service users with someone they could fluently speak with during the interviews.

Data analysis

The data analysis occurred in several steps. The first step was to transcribe the interviews (Silcock, 2001). Seidman (1991) offered insights on working with interview material, advising to "allow as much time for working with the material as for conceptualizing the study," and noting that "a computer program cannot produce the connections a researcher makes while studying the interview text." Thus upon completion of each interview, reading and re-reading the interview notes started the transcription process, which allowed for timely and continual-immersion into the data, before the coding process took place. Notes from the field journal were transcribed to a word document. After the interviews were transcribed and checked for accuracy, against the tape recordings (if applicable), the interview transcripts were entered into the qualitative research data analysis software Dedoose, which enabled comprehensive identification of themes. Dedoose is useful in developing a virtual systematic codebook – a data display that listed key codes, definitions, and examples that were later used in the analysis (Tracy, 2013).

From this coding process, the next phase was interpretation and analysis (Silcock, 2001). As recommended by Seidman (1991) essential questions were addressed by the interviewer, such as: "what was learned; what connections are understood that were not understood then; and how have the interviews been consistent with the literature? Many of these questions were answered through the process of reading, assessing, and identifying themes (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012). The coding system used for this study was created both deductively, deriving broad categories from specific data in the interviews (Rinehart & Yeater, 2011), and inductively, using the categories developed by McColl-Kennedy et al. (2012). First-level codes, such as sharing, learning, and references to feelings, i.e., "I feel more connected to who I am and my family during dinner;" "my goal is to learn to lose weight;" "I feel passive;" "I don't like working with services," respectively, were coded and put into categories. Taken from the interview notes, the following categories were constructed: ways (types of interactions) in which service users worked with others to learn about nutrition and food; service users' motivations to participate and engage the service provider; and service users' reasons not to participate and engage the service provider.

Through the coded data and additional back and forth into the literature, categories emerged; recorded data reflect consistency with McColl-Kennedy et al. (2012) Customer Value Cocreation Practice Styles (see appendix e) that provided a framework to make sense of the emerged categories. If a service user spoke about "working with the group" it was coded as a type of interaction, specifically, collaboration. If a service user spoke about "needing space to think about the information" that was coded as a type of interaction, specifically isolation. During the coding cycle, excerpts originally coded as service user's motivation to participate or not participate, i.e., "I don't like to take classes because I feel inferior," were then recoded as a type of interaction, such as isolation. These conceptual categories illuminated the way in which service users engaged with the service providers.

Trustworthiness and authenticity

Reliability and validity of the quantitative paradigm are conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor, and quality in the qualitative paradigm (Golafshani, 2003). More specifically, the more preferred criteria for demonstrating and judging quality in qualitative research are those of trustworthiness and authenticity. Guided by an interpretive paradigm, these criteria are based on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985). Trustworthiness and authenticity are shown by researchers' careful documentation of the process of research and the decisions made along the way (Daymon, 2011). Morse et al. (2002) argues the concept of authenticity, which includes fairness, the sharing of knowledge and action, has not yet become as widely known and debated as the concept of trustworthiness, which has taken a central place in qualitative research, especially in the U.S. (as cited in Daymon, 2011). A criterion for evaluating trustworthiness relevant for this study is transferability. Many qualitative studies involve a very small cohort and it is the role of the researcher to help the reader transfer the specific knowledge gained from the research findings to other settings and situations with which they are familiar, or to make connections between the two. A way of demonstrating transferability is when the researcher shows how any model that has emerged from the study might be applicable elsewhere, based on comparing findings with reading of previous investigations. This will be discussion in chapter 5.

It is also through this association that the way to achieve validity and reliability of research is to increase the researcher's truthfulness of a proposition about some social phenomenon (Denzin, 1978) using triangulation. Then triangulation is defined to be "a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). A combination of more than one perspective is often used to corroborate the data, because, traditionally, is it claimed that this strategy provides a more 'complete' picture (Daymon, 2011). Denzin (2009) argues that for small-scale research, using another method can confirm findings; this is referred to as methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation can be a combination of observations, interviews, documents, and questionnaires. For this study, observation of SNAP-Ed sessions was combined with the more time-intensive, in-depth interviews with SNAP-Ed service users. This allowed for what Patton (1990) suggests as a means to check for the consistency of what people say about the same thing over time and comparing the perspectives of people from different points of view—staff views, service users' views, and views expressed by people outside the program.

Limitations of the research design

The findings may be limited by the presence of uncontrollable factors (Seibel, 2012) and the influence those factors have on service user's ability to fulfill their role as a cocreator. The limiting factor in doing future research on this topic—as a result of the research design—is the modification in wording of the interview guide to account for cultural variances in understanding, discovered through the pilot testing phase. These modifications resulted from communicating with the Spanish-speaking service users; therefore, it is applicable for future studies that may include the examination of Spanish-speaking service users, but it is not consistent with the interview guide created by McColl-Kennedy et al (2012), which examined only those participants whose native language was English. The researcher's working knowledge of the Spanish language limited the ability to fluently engage in conversation, but assistance from the Spanish interpreter attempted to eliminate any barriers language might have imposed on the study.

Summary

Qualitative research provides critical, innovative insights into communicative processes, the motivations and involvement of human beings, and the cultural contexts in which they are situated. Qualitative research allows for an investigation of a problem and illuminates solutions, implications, and interventions to improve the situation. Therefore, a naturalist approach to semi-structured in-depth interviews was used to draw out stories of how SNAP-Ed service users are cocreators of value, and in what ways the cocreation process could aid in the improvement of nutrition and health outcomes. Alternating between emic, or emergent, readings of the data and an etic use of existing models, i.e., McColl-Kennedy et al. (2012), this study was a reflexive process in which data was continually revisited (Tracy, 2013) and enabled the emergence of relational categories.

In studies of social processes of complex human systems such as organizations, communities, and services, the qualitative design can be the most appropriate research strategy (Reid, 1987), and for this study it can mean helping to explain how stakeholders and publics make sense of communication activities, relationships and their worlds, and the subsequent implications for individuals, communities, organizations, professions, and ultimately society (Daymon, 2011).

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

INTERACTIONS AND RELATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

This chapter reveals the study's findings as a result of coding and analyzing in-depth interviews with women who utilize the SNAP-Ed service. Through analysis, relational characteristics emerged that helped illuminate the role of the SNAP-Ed service user in the cocreation process and identify how cocreation can be explained through interactions. These women connected with one another and their service providers in ways that they believed suited their current circumstances. A Spanish-speaker who recently applied for disability craved for Colombian influences in her diet, while learning to cook for only herself after her husband died. A 21-year-old mother struggled to provide healthy options for her family while on unemployment. A mother of four faced the challenges of allergies and the expenses associated with special diets. A single mother of a pre-Diabetic son experienced a cut in monthly government assistance after her hours at her service job increased. Experiences varied among these women, but the need for financial support and an interest to learn about eating healthy on a tight budget were the same.

The chapter is organized around six relational characteristics that emerged from over 150 pages of transcript; these relational characteristics reflect the perspectives of each of the women interviewed and offer guidance on how best to cocreate with this particular BoP cohort. The relational characteristics include: collaboration, isolation, acceptance, partnership, guidance, and equality.

The analysis of the data shows that when these women interact with their service provider or peers, they exhibit certain relational characteristics. The management of interactions—whether high-level of interactions, low-level of interactions, or isolation—is important for these women to cocreate value. The following sections report the findings that resulted from analysis and the emergence of relational characteristics. The findings as they relate to the literature and the implications for public services, specifically those services working with the population at the base of the pyramid, are discussed in chapter 5.

Service Users

The women in this study shared socio-economic similarities (see Table 4). For example, each woman was eligible for SNAP (food stamps) assistance, and the average household income was $25,000/year. In addition, at the time of the in-depth interviews, four of the women were unemployed, five worked part-time, two worked full-time, and one woman was on disability. Each of the women graduated from high school, while one graduated from a four-year university. Each had at least one child who lived at home, while one had four children living at home. The median age among these women was 45 years old, and the cohort ranged in age from early-twenties to late-fifties.

Table 4

Socio-economics of participants

ID	Age	Primary language	Employment
Meg	47	Spanish	Unemployed
Lola	37	English	Part-time
Sally	51	English	Full-time
Debbie	47	Spanish	Disability
Anne	49	English	Part-time
Cheryl	55	English	Unemployed
Denise	46	English	Part-time
Julie	58	Spanish	Part-time
Kim	55	English	Full-time
Amy	49	Spanish	Unemployed
Beth	21	English	Unemployed
Laura	32	English	Part-time

The

federal government and the states have taken steps to teach SNAP participants about how to buy low-cost, healthy foods and live healthier lives (Snaptohealth.org, 2013); however, as discussed in chapter 3, the SNAP-Education component of SNAP is not required of participants. Therefore, the women interviewed for this study were exceptionally proactive in bettering her nutrition and health outcomes. In addition, the proactive nature of each of these women carried over to other facets of their lives: many of the women were active in their communities. For example, Denise (46) volunteered for the Boys and Girls Club and while Sally (51) worked fulltime, she tried to volunteer at the local library in the mornings.

A shared goal between each of the interviewed women was to increase her understanding of food, nutrition, and basic cooking skills.

Analysis

In the examination of SNAP-Ed service users, the women interviewed typifies—whether derived through observation or direct communication during interviews—certain relational characteristics that determined their interactions with SNAP-Ed instructors and peers. In other words, the way in which each woman is connected to the service, the instructor, and to her peer group is illuminated through these characteristics, and these characteristics show how these women interact to varying degrees. Each of these relational characteristics is discussed in detail.

Collaboration

Meg (47) was one of the first service users interviewed, and while there was not an expectation of her to go beyond what was asked during the interview process, the nature in which Meg embraced the interview experience was lighthearted and interactive. Meg, a Spanish speaker, engaged the interpreter and me in conversation. She answered my questions with long-winded explanations and colorful descriptions. Meg was an active interviewee who engaged with me as much as I engaged her. Through the interpreter, she asked me numerous questions about my life and my own eating habits. Her style of interaction, very much collaborative, was also reflected in the way she explained how she makes food choices on a daily basis since attending SNAP-Ed. Meg said:

> I share what I like most about foods and then listen to what the others have to say. I enjoy watching the shining faces that sit across from me as they tell their own stories. I then take those memories home to my family. They will typically just shake their heads and say no to some of the ideas I get about food.

Several of the women indicated that the opportunity to tell stories and listen to others plays a significant role in how they learn during SNAP-Ed sessions. Kim (55), who works full time, told me:

> There's one woman who attends the group with me on Wednesdays; she's a riot! She tells the best stories about her husband storming out of the kitchen when he doesn't like the food prepared. Her stories make talking about cooking fun and entertaining.

Exhibited by four of the 12 women, the willingness to engage and collaborate with others was documented. Meg, an unemployed mother of three who has attended SNAP-Ed sessions since January 2013, typified this relational characteristic. Meg (47) said:

> I attend Wednesdays and I love talking with this group and working with them since I think I have a lot to contribute. Since I don't work, coming here allows me to interact with women my own age and discuss what challenges us. It also gives me the energy I need to become more interested in preparing good meals.

When asked to explain her process in seeking nutrition information prior to the start of SNAP-Ed, Meg explained: "I would always try to ask the produce guy (sic) or the store clerk what they recommend. Their expertise helped me learn more about food. But now, I have someone to talk to whenever I come here." Meg added jokingly that she realized the store clerk probably didn't want to talk to her. Conversations with Meg, Kim, Beth, and Laura indicate that they actively seek, share, and provide feedback. For example, Kim (55) said, "I will cut out stories I find in the newspaper or in magazines and bring them to class." When probed for her to explain why she performed this task, Kim said, "I like to use all the facts, news, things I have, even if I have only a little." These women seek to connect their peers with the resources and knowledge they have. Even during the interview with Kim, she stopped mid sentence to help one of her peers with the bus route.

She seamlessly jumped back into conversation once her peer was content with her direction.

The women also exhibited actively connecting with family, friends, doctors, and other service professionals. For example, when Meg (47) was asked what her relationships are like with other people in her social network, she said visits to her doctor often include discussing how she feels after she eats certain foods and that often times what she learned at the SNAP-Ed session will come up. These women view themselves as "the collector and sharer of information," according to Kim. Additionally, the following excerpt, shared by Meg, illustrates the importance of collaborating with others in her social network, including family and the service:

> My daughters influence a lot of my decisions about food. They like that I attend these classes and they have even joined me for a couple of them. My daughters like the process and listen to the information I now have about food. I will say that they don't always like the information I have though. They like chips. No more chips I often shout!

She adds: "What fun is life without chips? It's not fun! But I'm healthy and alive!" Beth (21), who has a child of her own, attends her SNAP-Ed sessions with her mother. She said: "When we learned that my mom had high blood pressure, we had to do something about it. We decided to join the group and since we live in the same household, it made sense to go together." When asked how frequently she and her mother utilize the SNAP-Ed service, Beth said:

> We use it more than I think we would if we went alone. It's good to support each other. And since we live together, if we are confused by something the instructor told us, we can talk to each other. We often meet up in the kitchen to talk about anything bothering us. We don't use the kitchen as just a place to cook but also as a place to talk.

Those women who exhibited an interest in communicating and listening to one another as a way of learning about food and nutrition typified the relational characteristic of collaboration.

In addition, during the interviews, the women revealed a tendency to reference the people of SNAP-Ed as a "group." For instance, Meg said she "loves talking with this group;" Kim said "there's a woman who attends the group;" Beth said "we decided to join the group," etc. Interestingly, McColl-Kennedy (2012) found that service users referenced the people around them as a "team." The interactions are reflective of a collaborative environment within either a group or team setting.

Overall, when Meg, Kim, Beth, and Laura were asked what they see as their role in the SNAP-Ed program, the general consensus among the four women was that there must be a combination of teaching and listening to others. As Kim shared:

> I've struggled with my weight for several years and can't seem to break the cycle. Listening to the people in these classes [SNAP-Ed] and learning from the instructor reassures me that I'm not alone, and that I'm able to create a balanced diet and workout plan based on what I like; it seems more fun than work. I get to share my joys too.

Laura (32), who is married and a mother of two, explained that she tends to arrive early to the sessions and helps the instructor, she said: "I'll help the instructor pass out handouts or other material. And sometimes I even help answer questions the class might have. I learn from them too." When probed about what kind of questions the class asks and how she helps, Laura responded:

> Well, for example, we were talking about grilling meat. Someone asked if it's safe to use the same utensil for grilling raw and cooked meats. Several others wondered the same thing. I jumped in and said that I cook with two sets of utensils, one for the raw and one for the cooked. At that point another woman [Laura later clarified that the woman was of Colombian origin] jumped in and said that it depends. Apparently, some cultures have different safety cooking practices, so sometimes it's okay if you cook with the same utensil. I didn't know that. I swear, I learn something new every single time I here!

As part of this emerged relational characteristic, collaboration is manifested in the way the women talk about learning in a group, sharing stories, and being open to other's contributions. Collaboration is a relational characteristic that can be understood in terms of the interactions between Meg, Kim, Beth, and Laura, their service provider, and peers in their own process of cocreating value.

Isolation

Some of the women did not share in the same enthusiasm as those women who exhibited a relational characteristic of collaboration. Most of these women are overworked, tired, stressed, and alone, but some of them wear their pain on their faces, and as an observer you could feel their grievances. These women tended not to rely on the SNAP-Ed service provider for information about food and nutrition. The Internet and other media provide a source for their learning. Lola and Sally preferred finding their own resources over listening to what others had to say. Sally (51) told me:

> Being on food stamps isn't easy. But I try to get a lot of help. I think knowledge is power, so I try to get all the information I possibly can, there seems to be a lot of it for people in need, but I don't need counseling on food, I ultimately need more money. It's hard to make it with just me working and supporting my family. I have a son who is big and eats, eats, eats, eats all day.

Sally takes responsibility for seeking out information that is relevant to her situation. However, her interaction with the SNAP-Ed service is minimal. “I don’t really talk with many people about my money problems or about food. I’m doing it on my own,” Sally said. However, she does participate in a high level of activity, including seeking information, reading, and Internet browsing. This relational characteristic of isolation can be understood as a limited amount of interaction between these women, the service provider, and their peers. These women tend to see their role as controlling from a distance or as McColl-Kennedy have labeled it “insular controlling.”

Two of the 12 women exhibited this emerged relational characteristic of isolation. A service user may exhibit this relational characteristic if they feel working or interacting with a service provider does not add value to their decision-making. Lola was quoted as saying, “attending the classes [SNAP-Ed] doesn’t really affect what I do.” Sally, who is reluctant to engage with SNAP-Ed, said her son will soon enter high school, he is 5’7 at 241 lbs. and his doctor said he has the markers for Type 2 diabetes. She pointed out:

> I just want the basic information that SNAP-Ed can provide and nothing else. I felt this way after I had my first experience with someone who disagreed with my choice of foods and ingredients. I didn’t feel like I connected with them because they didn’t know what African Americans traditionally ate. I said, hell with it. I’m doing this on my own!

Speaking about the foods her family is accustomed to eating, Sally continued:

> If I want my family to eat meatloaf, there has to be other ways we can make it healthy than just eliminating it all together. I don’t need someone to tell us we must change everything about who we are. So I plan to find those options myself. I will say that the information on the SNAP website is good and I use it all the time. I’ve been to the website probably two weeks ago.

When asked what SNAP-Ed might do better, Sally responded:

> I know a lot of people who like the classes. It does allow people to come together and discuss food. I'm just saying that I like finding my own information and don't have time to spend in a classroom because I do work and have a kid. It's just me taking care of the household.

Similarly, Lola (37), a mother of four who works part time, said: "It's difficult for me to find the time to get the information I need given my heavy schedule. Although the service is useful, I just try to utilize the website, mainly for recipe ideas and to read FAQs, stuff like that." When Lola was asked what she sees as her role in the SNAP-Ed service, she said: "Nothing. I just want to find the recipes and cooking instructions that I need." When asked how frequent she utilizes the SNAP-Ed service, she said: "Oh, I use to go when I first got on food stamps, but it was just to see what it was like. Feel the situation out. Now I don't go at all. I just don't have time."

Lola's interaction with the service provider is minimal since she started using food stamps about 11 months ago, but her efforts to keep her family on a healthy diet include reading websites, printing recipes off the SNAP-Ed website, and proactively seeking information, even if in a very controlled, isolated way. When asked what specifically is done to ensure healthy food choices are made since utilizing the SNAP-Ed service, Lola remarked:

> You know, I feel horrible that my husband and I have put our kids in this position [receiving government assistance]. I'm responsible for my family and want nothing more for them than to get the best foods, the best care possible. Because of this, I do try to spend extra time to get the information I need, but like I said, it's on the computer. My family faces unique health challenges, so I find the information and make the food choices that I think will suit us the best.

Sally too responded in kind when asked what is done to make sure healthy food choices are made. Sally responded by saying that she is dedicated to keeping her family healthy, specifically her son's health, so she listens to her family and then makes an effort to do what needs to be done. "Rarely will I go with what a doctor or dietitian tell me though, they tend not to know my situation, so I'm just focused on how my son feels."

Though the analysis of data reveal that the relational characteristic of isolation was one of the least exhibited among the women, the interview with Sally and Lola suggests that an opportunity exists to increase engagement with this type of service user as both Sally and Lola were committed to providing healthy food choices for their families and seeking the information most relevant to them. "I want information that is fast and accessible, so I can print it off and head into work or do whatever else I need to do that day," said Sally. In general, service users like Lola and Sally indicate that information about food and nutrition should be available at a time appropriate for them, and they will determine the information deemed useful for their circumstance. This is consistent with the McColl-Kennedy practice style of insular controlling in that service users are given the room to cocreate based on their own interests of time and proximity. Isolation as an emerged relational characteristic can be understood in terms of the lack of interaction between Lola and Sally and their service provider and peers respectively.

Acceptance

Change can be difficult, especially if met with resistance, but some of these women's circumstances left them fairly resigned. Two of the women interviewed explained that there was little they could do to change their circumstance, but just learn to live with it. "My son is diabetic and I needed to change the way I cared for him, specifically as it related to food preparation. I wasn't scared about the change, I just knew it had to happen," said Sally, who has a 13-year-old son. She also exhibits a relational characteristic of isolation in the way she interacts.

The relational characteristic of acceptance manifested itself in the way these women addressed change as a necessary part of life in order to manage and live with new circumstances; Sally (51) and Debbie (47) exhibited this emerged characteristic. The interactions are based on trying to make a new situation as bearable and manageable as possible. Sally and Debbie are likely to seek out ways in order to make their situation better. When asked what people at SNAP-Ed can do to help ensure healthy food choices are made in the household, Sally remarked:

> Well, I don't go to the SNAP-Ed people, but I do use their information, so I need them to understand my circumstance so they can give me the right written information. They need to know that I don't make a lot of money, so they must try to understand what it is like for me and my son to live.

Similarly, Debbie (47), a native Colombian and widow who recently applied for disability, said:

> Red meat is a staple in my culture. I would add it to my meals almost every single day of the week, and didn't think anything of it. But the lady [instructor] explained to me that when it comes to food, moderation is best, especially when it comes to meat. My health is getting worst, so I have to change my ways of cooking and what I think is healthy. I'm not happy about it.

Debbie threw her hands in the air and rolled her eyes as if being defeated. When pressed on what alternatives she could eat, Debbie said:

> Nope everything is off limits unless I spread them out over the month, so I'm not eating something too often. I guess I can still eat beans. But what I've been told is that most of my foods I grew up with aren't that good for me. I do wish I had good alternatives that weren't too different. But I do need to change. My kid wants me to live for several years more.

When asked what informs their food choices, those who typify acceptance as a relational characteristic said they listen without much back and forth. Similarly, McColl-Kennedy found that these service users are likely to listen to the service provider [instructor] in order to make their situation better. "I trust the instructor and she tells me how to make the right food choices. Like I said, I'm sick so I know I have to make a change. There isn't reason to argue," said Debbie. Sally, on the other hand, as a service user who typifies both isolation and acceptance relational characteristics represents a more argumentative style to acceptance, with little interaction with the service provider. "Oh, my boy will get diabetes, I know it. Now let's see what I can do to help him." Acceptance manifested itself in the way the women changed their ways of doing things, not always the way the service provider/instructor recommends, but makes changes due to their circumstances. "Life is tough for people like me, a lot of things against me, but I accept these difficulties and do what I need to in order to get by," Sally said. As both the relational characteristics of isolation and acceptance typified Sally's interactions, she deviates from what McColl-Kennedy found in that the practice style of pragmatic accepting represents high levels of interactions; this of course is not consistent with Sally's behavior, who prefers disengagement from service provider and others in her social network.

This finding possibly represents an argument that relational characteristics and what has been found in the literature, known as practice styles, are not mutually exclusive, but interactions are made up of different combinations of relational characteristics.

The analysis of the data also reveals that these women seem to think that their role in the SNAP-Ed program is to inspire others. For instance, Debbie is disabled by a broken hip and cannot walk without assistance. For her, the SNAP-Ed sessions give her the opportunity to showcase that, although she is disabled, she is able to live a healthy lifestyle. She corrected me and said: "*try* to live a healthy lifestyle." Debbie told me:

> We get up everyday, put our pant legs on and try to make it through. Life isn't that hard though. I'm here, smiling with a bad hip. You learn to accept these things, find a way to make your life the best it can be. I think everything else will follow. I want others to know that too. We're all going to be okay.

Similarly, Sally expressed that she wants her son to see all that she is doing for him:

> I work long hours and it's tough to live on the amount of money I receive in food stamps, but we're making it work. I may complain about it a great deal, but it's working. I want things better for my son, but sometimes we have to accept that we don't always get what we want, especially when I have neighbors who cheat the system and get extra food stamps. It's unfair, but I'm working hard for us….

To a lesser degree, Amy (49), who is unemployed, exhibited this relational characteristic of acceptance by stating the following in her interview:

> The job market is tough right now. So what I can do is find ways to make the situation a little better even though I don't have too much control. Attending SNAP-Ed is a good way to stay current on what I need to do.

Acceptance is a relational characteristic typified by women who saw their interactions with the service provider and peers as an opportunity to make their lives better given their circumstances, and share their own successes and struggles. Acceptance as a relational characteristic can be understood in terms of utilizing interactions in order to reframe thinking of current circumstances.

Connection

Many of the women interviewed regarded their relationship with the SNAP-Ed instructor or a member of the SNAP-Ed community as being very important and essential in order to be successful and learn. Developing a connection is a relational characteristic that manifested itself in ways of focused, narrowed collaboration between the service user and service provider as well as individual relationships with the peers of these women. For example, Anne (49) said: "my life is better after working with SNAP-Ed, specifically when working with the instructor. I want to be a better person and working with her [instructor] allows me to do that. I think she does a good job at tailoring this for me." Anne, who has two children and between her and her husband make under $25,000/year, made a point to find the cheapest foods for her family without regard to nutrition. But working with the instructor has provided her with more food options even at cheap prices. When asked what she sees as her instructor's role, Anne said:

> To me, my instructor plays a large role in answering my questions, especially about finding cheap foods that are still okay for me. She's always there for me, especially when I need her most. I'm able to call her up and ask her a question from my kitchen. I did that one time! I really like the ability to speak with her directly…she might get annoyed at this though. But she offered, so I take her up on it.

Probing for the reason as to why Anne enjoys the direct partnership, she responded:

> I don’t have the time to engage everyone else in the group [during the SNAP-Ed sessions]; I want to have direct contact with my instructor when I need her. Sometimes when I ask questions in the group setting, another person will jump in with their feedback and then ask their own questions and I often feel that my original question was never answered. That’s why I like speaking directly to my instructor.

Intrigued by her need to manage a direct relationship with the SNAP-Ed instructor, Anne was then asked how she interacts with other service providers in her social network. She answered:

> Oh, I email with my doctor when I have a question, that way I don’t have to discuss anything with a nurse or the front desk. I’m one of those people who will try to bypass the operator. I want direct answers. I was happy to learn that this program [SNAP-Ed] is offered and that my instructor is available to me whenever I need her. Or I guess I kinda made it that way.

Anne continued:

> I also will change numerous doctors if I don’t feel connected with the person. I didn’t have to do that at SNAP-Ed because I love the instructor, everybody loves her! But there have been times when I didn’t feel like my doctor listened to who I was or what I needed.

These women who typified connection as a relational characteristic demonstrated low number of interactions with others, but an intense interaction with a few people. Similarly, Anne and Cheryl saw their role as a partner, primarily with the service provider/instructor.

During a SNAP-Ed session that required the women to stand around a steel kitchen island in the classroom where they were to make quick, easy dishes, Cheryl (55) was seen standing next to the instructor and assisting her in handing ingredients.

When asked about this and what other things she found herself doing to help others in her life, Cheryl, unemployed with three children, responded:

> …You saw me standing next to the instructor? [Laughing] That sounds about right. That just helps me focus more and stay in the moment. I want to be able to see everything she does and hear everything she says. Besides I can't really see in this poor lighting. My eyes. Up close is best.

Cheryl continued:

> …And to answer your other question, I find that I learn a great deal from listening to the instructor. I don't always like it or take what she says. So, what I learn from my instructor here I often take to my friends, and debate certain things. I don't always use what I learn here, but I like that she's my friend. So, she won't get mad if I don't apply any of this to my own life. Ultimately, I feel that I always share something with my friends about food they didn't already know. I feel good that I've learned so much new stuff and I can share it with my friends at home. We'd like to live to be 100 years old.

In addition, the women who exhibited this relational characteristic through interactions positioned their success with food and nutrition as a direct result of the instructor's work. For instance, Anne said:

> I've lost weight because of what my instructor told me to do. I find the information to be personalized for me and it's easy to do. I don't think I would have been able to lose weight without her and her help. Oh, and she has supported me a great deal. She also encouraged me to exercise more.

Anne also shared that she often talks to the instructor before the SNAP-Ed session:

> I feel like we're friends [the instructor] because we talk about things outside of food and nutrition, we talk about my kids; we talk about her husband, and what we have planned for the week. This makes me feel like she cares about me.

Throughout the interviews, neither Cheryl nor Anne mentioned others in the group setting. Both women focused on the information provided by the SNAP-Ed instructor, and their relationships with their social network [public sources]; family and friends outside of the classroom were secondary. Connection as a relational characteristic can be understood in terms of focused, binary interactions between service user and the service provider/instructor.

Guidance

Some of the women interviewed expressed a need to absorb as much information as possible without too much interaction during the SNAP-Ed sessions and tended to feel as though they didn't have much to contribute. As Amy (49) expressed, "I shut up and listen." When probed as to why Amy feels she needs to just listen, she responded:

> She [instructor] knows more than I do on this stuff. She tells me what I need to do and typically that works out for me. For example, I accidentally used baking powder when a recipe called for baking soda, if only I listened to her. I remember one time in class she actually had us feel the difference between the two. I thought how could anyone mix them up. Well I just did and I learned my lesson!

Guidance is a relational characteristic that manifested itself in ways with low level of interaction and a desire to follow the guidance of others.

"I trust the information I get and I work them into my planning and cooking on a regular basis," said Amy, who speaks Spanish and required a Spanish-translator to translate her thoughts. These women believe their role is to comply with what is expected of them. Denise, whose primary language is English, exhibited the emerged relational characteristic of guidance. When asked what she thought her role is during SNAP-Ed sessions, Denise (46), a mother of two children, responded:

> Who? me? Well, as a student here, I have a minimal role. I like to listen to what the instructor has to say and then I tend to go do it. I have two young kids and don't have much time to do anything else. I listen and respond to what has been said, and try to use the information as much as possible into my daily schedule. I think it's working.

Women like Denise tend not to take initiative, such as searching the Internet for more information or reading newspapers and magazines for nutrition advice. When asked whether she gets information outside of SNAP-Ed, Denise said: “No, I don’t have to because that’s the instructor’s role. Plus I don’t have additional time to do that. What she says I accept as long as she listens to my needs.” When asked what other people can do to help ensure healthy food choices are made, Denise suggested, “Listen to others who have struggled before you.”

Seeing herself as playing a minimal role, Denise will accept what the instructor says. While this may seem like a passive approach to interacting, Denise’s relational characteristic is indeed an example of what participant-centered service or cocreation looks like. Denise, in fact, is more active in the process than she considers herself to be because she provides a jumping off point from which the instructor can work. Denise said:

> I always tell the instructor what I’m battling with, but then I listen to what she has to say to that. It’s how she frames things that I think I like the most. She’s kind. But I would listen to her even if she weren’t so nice. I’m there for a reason, might as well hear what I need to do, rather than tell her what I think I need to do.

Being compliant was observed of some of these women too. When Amy was asked how often she attends SNAP-Ed sessions, she responded by naming her child and instructor first:

> If my kid is behaving, I will then head in. I try to make it every Wednesday, but my daughter doesn’t always allow me to do that. Once I’m there, I listen to the instructor on what to focus on for the week and what I should do to prepare for the following week. I also will stick to the dinner plans the instructor suggests for me.

Denise told me the following:

> I hate eating bananas. The taste isn't good to me. But the group told me that they are high in nutrients and that I need to start eating them. Now, I know there is other fruit I could eat instead, but they want me to eat bananas. Yuck. But I'll do it! I often hate people's recommendations, but it's worth it.

Also, these women appreciate when the instructor develops a curriculum focused on their particular needs that allows them to sit and listen, without much interaction, with an opportunity to apply what they've learned later. Similar to McColl-Kennedy's practice style, guidance as a relational characteristic can be understood in terms of minimal interactions between the service user, provider, and peer group, where the user is compliant and back and forth dialogue is virtually nonexistent.

Equality

Scholars have indicated that an important research area is to better understand relationship building between service provider and those who are low income. Previous research found that interactions between service provider, peers, and service user would vary depending on needs. This study's analysis of the data indicate that, while women vary in their level of interactions, most of these women exhibit a certain level of back and forth where they strive for their interactions to be equal, reciprocal, and fair. Therefore, equality as a relational characteristic was witnessed from the interviews with eight of the 12 women to suggest that the process of cocreation is not just varying degrees of collaborating, isolating, accepting, connecting, and following guidance, but also reciprocating and creating balance. Therefore, the following section discusses the finding of equality as it emerged from this study's analysis.

An analysis of the interview transcripts with some of the women revealed a need for an equal distribution of time allotted for them to speak and share information or their concerns. This demonstrated a need for equality. For example, when asked what she thinks her role is in SNAP-Ed, Julie (58), a Spanish-speaker said:

> Well I would say, I get that the instructor might have all the answers, but I have a lot of experience in (sic) food and know my way around the grocery store, I'd like to give my feelings, and feel like I've contributed information in some way that helps the group. Ever since I was a little girl, I cooked. I helped my grandmother and mother, so I do feel I have a lot of experience.

In this examination of these women, balance and mutuality between the service provider/instructor and service user emerged. It was revealed that a give-and-take transaction between woman and service provider/instructor took place so as to create a balanced relationship. Meg, Kim, Julie, Anne, Sally, Cheryl, Beth, and Laura typified this emerged relational characteristic and exhibited the need to ensure balance was maintained between themselves and the service. As Cheryl noted:

> I want to share the issues I have with food and then hear about what others struggle with too. I like being able to give feedback on what everybody says. We seem to have the same issues, so might as well share those issues with everyone and see what you can learn.

The women who exhibited this relational characteristic showed that they mark their relationship with very concrete operations of balancing, comparing, or counting in one-for-one correspondence. Kim (55) said: "I just ended my classes, but I have to tell you that I would make food for my instructor outside of the classroom because she gave me information and guidance. I wanted to repay her." This study's analysis revealed that women felt entitled to the same amount as others in the relationship, and if there was an imbalance, it was meaningful to the relationship. When asked what her role in the SNAP-

Ed service is, Sally (51), one of the more aggressive personalities of the interviewees and who also exhibited isolation and acceptance as a relational characteristic responded:

> I don't have much of a role, because I don't really attend that often. But I did share with her [instructor] once that I know for a fact that my neighbors down the street receive more than me on their food stamp EBT card. I reminded the instructor that I want to receive the same amount as them. Am I ratting on them? No. I just deserve the same as everyone else. Is it fair that I don't receive the same? No, it's not fair! And to be honest, I don't like how some people get more money than me.

Food stamp distribution is based on the number of members in a household and total income. Equal distribution to every SNAP participant is impossible, but this analysis reveals that these women who attend SNAP-Ed seek equality not only in the amount of attention given in the classroom and outside the classroom, but possibly in monetary assistance as well. When Laura was asked how she felt about attending SNAP-Ed with other people, she responded:

> Well I like hearing what others have to say, but truly, I want my issues and questions to be answered. I think the instructor does a good job at giving us all the same amount of time to discuss what we need and she doesn't blow any of us off. I like that. But it's ultimately about answering all of our questions before the class is out for the week. It's a lot. And sometimes I don't feel I get my fair share of time with the instructor.

Therefore, a one-to-one correspondence in a group setting was observed. "I like it when the instructor addresses each of our own needs individually in the group. I learn more than if the instructor just answered my questions," said Cheryl (55). The women's contributions are matched by following a one for you and one for me format. Whether equality in the flow of information or monetary assistance, a need for balance was observed among these women. Cheryl mentioned her frustration with what could have been considered a form of inequality: "Last week, I was annoyed that someone talked the whole session! I wanted to listen to the instructor…and I also had a few things to say."

While the women share socio-economic similarities, the cohort differs in their cultural backgrounds; this analysis reveals that addressing each interaction with balance and equality can play a role in making these differences less problematic during the process of cocreation. When asked what she sees as being her role in SNAP-Ed, Anne (49) noted:

> We're all in the same boat, we know that each of us gets help from the government, but other than that, we don't know much about each other's backgrounds. I think I play a role in treating everyone respectfully and listening to them and being a friend. I also think it's my instructor's job to tell me how I should work with others in the classroom. I often look up to her. So my role is to be respectful, work with the instructor and listen to her suggestions, and be open.

When asked what is the role of the instructor, Kim (55) said, "my instructor knows how to listen and we tell her about our home lives and she goes around the room and addresses each of our circumstances." Throughout the interview process, it became clear that these women appreciated that the instructor took notice of the differences that separated them and knew what would be required to restore balance between those differences, i.e., explain educational information as it pertains to each household, culture, and general background. As Julie (58), who speaks Spanish only, said with help from the interpreter:

> I'm from Colombia, so I only know what foods my family will like. It would be very difficult for me to listen to the others in the group, who are not from Colombia, but the instructor understands my country's diet, so she speaks directly to me when I have a question. She'll do that too for anyone else from a different Latin American country. [This particular instructor is multilingual].

Women also expressed the need to be seen as equals, therefore not seen as a student, but as a peer. When asked how Cheryl (55) felt about making healthy food choices now that she has utilized the SNAP-Ed service, she responded to the question, albeit indirectly:

> I don't like to be talked down to, I tend to feel that way when visiting with my doctor, but here I'm seen as having information. I feel good about making food choices now because I can contribute. The instructor does a good job at valuing me. She makes me feel that she'd care what I had to offer as a food recommendation.

Laura added:

> Just because I'm on food stamps doesn't make me a stupid person. I want the instructors and everyone here, even you, to know that I'm a smart person who understands foods. I was thinking about bringing in food to the group, but hey, I need to feed my family first, so I haven't done that yet.

Noticeably, personal contributions were these women's approach to equality. For instance, Beth (21) expressed being proud of her contribution to SNAP-Ed. She said:

> I told the other women that I stopped eating bread. During the next session, I found out that the lady next to me stopped eating bread too. It made me feel confident that what I had to say mattered. The lady next to me said she feels so much better now that she has taken bread out of her diet. I was also asked if there was anything else I do that I could share.

Conversely, some of the women expressed that they do not always feel equal. Julie (58) noted, "I don't always want to go to the sessions because I feel like people are judging me because I am on food stamps." Amy shared the same concern, "…sometimes I'm embarrassed by my situation." It seemed that these women were unable to make the connection that each of them struggled with similar economic circumstances and what seemed to be a safe place for most of them, was a place of fear and judgment for others.

In addition, when asked what she thinks her role is at SNAP-Ed, Laura said:

> I do feel embarrassed by my situation, so I try to speak up when I can to show that I know what the instructor or someone else is talking about. But I often think they're laughing at me and not respecting what I have to say. Sometimes that's really hard. So I'm not really sure what my role is. I'd like to think I'm contributing a lot, but I just can't be sure.

As discovered in the emerged relational characteristic of equality, these relationships generally are structured around sharing goals and helping one another based on a loose exchange of favors. Take for example Kim's experience she shared when asked what people at SNAP-Ed can do to help ensure healthy food choices are made:

> If I didn't know something, and the instructor wasn't sure, I could turn to the group for help. If the suggestion comes from someone other than the instructor, I would try to return the favor in some way too, either by bringing in a recipe to the next class or just telling them after class how much that helped me. I'd make a note of it.

This sort of turn taking is what manifested as equality. Laura (32) was also quoted as saying:

> My friends and I will take turns hosting a dinner at each other homes, when we can, and that's how I feel with the people I've built relationships with here [SNAP-Ed]. Sometimes I'll bring something in and the next session maybe someone else brings something in. We share.

However, it was also found that some of the women would not share if they discovered that others in the class do not share in return. For example, when asked the first time what her role is in SNAP-Ed, Laura said:

> …I'm often reluctant to share information about myself in fear that the others will judge me or laugh or won't reciprocate [with personal stories they have about themselves]. Sometimes that will happen. I will say something about my life that is embarrassing and no one talks after that…

In addition, when discussing her experience with SNAP-Ed, Julie leaned in and whispered:

> One time I gave this lady next to me cooking advice and she didn't say thank you, she just nodded as she wrote it down. Maybe the nod meant something, but a thank you or something in return would have been nice. You know? I typically like working with this group of people, but sometimes, I feel like I do more for them than they do.

In general, these women who feel less than empowered in other facets of their lives, feel they have something to contribute. Lack of education, money, or control aside, the SNAP-Ed service gives them an outlet to share their own experiences and worldviews that really might change someone's life for the better. The relational characteristic of equality reveals that these women may feel open to empower others if there is an understanding that others will respond in-kind.

Summary

This study's analysis of the data suggests that women cocreate value differently, demonstrating varying degrees of interactions when working with service provider and peers. The six relational characteristics emerged in response to the three research questions that guided this study. First, in response to the question, "how do service users at the base of the pyramid (the SNAP-Ed user) cocreate value with the service provider," women show relational characteristics that indicate varying degrees of interaction. The relational characteristics of collaboration, isolation, acceptance, connection, guidance, and equality emerged.

Second, in response to the question, "how do service users at the base of the pyramid view themselves in their role as a value cocreator," a significant finding indicated that “being equal” was a role women sought to attain. Eight of the 12 women interviewed expressed their appreciation for the chance to speak individually about their own needs and wants and offer expertise as well.

Lastly, in response to the question, “in what ways can cocreation between service provider and service user be explained through a public relations lens,” organization-public relationships—a key concept in public relations research—may provide a framework to explore how to establish and maintain relationships between services and its service users.

The analysis of data also suggests that five of the emerged relational characteristics show similarities to the McColl-Kennedy (2012) practice styles of value cocreation. For example, some of the women demonstrated a willingness to discuss thoughts with a group and were open to feedback, while others exhibited a preference to be alone and not to share their feelings and problems with others. Some of the women interacted with different individuals from public sources and private sources (doctors or dietitians) and some of the women exhibited a medium number of interactions with different individuals. And others demonstrated a need to interact primarily with one source, the professional, following orders. Women even demonstrated that their role is to comply with what is expected of them. But a relational characteristic of equality, which emerged from this study’s analysis, currently is not accounted for in the McColl-Kennedy framework.

To conclude, collaboration, isolation, acceptance, connection and guidance as relational characteristics can be understood in terms of varying degrees of interaction between service user, provider, and peer group, and there is an opportunity for future research to examine the relational characteristic of equality in different public service settings.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses cocreation between the economically disadvantaged service user and service provider as a result of 12 in-depth interviews and the findings as it relates to the research. The three questions guiding this study were: 1) How do service users at the base of the pyramid (SNAP-Ed user) cocreate value with the service provider; 2) How do service users at the base of the pyramid view themselves in their role as a value cocreator; and 3) In what ways can cocreation between service provider and service user be explained through a public relations lens? Relational characteristics emerged that helped illuminate the role of the SNAP-Ed service user in the cocreation process and identify how cocreation can be explained through interactions. The findings support previous research in that service users cocreate value differently demonstrating different ways to interact (McColl-Kennedy, et al., 2012). In addition, service users seek equal distribution of time allotted to speak and share with the service provider that demonstrated a need for equality, also known in the research as equality matching (Fiske, 1993). As a result, the model of equality matching is suggested as a concept of cocreation and proposed as a relational characteristic to further extend McColl-Kennedy's framework; and lastly, service users cocreate value through interactions that could be explained with public relations constructs. In this chapter, the findings discussed in chapter 4 are related to the research questions and the literature to find confirmation, disputation, and new contributions to the discourse (Thornton, 2006).

Cocreation builds on human networking: people connecting fluidly with each other as service users, providers, and resources to pursue common values (Chan & Hsu, 2012). The research supports that cocreation with local people in low-income areas helps in creating services and models that answer to local needs and fit the local environment (Simanis & Hart, 2009). Indeed, this study's findings suggest that cocreation requires a greater focus on the processes, not just outputs, and on the centrality of the interactions between service user and service provider. In general, the findings suggest that an effort to maintain balance between the service provider and economically disadvantaged service user may encourage the process of cocreation. Previously, researchers observed that limited resources could leave expectations for reciprocity unmet (Hogna, Eggebeen, & Clogg, 1993), but here the findings suggest that those with limited resources still have the opportunity to reciprocate value. The support for equality matching in the cocreation process could eliminate undue expectations of reciprocity between the service provider and service user because in equal relationships there is no authority between people or a deeper responsibility towards one another. Equality matched relationships generally collaborate around shared goals and help one another on the basis of a loose exchange of favors (Fiske, 1993).

In general, value cocreation is fueled by aspirations for longer-term, humanistic, and more sustainable ways of living (p2pfoundation.net, 2012). It supports the exploration of open-ended questions such as how can we improve people's lives who currently live in poverty? Since much of a person's daily lives are spent cocreating service offerings and interacting with services such experiences are likely to significantly affect their lives (Anderson et al., 2013), and researchers have sought to explain how resources, accessibility, and bandwidth may affect such processes (e.g. Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013). Therefore, this study extends the conceptualization of the value-cocreation process (Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008) to focus on the user at the base of the pyramid, and suggest equality matching as an additional relational characteristic when working with this particular service user.

What follows is a discussion of the findings as they relate to this study's research questions and research. First, a recommendation to formalize the concept of exchange—previously found in the literature—is proposed as an addition to the value cocreation framework originally developed by McColl-Kennedy et al. (2012), followed by a discussion of organization-public relationships (OPR) that can help explicate the process of cocreation through a public relations lens. The practical implications and applications of this study's findings to the public sector as it relates to the economically disadvantaged and public policy are then discussed, followed by directions for future research and the limitations that should be considered.

Extending the relational characteristics

Equality as a relational characteristic can be understood in terms of high level of interactions that are equal, reciprocal, fair, and balanced between the service user, provider, and peer group. The findings suggest that if one woman gives something to another, she generally expects something in return. The recognition of equality and exchange emerged as a finding that currently is not reflected within the framework of McColl-Kennedy's Customer Value Cocreation Practice Styles. A standard way to understand how people cocreate value was developed through McColl-Kennedy's five practice styles of team management, insular controlling, pragmatic adapting, partnering, and passive compliance. The analysis of this study's emerged relational characteristics indicate that an additional practice style (see appendix F), one in which explains the give-and-take relationship of service user and service provider and the equal distribution of resources that takes place between service user and service provider, would provide additional insight into the way people cocreate value.

Relational model of equality matching

Service users at the base of the pyramid engaged the SNAP-Ed service through the use of relational characteristics that formed their interactions. The findings support the applicability of the five value cocreation practice styles developed by McColl-Kennedy et al. (2012) to a public sector service setting (see appendix G), including (1) team management: high involvement of the user and focus on collaboration with others; (2) insular controlling: little interaction and user is self-focused; (3) partnering: user is involved with the service provider directly; (4) pragmatic adapting: user is forced to change due to health risks or change in diet; (5) passive compliance: user listens to the instructor with low involvement. It was also found that equality (Beugre, 2007) and mutuality are sought between service user and service provider. This involves a balanced dialogue based on the interests and needs of the service user and service provider together. For example, if one person in the relationship were to receive more attention or resources over the other, this would be socially significant (Bolender, 2010) to the relationship and not equal. People who practice equality matching often mark their relationship with very concrete operations of balancing, comparing, or counting-out items in one-for-one correspondence (Fiske, 1993). This was found in Kim's behavior as she gave her instructor food as repayment for her service or in Sally's behavior as she requested the same amount of monetary assistance as others. Therefore, a give-and-take transaction between user and provider must take place so as to create a balanced relationship, and service providers should be cognizant of developing service programs that foster the balance between themselves and service users. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) too found that the claim of equality is supported in the literature; however, this study's findings indicate that equality may be an independent relational characteristic that is not demonstrated or used during every interaction.

Equality matching is one of the four ways people relate to each other according to Fiske's (1992) Relational Models Theory. That is, the motivation, planning, production, comprehension, coordination, and evaluation of human social life may be based largely on combinations of four psychological models, including equality matching. Relational Models Theory has received widespread attention, not only from psychologists, to whom it has most often been pitched, but also from management scholars, anthropologists, sociologists, and cognitive political scientists (Haslam, 2004). Many theorists and researchers have put the theory of Relational Models to work generating a variety of conceptual links and empirical findings; in this study, equality matching is proposed for consideration as an additional practice style as part of the value cocreation framework, originally developed by McColl-Kennedy et al. (2012).

Modifying service models to different contexts requires knowledge about local needs, attitudes, norms, culture, business environment, and institutions (Kandachar & Halme, 2008). While the women interviewees shared socio-economic similarities, the cohort differed in their cultural backgrounds; equality matching could play a role in making these differences less problematic during the process of cocreation. The research indicates that acquaintances and colleagues who are not intimate often interact on this basis: They know how far from equality they are, and what they would need to do to even things up (Fiske, 1992).

Relationship management perspective

Equality matching relationships are based upon in-kind reciprocity and compensation by equal replacement. Often those involved in equality matching relationships are keenly aware of the balance of the relationship, and work to maintain that balance (Brunig, Demiglio, & Embry, 2006). As such a discussion on the relationship management perspective of public relations could help explain what equality matching might mean as a practical application. Within this perspective, public relations is seen as the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994). Consequently, the SNAP-Ed service is also invested in managing mutually beneficial relationships with its service users and SNAP participants so as to improve the likelihood that healthy choices will be made (fns.usda.gov, 2014). As several of the women expressed, this could be done with a reciprocal sharing between service user and service provider.

The discussion on the relational perspective provides a process for determining the contribution of public relations initiatives to organizational [service] goals. Research demonstrates that programs designed to generate mutual understanding and benefit—the desired outcome of management of OPRs—can contribute to attainment of an organization's social, economic, and political goals when those programs focus on the common wants, needs, and expectations of organizations and interacting publics (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). While Sousa and Eusebio (2007) found that public service providers tend to underestimate services as a collaborative process and negotiation of strategies, and tend to adopt a traditional clinical approach, where service users should obey the providers' instructions, this study's findings suggest a collaborative process that enables the service provider and user work on the outputs and outcomes as a result of the relationship. To that end, research has demonstrated the usefulness of the relational perspective in identifying measurable outcomes (Ledingham, 2003).

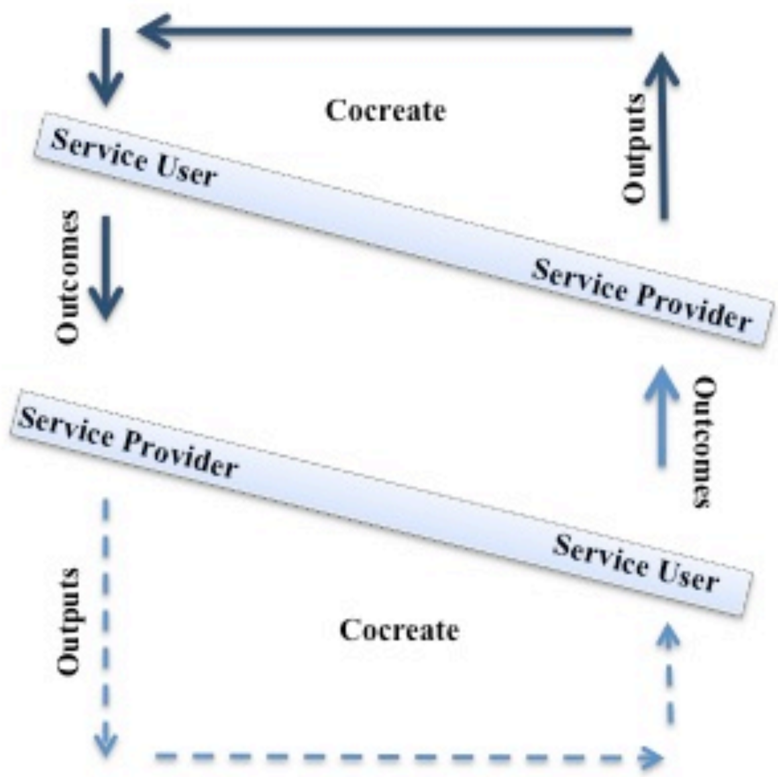
Services outputs and outcomes. For an easy approach to measure whether a service is meeting the expectations of its service users, this study suggests that service providers consider its outputs and outcomes. Taken from the public relations literature, outputs are usually the immediate result of a particular program or activity. They measure how well an organization [service] presents itself to others and the amount of attention or exposure that the service receives. This is the basic form of measurement. It is what is produced and how it was produced. Was it on time? On budget? On message? Measuring outputs can point out inefficiencies that need to be addressed (Kucharski & Wight, 2012). For example, Sally noted that ethnic differences in food selection during her time with SNAP-Ed were not always addressed. Focusing on the measurement of an interaction would identify this inefficiency. For the most part though, the women interviewed expressed an appreciation for how SNAP-Ed service providers disseminated cultural messages.

Public relations practitioners and scholars have made a commitment to measuring services, campaigns, and outreach. According to the Barcelona Declaration of Measurement Principles (amecorg.com, 2012), it is recommended that outputs—what is produced and how it was produced—be determined by the effects of the quantity and quality of the public relations process, while accounting for other variables, including interactions.

The sophisticated form of measurement is outcomes (Kucharski & Wight, 2012), and measuring the effect on outcomes is preferred to measuring outputs (amecorg.com, 2012). Outcomes measure whether the target audience actually received the messages directed at them, paid attention to them, understood the messages, and retained those messages in any shape or form. This study suggests that between the outputs and outcomes reside the opportunity to cocreate. In equality matching, cocreation will take place after the service provider has produced an initial output; therefore the outcomes—dependent on the level of participation during the cocreation process—are affected. The outcomes are often reflected in the actions taken by the service user or their changed behaviors. This idea forms a model that attempts to describe the equality matching relationship between service provider and service user influenced by the relational management perspective. If developed, this could be used to explain when and how the outputs begin to change as a result of the influence of cocreation over time. In equality matching, both parties seek to restore or maintain balance (Fiske, 1993), thus a service must pay particular attention to the outputs by its provider and the outcomes cocreated by its user in order for shared goals and values to be identified. Model 1 illustrates the balance and mutuality between service provider and service user that could be achieved based on a continuum of outputs and outcomes as suggested by this study through equality matching.

Model 1

Balance and mutuality between service provider and user



Equality matching

The findings support the claim that a relationship begins when there are consequences created by a service that affect its service users or when the behaviors of users have consequences on a service (Hung, 2005). Coombs (2001) posited that a relationship means there is interdependence between two or more people. According to this view, relationships start when people are linked in some way. SNAP-Ed service users and their service providers are connected by the need for information and an interest to share information, respectively. In a public service setting, like SNAP-Ed, the service provider/user relationship as interdependent—meaning, members of the group are mutually dependent on the others—may not seem like an accurate designation. Although it may not seem that the service provider is mutually dependent on the service user, this study suggests that given the equality matching relational characteristic observed, the exchange between service provider and service user is equal, or strives to be equal, and the interdependence between the two requires a form of exchange. Of course, the exchange of knowledge, information and experiences, in which new ideas and concepts are discussed is not new to the discourse of cocreation (see Chesbrough, 2003; Von Hippel, 2007). Alford (2009) found that a type of exchange between public sector and client does exist because organizations need certain things from them. However, it is this study's suggestion that the form of an equal exchange does not necessarily exist within every interaction between service provider and service user, but may be seen as only one of the six relational characteristics exhibited by the service user during the cocreation process. For example, Lola (37) who at the time of this study worked part time and had four kids living at home exhibited the relational characteristic of isolation, which means her interaction with others is minimal and prefers the access of information via the SNAP-Ed website. An equal exchange is not fully exhibited within the parameters of isolation. It could be argued that the proposed adoption of equality matching as part of McColl-Kennedy's Customer Value Cocreation Practice Style is characteristically unique from the other five practice styles and acts as its own construct within the value cocreation practice style framework.

Cocreation through organization-public relationships

The concept of interdependence has been widely discussed in organizational literature (Hung, 2005) and from the relationships management perspective. Salancik and Pfeffer (1978) contended that, in social interactions, interdependence exists whenever one actor does not entirely control all of the conditions necessary for the achievement of an action or for obtaining the outcome desired from the action. When an organization realizes the interdependence with its publics, it either competes or collaborates with its publics in acquiring the resources. As a result, this kind of realization will influence the type of interactions the organization intends to have with its publics (Hung, 2005). The relationship management perspective holds that public relations balance the interests of organizations and publics through the management of OPRs (Ledingham, 2003). Thus, OPRs—a key concept in public relations research as well as a relationship paradigm—provides a framework to explore relationships between services and its service users. As a result of this study's findings, the relationships between key constituencies—service user and service provider—can best be measured by focusing on six very precise elements or components of the relationships that exist (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Theses are:

Control Mutuality—The degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another. Although some imbalance is natural, stable relationships require that organizations and publics each have some control over the other.

Trust—One party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party. There are three dimensions to trust: integrity is the belief that an organization is fair and just; dependability is the belief that an organization will do what it says it will do; and competence is the belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will do.

Satisfaction—The extent to which each party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced. A satisfying relationship is one in which the benefits outweigh the costs.

Commitment—The extent to which each party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote. Two dimensions of commitment are continuance commitment, which refers to a certain line of action, and affective commitment, which is an emotional orientation.

Exchange Relationship—In an exchange relationship, one party gives benefits to the other only because the other has provided benefits in the past or is expected to do so in the future.

Communal Relationship—In a communal relationship, both parties provide benefits to the other because they are concerned for the welfare of the other—even when they get nothing in return. For most public relations activities, developing communal relationships with key constituencies is much more important to achieve than would be developing exchange relationships.

Hung (2005) suggested that when a service decides the types of relationships it wants to develop with its publics, these types of relationships will influence the service's behavior. Mills and Clark said that friendships, romantic relationships, and family relationships are more communal in nature; whereas people in business settings or strangers meeting for the first time are more involved in exchange relationships (Mills & Clark, 1994). Those service users who have utilized SNAP-Ed services for over a year, such as Amy, may have already developed a communal relationship with the service provider out of what started as an exchange relationship. Indeed, Hung (2005) argues that relationships often begin with exchange relationships and gradually evolve into communal relationships. The findings here then might suggest that those service users who exhibit a relational characteristic of acceptance, like Denise and Amy, may later develop a team-oriented interaction, such as collaboration, as the service user becomes more acquainted and comfortable with the service and service provider. Consistent in the literature, as illustrated by one of the axioms of OPRs, is that relationships are dynamic and will change over time (Ledingham, 2003). Thus, service providers should acknowledge that while these relational characteristics are helpful designations for understanding how a service user interacts, a service user may exhibit change over the lifespan of their relationship with the service provider.

Lastly, Rubalcaba, Michel, Sundbo, Brown, and Reynoso (2012) argue too that services must combine value creation for all parties in a balanced way in order to be successful in the long run. Ensuring this balance is the task of the public sector.

Rubalcaba et al. (2012) argue that perhaps then the common determinant will not emerge from a specific dimension or perspective of relationships, but rather arise through interactions, just as this study suggests.

Practical Implications and Application

By conceptualizing value cocreation through OPRs, the public service provider has an opportunity to measure relationships with its service users in order to understand the value of its tools and techniques that enable cocreation. From a public relations perspective, Hon and Grunig (1999) offer the PR Relationship Measurement Scale, and have found through their research that the outcomes of a service's longer-term relationships with key constituencies can be measured by focusing on the aforementioned six very precise elements or components of the relationships that exist. As a result of this study's findings that support the claim that cocreation is developed through relational characteristics, it is this study's recommendation for a public service to measure its cocreation efforts by focusing on the elements and components of the service's relationship with key constituencies. Therefore, to measure the outcomes of a service's relationship with key constituencies, Hon and Grunig suggest administering a questionnaire form that includes a series of agree/disagree statements pertaining to the relationship. Respondents are asked to use a 9-point Likert scale to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree that each item listed describes their relationship with a particular service. Here is a shortened list of some of the items that have been used by academicians as valid measures of relationship outcomes:

Control Mutuality

1. This organization and people like me are attentive to what each other say.
2. This organization believes the opinions of people like me are legitimate.
3. In dealing with people like me, this organization has a tendency to through its weight around.
4. This organization really listens to what people like me have to say.
5. The management of this organization gives people like me enough say in the decision-making process.

Trust

1. This organization treats people like me fairly and justly.
2. Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.
3. This organization can be relied on to keep its promises.
4. I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.
5. I feel very confident about the skills of this organization.
6. This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.

Commitment

1. I feel that this organization is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to people like me.
2. I can see that this organization wants to maintain a relationship with people like me.
3. There is a long-lasting bond between this organization and people like me.
4. Compared to other organizations, I value my relationship with this organization more.
5. I would rather work together with this organization than not.

Satisfaction

1. I am happy with this organization.
2. Both the organization and people like me benefit from the relationship.
3. Most people like me are happy in their interactions with this organization.
4. Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship this organization has established with people like me.
5. Most people enjoy dealing with this organization.

Exchange Relationships

1. Whenever this organization [service] gives or offers something to people like me, it generally expects something in return.
2. Even though people like me have had a relationship with this organization [service] for a long time, it still expects something in return whenever it offers us a favor.
3. This organization [service] will compromise with people like me when it knows that it will gain something.
4. This organization takes care of people who are likely to reward the organization [service].

Communal Relationships

1. This organization [service] does not especially enjoy giving others aid. *(Reversed)*
2. This organization [service] is very concerned about the welfare of people like me.
3. I feel that this organization [service] takes advantage of people who are vulnerable. *(Reversed)*
4. I think that this organization [service] succeeds by stepping on other people. *(Reversed)*
5. This organization [service] helps people like me without expecting anything in return.

Hon and Grunig offer that once the questionnaire has been filled out, the negative indicators of each concept should be reversed, and the answers to the items measuring each relationship outcome should be averaged, so that overall "mean" scores can be calculated. The findings can illuminate service user perceptions for a given public service. And in turn, this application can serve the public service provider in its development and implementation of effective cocreation processes and ensure the needs of its service users at the base of the pyramid are met.

Opportunity for relationship building

The emerged relational characteristic of equality matching gives service providers an opportunity to focus efforts on building relationships first focused on exchange—one party gives benefits to the other because the other has provided benefits in the past or is expected to do so in the future (Hon & Grunig, 1999)—with the potential to grow into a communal relationship—both parties provide benefits to the other because they are concerned for the welfare of the other—even when they get nothing in return. From a public relations perspective, developing communal relationships, in the long run, with key constituencies is much more important to achieve than would be developing exchange relationships (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

In addition, Grunig and Grunig (1999) elaborated on the concept of communal and exchange relationships as a way to distinguish the difference between public relations and marketing. This too may be valuable in the future examination of cocreation, which has largely been studied through a marketing lens. As such, marketing personnel are responsible for developing exchange relationships with consumers with the goal of increasing the organization's profit margins, while public relations practitioners need to cultivate long-term communal relationships. Hung (2005) argued that instead of focusing on treating both communal and exchange relationships as relationship outcomes, both relationships should be considered as types of relationships existing either concurrently or at different times. Therefore, by suggesting that service providers and service users in the cocreation process adopt exchange and communal relationships, the cocreation process can benefit from the concepts and dimensions found within the relationship management perspective of OPRs, a key construct in public relations research.

Relationships at the base of the pyramid

Researchers have posited that the poor are not just short on cash; they are often short on bandwidth. In other words, poverty imposes such a massive cognitive load on the poor that they have little bandwidth left over to do many of the things that might lift them out of poverty (Shafir & Mullainathan, 2013)—like make healthy choices. This study's findings suggest that service users' bandwidth may not be a factor, but rather the overemphasis of differences between the service user and service provider. Therefore, specific attention should be paid to the following with respect to the emerged finding of equality matching:

1) It is important that the service provider maintain equality in relationships so that the norm of reciprocity is followed religiously (Heath, 2001). Service users who utilize SNAP-Ed do not represent the misinformed or uneducated. SNAP may be a temporary service for the user while financial stability is attained; therefore, users must be seen as knowledgeable individuals who can impart knowledge as part of the process of cocreation.

2) It is important for the service provider to be cognizant of the qualities of each relational characteristic. A service user who exhibits a relational characteristic of connection, similar to Anne and Cheryl, will cocreate differently than a service user who exhibits equality matching. In addition, if a service provider is working with a service user who exhibits the relational characteristic of isolation—typified by a restrictive amount of detail or sharing by the service user—the service provider must not only engage the user, but also invite them to participate in the cocreation process.

(3) It is important for the service provider to acknowledge the differences among themselves and the service user and know what is required to maintain balance (Heath, 2001). For example, if a service user's place of origin is not the U.S., the

service provider should be aware of the differences in diet and nutrition, and what is culturally relevant to the service user.

A call to action for public policy and federal assistance

The past two decades have witnessed the emergence of a 'new' public health system focused on how social, economic, and political factors affect the level and distribution of individual health. As a result, environmental factors are now more important for understanding differences in the health of individuals than ever before. The most important of these environmental factors are related to the social structures in which people are embedded. Social inequalities have become a major focus of public health in general (Babones, 2009). The public sector and public health interventions can help close the gap on the social inequalities found in the delivery of health and nutrition care. Therefore, there is an increased need to examine the public services that provide resources and work directly with service users to determine whether the right processes, tools, and techniques are implemented in order to see behavior changes. The delivery of services through cocreation can help.

Scholars have argued for the examination of cocreation through a combination of social, cultural, and institutional lens. For example, Voorberg et al. (2013) have argued that the added value of cocreation should be assessed from a more cultural or institutional perspective.

To that end, cocreation processes are important symbolic processes in which a service provider must try to establish a process of normative integration between the central and dominant values and developments, which are important in the environment of the service (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In other words, the process of cocreation between service user and service provider presents opportunities to better reveal the social, cultural, and environmental factors that may be detrimental to a service users' health.

SNAP-Ed, a requirement. Despite recent growth in SNAP caseloads, participation gaps remain: 1 in 4 people eligible for SNAP are not served. SNAP policies that improve program access and outreach can help communities, families, and businesses maximize federal recovery dollars. Ensuring that all of those who are eligible for SNAP are able to participate in the program is crucial as high rates of unemployment, underemployment, poverty, and food hardship plague millions in the U.S. A recent study using the *Healthways Well-Being* survey collected by Gallup showed that nearly 25% of the population did not have enough money to feed themselves or their family (frac.org, 2013). In addition, foods considered to be unhealthy are on the rise among the poorest Americans. It starts with educating Americans about accurate nutritional information. The SNAP-Ed service is positioned to assist low-income service users with making healthy dietary choices even on a tight budget and with a lack of access to quality, healthy foods.

Since 1990, legislation has mandated that people receive the information that assists them in maintaining healthy dietary practices. Yet, in few arenas is the imbalance of information between industry and differing socioeconomic status more prevalent than that of the food industry (Nibley, 2011). Individuals with a low income are more likely to have lower levels of nutrition knowledge (Drichoutis, Lazaridia, & Nayga, 2006). Tailoring health and nutrition education is a strategy used to bring individualization and personalization of health messages to a member of a targeted group (Brug, Oenema, & Campbell, 2003). Combining individualization and building relationships that are equal and fair may be an important tool for those who are economically disadvantaged (Skinner, Strecher, & Hospers, 1994), as such through relationship building can service providers at SNAP-Ed be certain that service users receive the relevant information in response to their particular life circumstance(s). This can only happen though if persons eligible for food assistance take advantage of the SNAP-Ed service. It is the result of this study that a call to action be set in motion for the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service make SNAP-Ed a mandatory service for those who receive SNAP assistance so as to change the learning process from educating service users to cocreating with service users based on interaction. Currently, there exists SNAP-Ed Connection, an online resource center for State and local SNAP-Ed providers. Curricula, lesson plans, research, participant materials and professional development tools are offered as part of this site, but does not meet the standards of a collaborative environment that the SNAP-Ed classroom provides. The collaborative environment challenges the antiquated educational model based on one-way communication. It is through the process of cocreation that two-way communication can result in personalized learning.

Directions for Future Research

Cocreation among social networks

Given that large segments of people at the so-called base of the pyramid have an increasing need and aspiration for services (Grosse & DeLano, 2011), a federally assisted public service was a likely setting to study. The public service in this study encouraged the service user to be present for the educational instruction, but also encouraged the service user to make choices about activities that could take place outside the service. This offered significant opportunity for service users to cocreate value in a number of ways through interactions as the relational characteristic of equality matching and the five practice styles (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012) suggest. By considering the redefined practice styles to include equality matching, an area for future study may include an examination of what service users do outside of a public service that involves their social networks (i.e., family, friends, other service providers) and what those interactions and relationships look like as they relate to exchange and communal relationships.

Cultural factors

Another consideration for future research would be to examine whether cultural factors determine relational characteristics and practice styles. This study examined economically disadvantaged service users regardless of culture or ethnic background; however, culture plays a large role for many of the service users when dealing with food and nutrition. For example, service users want a service that pays considerable attention to their cultural background, specifically as it relates to food and nutrition. According to demographic data, 43% of SNAP participants are white, 33% are African-American, 19%

are Hispanic, 2% are Asian, and 2% are Native American (snaptohealth.org, 2013). Thus, future research—in the SNAP setting—should investigate whether relational characteristics and practice styles may vary according to Hofstede's (1983) cultural scale, with individualist cultures more likely to engage in certain styles of value cocreation, while collectivist cultures may be more likely to demonstrate other practice styles (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012).

In addition, cultural factors play a role in the level of trust service users may have in organizations, services, and governments. Future research should consider the contingency theory of accommodation as a lens in which to examine what is going to be the most effective method through the consideration of various factors, including individual characteristics of the service user, in the strategies organizations/services use when dealing with these external publics (Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, 1997).

Gender

Another area for consideration is whether relational characteristics and practice styles vary depending upon service users' sociodemographics, specifically gender. In general, studies have shown that women use more health services than men (Bertakis, Azari, Helms, Callahan, Robbins, 2000; Keene & Li, 2005). As reflected in this study, only women participated in this public service. However, McColl-Kennedy et al. (2012) argue that the practice styles are potentially transferable, especially to settings where people see value in integrating resources to reach important goals such as financial planning, legal advice, and education.

Future research should investigate traditional services that generate high-levels of engagement from both men and women service users and examine gender differences amid the process of cocreation.

Equity

Another consideration for future research is a result of the lack of attention that has been paid to equity (Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013). Previous studies have found that knowledge and resources are important constraints on service user input to the production of public services. This study's findings, however, demonstrate that the economically disadvantaged were capable and willing to contribute when asked by the service provider. This could be due in part to the type of information they contributed: subjective eating habits and patterns developed either through familial ties or cultural traditions. More research is needed to examine the economically disadvantaged working with a service where the majority of people lack perceived literacy, such as financial services. As is consistent in the literature, most empirical data is derived from records within the education and health care sector. Since service user involvement has gained popularity in other policy sectors as well, it seems prudent to expand this body of knowledge with other domains. Future research must examine how cocreation is implemented within other sectors as well (Voorberg et al., 2013).

Value

In the research on value cocreation, it often remains unclear whether value is understood as user value, service value, or both. The discussion around the concept hardly addresses the multidimensionality of value, whether value cocreation results in value that is more utilitarian or more hedonic, or is characterized by other value dimensions. Saarijarvi, Kannan, and Kussela (2013) argued that instead of only stating that value is cocreated, in order to enhance our understanding of value cocreation, it is essential for future research to clarify for whom value is cocreated.

In addition, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) argue that the role of the individual has changed from isolated to connected, from unaware to informed, from passive to active, and that the impact of the connected, informed, and active individual manifests in many ways. Yet from the individuals' perspective, the role remains speculative. As a result of this study, the findings indicate that service users welcome the opportunity to engage with the service provider, but have yet to recognize how much their role adds value to the service itself. Even some service users, such as Lola and Sally who exhibited a relational characteristic of isolation, expressed their roles as being minimal. Humphreys and Grayson (2008) too argued that although people are increasingly performing tasks normally handled by companies, this role redefinition might be, at least in some cases, illusory. Yet they have identified that individuals who have traditionally been defined as 'consumers' are producing 'exchange value' for companies, and this, they argue, is where there is a fundamental change in how these two parties interact. This present study supports previous findings that there is a form of exchange that takes place during cocreation; however, it still remains to be seen how the service user perceives how this exchange affects the service delivered.

Further research is needed to examine the differences between value and exchange value, and what this means to the service user from their perspective.

Role of the service provider

Given that the characteristic feature of a social relationship is that two or more people coordinate with each other so that their action, evaluation, or thought are complementary (Fiske, 1992), another consideration for future research should examine the role and perspective of the service provider in the value cocreation process. Service providers adopting a cocreation approach may find it necessary to be more open and reduce the level of control that they have traditionally exercised (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012). Enabling the service user to cocreate value successfully from both their perspective and that of the service requires the user to learn from the service as well as the reverse (Payne, Storbacka, Frow, & Knox, 2009). An examination into a public service and its service providers may result in ways to become more efficient on more lean staffing and budgeting.

Limitations

The scope of this research was designed to avoid the limitations in the literature where evidence on economically disadvantaged service users is based on administrative data, claims data, and secondary analysis of national surveys all of which are several steps removed from the actual life experience of poor and underserved individuals

(Devoe, Graham, Angier, Baez, & Krois, 2008). When considering the interpretation of this study, limitations should be considered. First, cultural differences as well as language proficiency may have independently influenced the way interview notes were taken and transcribed. Indeed, cultural factors affect the interview situation (Kapborg & Bertero, 2002). Ideally, the culture of the interviewee and the interviewer should be the same (Freed, 1988). When this was not possible, an interpreter was used to assist in interviews with service users whose English was the second language. Since interview questions may not be value-free but may reflect the researcher's cultural values, problems may exist in relation to the interpretation of the questions or how the interpreter perceived and/or interpreted interview questions (Kapborg & Bertero, 2002). To account for this limitation, a meeting with the interpreter was scheduled prior to the interviews and information was provided on the study's background, research interests, and interview questions in depth. However, different languages create and express different realities, and language is a way of organizing the world (Patton 1990) — one cannot understand another culture without understanding the language of the people in that culture (Patton 1990). This indeed is a limitation that cannot go unnoticed.

In addition, as a result of the research design, a limiting factor in doing future research on this topic is the modification in wording of the interview guide to account for cultural variances in understanding, discovered through the pilot testing phase. These modifications resulted from communicating with the Spanish-speaking service users; therefore, the interview guide is applicable for future studies that may include the examination of Spanish-speaking service users, but it is not consistent with the interview guide created by McColl-Kennedy et al (2012), which examined only those participants whose native language was English. The researcher’s working knowledge of the Spanish language limited the ability to fluently engage in conversation, but assistance from the Spanish interpreter attempted to eliminate any barriers language might have imposed on the study.

Lastly, there is no singular way to measure the quality of qualitative research because it is so diverse (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), but it should be noted that the results of this study reflect the responses of a small cohort size. Normally, fewer interviews that are thoroughly analyzed are preferable to many interviews that are only superficially explored (Brinkmann, 2013), and many qualitative researchers' estimates for participant sizes vary from eight for long interviews (McCracken, 1988) to between 12 and 20 when the aim is to achieve maximum variation (Kuzel 1992) and saturation. The central aim of research is to extend and advance knowledge (Caelli et al., 2003); therefore, the adequacy of the sample is not determined solely on the basis of the number of participants, but the appropriateness of the data (O’Reilly, 2012). As such, this inquiry focused on a cohort size that sufficiently answered the research questions (Marshall, 1996), but as a qualitative study with a limited number of participants, the results are representative, not generalizable (Thornton, 2006).

Conclusion

Both scholars and practitioners have been encouraged to focus more on identifying and understanding what kind of resources and through what mechanisms cocreation exists (Saarijarvi, Kannan, & Kuusela, 2013). This study concludes that cocreation exists through varying degrees of interactions that help in the development and maintenance of relationships. Many researchers have explored the reasons economically disadvantaged populations do not use services, but primarily focused on the logistical barriers presented by such factors as transportation, child care, and the cost of services (Anderson, Robins, Greeno, Cahalane, Copeland, & Andrews, 2006). Here, the findings of this study, suggest that such factors—also referred to in this study as bandwidth—may not prohibit the process of cocreation, but the way in which the service and service provider interacts and engages with this population. Indeed, new models of collaboration are as important as new business or service models (Gardl & Jenkins, 2011), and the opportunities for value cocreation is fundamentally about identifying new ways to support either the service user's or the service's value-creating processes (Saarijarvi, Kannan, Kuusela, 2013). Therefore, this study's findings demonstrate that cocreation as implemented in the public sector can be considered a process in which service users: a) exhibit relational characteristics in order to cocreate value; b) exhibit a relational characteristic of equality matching that marks a relationship with very concrete operations of balancing and comparing; and c) interactions are explained through the development of organization-public relationships of control mutuality, trust, commitment, satisfaction, exchange, and communal relationships, that can be easily measured.

Lastly, it is suggested that these findings inform future program interventions and criteria that calls upon the service provider to develop, and to a greater extent measure, relationships with its service users in order to enhance the process of cocreation. In addition, those relationships should be based on equality and mutuality in order to ensure that the economically disadvantaged around us receive the same opportunity to participate in the process of cocreation as those of us who are not taxed with limited resources, access, or bandwidth.

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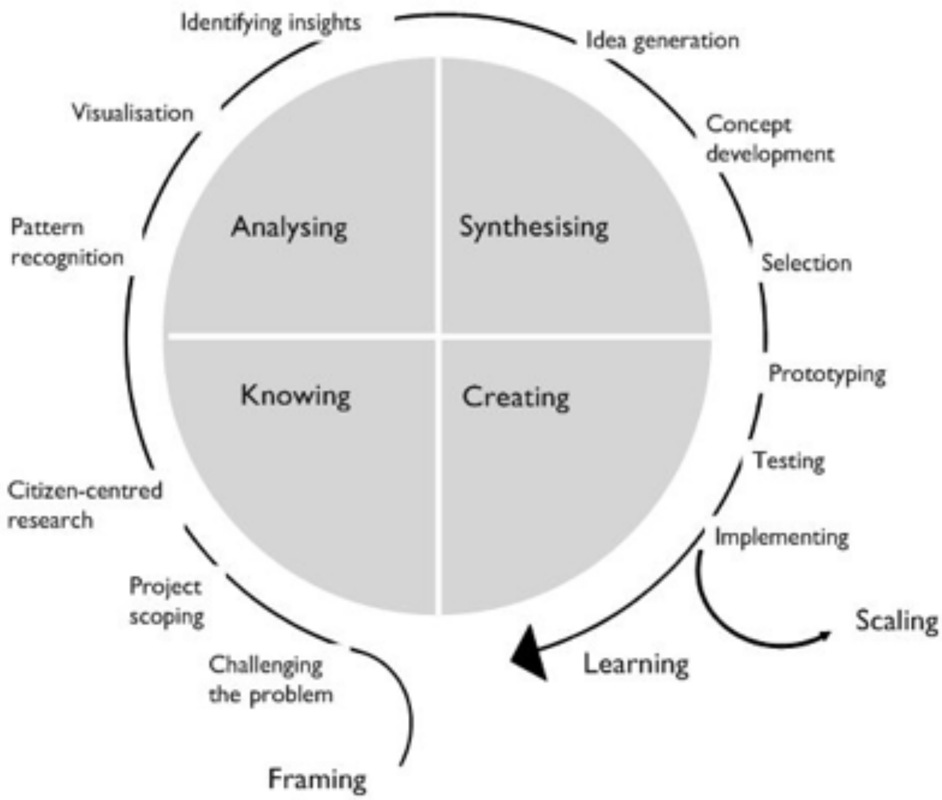
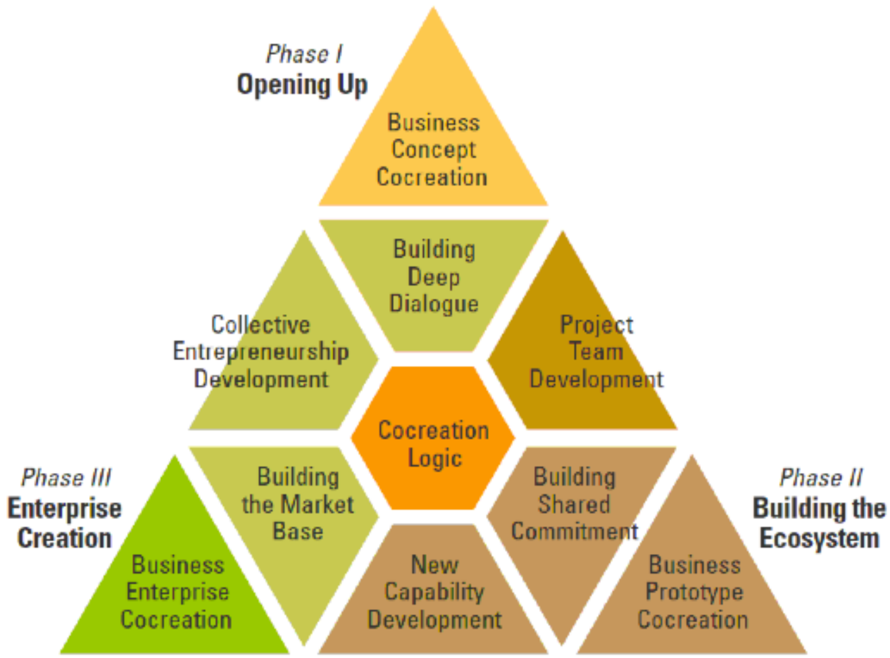
APPENDIX A

ITERATIVE PROCESS OF COCREATION (BASON, 2010)


Identifying insights
Idea generation
Visualisation
Concept development
Pattern recognition
Analysing
Synthesising
Selection
Prototyping
Knowing
Creating
Testing
Citizen-centred research
Implementing
Project scoping
Scaling
Learning
Challenging the problem
Framing

APPENDIX B

ENGAGEMENT OF THE BASE OF THE PYRAMID POPULATION (SIMANIS & HART, 2008).


Phase I
Opening Up
Business Concept Cocreation
Building Deep Dialogue
Collective Entrepreneurship Development
Project Team Development
Cocreation Logic
Phase III
Enterprise Creation
Building the Market Base
Building Shared Commitment
Phase II
Building the Ecosystem
Business Enterprise Cocreation
New Capability Development
Business Prototype Cocreation

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

Understanding How Consumer Cocreate Value in Nutrition Education

Spring 2014

Dear Participant:

Hello, my name is Liz Candello and I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University. I am working under the direction of Dr. Leslie-Jean Thornton to conduct a research study to understand how SNAP-Ed consumers cocreate value in nutrition education.

I am recruiting individuals, 18 or older, to participate in confidential, audio-recorded in-depth interviews about cocreation and nutrition use. The interviews will take approximately 60 minutes, depending upon availability, and can be scheduled at your convenience.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time. Also, you have the right to skip questions and/or to stop the interview at any time.

This interview will be confidential. You will be asked to choose a pseudonym and your name will not appear in my notes or transcripts. Only generic descriptive information such as gender, ethnicity, age, vocation, or location will be used to reference you. If you make any identifying statements, they will be stricken from all transcripts and not included in any field notes. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications, but your name or any identifying information will not be mentioned.

I would like to audiotape this interview with your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be recorded; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. Audio recordings will be kept on a password-protected computer in a locked office accessible only by me. After transcription and analysis, recordings will be destroyed.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please let me know before we begin. You may also contact the research team at any time by calling 503-701-7589 (Liz Candello) or 845-216-1721 (Dr. Leslie-Jean Thornton). If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER SPANISH TRANSLATION

Entender cómo los consumidores CoCreate Valor en Educación Nutricional
Primavera 2014

Estimado participante:

Hola, mi nombre es Liz Candello y soy una candidata para el Doctorado en la Escuela Walter Cronkite de Periodismo y Comunicación de la Universidad Estatal de Arizona. Estoy trabajando bajo la dirección de la Dra. Leslie-Jean Thornton, para llevar a cabo un estudio de investigación para entender cómo SNAP-Ed consumidores crean valor en la educación nutricional.

Yo estoy reclutando individuos, de 18 años, para participar en entrevistas confidenciales, grabadas en audio en profundidad sobre la creación y el uso de la nutrición. Las entrevistas se llevarán a aproximadamente 60 minutos, dependiendo de la disponibilidad, y pueden ser programados a su conveniencia.

Su participación en este estudio es completamente voluntario. Usted puede optar por no participar o retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento. Además, usted tiene el derecho de omitir preguntas y / o detener la entrevista en cualquier momento.

Esta entrevista será confidencial. Se le pedirá que elija un seudónimo y su nombre no aparecerá en mis notas o transcripciones. Sólo la información descriptiva genérica, como el género, la etnia, la edad, la vocación, o la ubicación se utilizará para hacer referencia a usted. Si realiza declaraciones que identifican, van a ser eliminadas de todas las transcripciones y no se incluiran en las notas. Los resultados del estudio pueden ser utilizados en informes, presentaciones o publicaciones, pero su nombre o cualquier información de identificación no serán mencionados.

Me gustaría grabar el audio de esta entrevista, con su permiso. Por favor, hágamelo saber si usted no desea que la entrevista sea grabada; también puede cambiar de opinión después de que comience la entrevista, sólo házmelo saber. Las grabaciones de audio se guardan en una computadora protegida por contraseña en una oficina cerrada, accesible sólo por mí. Después de la transcripción y el análisis, la grabaciones sera destruida.

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta relacionada con el estudio de investigación, por favor hágamelo saber antes de empezar. También puede comunicarse con el equipo de investigación en cualquier momento llamando al 503-701-7589 (Liz Candello) o 845-216-1721 (Dra. Leslie-Jean Thornton). Si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos como sujeto / participante en esta investigación, o si usted siente que ha sido colocado en situación de riesgo, puede ponerse en contacto con el Presidente de los sujetos humanos Comité de Revisión Institucional a través de la Oficina de Integridad de la Investigación ASU y Aseguramiento, al (480) 965 a 6788.

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How frequently do you utilize the SNAP-Ed service? *Please answer in times per week, times per month, or times per year*

2. Approximately how long have you been utilizing this service? *Please answer in weeks, months, or years*

3. Can you explain your process in seeking nutrition information prior to the start of SNAP-Ed?

4. In general, what informs your food choices, i.e. health, family, doctor recommendation, etc.?

5. How do you feel about making healthy food choices now that you've utilized the SNAP-Ed service?

6. Healthy food choices may mean something different to everyone. That said, what does healthy food choices mean to you?

7. What do you specifically do to ensure you make healthy food choices since utilizing the SNAP-Ed service?

[Probe - try to understand whether others are involved in the decision-making process]

8. What do you see as your role in the SNAP-Ed program?

9. How do you prefer to interact with the educator?

10. What do you see as your educator's role? What about your family, do they also play a role in making healthy food choices?

11. What can people at SNAP-Ed or your family do to help ensure healthy food choices are made (what do they currently do and what else could they do that they may not do at present)?

12. Do you see yourself as actively participating in the SNAP-Ed program? What do you do to actively participate in the program? What are the benefits of actively participating (short term and longer term)?

[Probe - try to get at outcomes – quality of life, feel better etc]

13. At what times do you feel you are a more passive participant? What makes you feel this way?

14. What things do you find yourself doing to help a) other participants b) the educator's in their role, and c) family/friends in making healthy food choices?

15. How do you feel after leaving a session with the SNAP-Ed program?

[Try to get beyond words of good, excellent, happy etc]
[Probe - what is it that these services provide for you beyond nutrition information, try to get at outcomes of the service process]

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. Are you Male or Female?

- ❑ Male
- ❑ Female

2. What is your age? _______________ years old.

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ❑ Less than high school
- ❑ High school/GED
- ❑ Some college
- ❑ 2-year college degree/Associates
- ❑ 4-year college degree (BS/BA)
- ❑ Master's degree
- ❑ Doctoral degree
- ❑ Professional degree (MD/JD)

4. How would you describe your current employment status?

- ❑ Employed full time
- ❑ Employed part time
- ❑ Unemployed / Looking for work
- ❑ Student
- ❑ Homemaker
- ❑ Retired

5. What is your current marital status?

- ❑ Single, never married
- ❑ Married
- ❑ Separated
- ❑ Divorced
- ❑ Widowed

6. What is your family income from all sources? (*note to researcher: SNAP recipients must meet the program's income guidelines, $25,400 or under for a family of three; however the poverty level is higher for bigger families and lower for smaller families*).

- ❑ Under $25,000
- ❑ $25,000 - $39,999
- ❑ $40,000 - $49,999
- ❑ $50,000 - $74,999
- ❑ Other ____________

7. How many children under 18 years old live in your household?

- ❑ 1
- ❑ 2
- ❑ 3
- ❑ 4 or more

8. What is the primary language spoken in your household?

- ❑ Chinese
- ❑ English
- ❑ French
- ❑ German
- ❑ Korean
- ❑ Russian
- ❑ Spanish
- ❑ Vietnamese
- ❑ Other_______

9. Is there a secondary language spoken in your household?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ If yes, what is that language? ____________

10. Would you describe yourself as:

- ❑ American Indian / Native American
- ❑ Asian
- ❑ Black / African American
- ❑ Hispanic / Latino
- ❑ White / Caucasian
- ❑ Pacific Islander
- ❑ Other_________

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW GUIDE SPANISH TRANSLATED

PREGUNTAS DE LA ENTREVISTA

1. ¿Con qué frecuencia usted utiliza el servicio de SNAP-Ed? *Por favor, responda en veces por semana, horas por mes, o veces al año*

2. ¿Aproximadamente cuánto tiempo ha estado utilizando este servicio? *Por favor, responda en semanas, meses o años*

3. ¿Puede explicar su proceso de búsqueda de información nutricional antes del inicio de la SNAP-Ed?

4. En general, lo que informa a sus opciones de alimentos, es decir, la salud, la familia, el médico de recomendación, etc?

5. ¿Cómo te sientes acerca de la elección de alimentos saludables ahora que usted ha utilizado el servicio de SNAP-Ed?

6. La elección de alimentos saludables puede significar algo diferente a cada uno. Dicho esto, ¿qué opciones de alimentos saludables para ti?

7. ¿Qué se hace específicamente para asegurar a elegir alimentos saludables ya la utilización del servicio de SNAP-Ed?

[Probe - tratar de comprender si otros están involucrados en el proceso de toma de decisiones]

8. ¿Qué cree usted que es su papel en el programa SNAP-Ed?

9. ¿Cómo te gusta trabajar con el educador?

10. ¿Cuál cree usted que es el papel de su educador? ¿Qué pasa con su familia, es lo que también desempeñan un papel en la elección de alimentos saludables?

11. Lo que la gente en el SNAP-Ed y su familia pueden hacer para ayudar a asegurar la elección de alimentos saludables se hacen (¿qué hacen actualmente y qué otra cosa podían hacer para que no se haga en la actualidad)?

12. ¿Te ves como la participación activa en el programa SNAP-Ed? ¿Qué hacer para participar activamente en el programa? ¿Cuáles son los beneficios de participar activamente (a corto plazo como a largo plazo)?

[Probe - tratar de conseguir en los resultados - la calidad de vida, sentirse mejor, etc]

13. ¿En qué momentos se siente usted es un participante más pasivo? ¿Qué te hace sentir de esta manera?

14. ¿Qué cosas te encuentras haciendo para ayudar a) con otros participantes b) el educador en su papel, y c) la familia / amigos en la elección de alimentos saludables?

15. ¿Cómo te sientes después de salir de una sesión con el programa de SNAP-Ed?

> [Trata de ir más allá de las palabras de bueno, excelente, feliz, etc]
> [Probe - ¿qué es lo que estos servicios proporcionan para usted más allá de la información nutricional, tratar de llegar a los resultados del proceso de servicio]

CUESTIONES DEMOGRÁFICAS

1. ¿Eres hombre o mujer?

q Masculino
q Mujer

2. ¿Cuál es su edad? ______________ Años.

3. ¿Cuál es el nivel educativo más alto que ha alcanzado?
- Menos de la escuela secundaria
- La escuela secundaria / GED
- Un poco de universidad
- 2 años de estudios universitarios / Asociados
- 4 años de estudios universitarios (BS / BA)
- Máster s
- Doctorado
- Título profesional (MD / JD)

4. ¿Cómo describiría su situación laboral actual?
- Empleados a tiempo completo
- Empleado a tiempo parcial
- Desempleado / Busco Trabajo
- Estudiante
- Ama de Casa
- Jubilado

5. ¿Cuál es su estado civil actual?
- Soltero, nunca casado
- Casado
- Apartado
- Divorciado
- Viudo

. 6 ¿Cuál es su ingreso familiar de todas las fuentes *(nota al investigador: beneficiarios de SNAP deben cumplir con las pautas de ingresos del programa, $ 25.400 o bajo para una familia de tres, sin embargo, el nivel de pobreza es mayor para las familias más grandes y más bajos para las familias más* ***pequeñas)?.***
- Bajo $ 25,000
- $ 25,000 - $ 39,999
- $ 40,000 - 49,999 dólares
- $ 50,000 - $ 74,999
- Otro ___________

7. ¿Cuántos niños menores de 18 años viven en su hogar?
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 o más

8. ¿Cuál es el idioma principal que se habla en su hogar?
- Chino
- Inglés
- Francés
- Alemán
- Coreano
- Ruso
- Español
- Vietnamita
- Otro_______

9. ¿Hay un idioma secundario que se habla en su hogar?
- Sí
- No
- En caso afirmativo, ¿cuál es ese idioma? ____________

. 10 ¿Se describiría a sí mismo como:
- Los indios americanos / nativos americanos
- Asiático
- Negro / afroamericano
- Hispano / Latino
- Blanco / Caucásico
- Islas del Pacífico

Otro_________

APPENDIX G

SUMMARY OF CUSTOMER VALUE COCREATION PRACTICE STYLES AND RELATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Style	**Relational Characteristic**	**Role**	**Example**
Team management	Collaboration	To assemble and manage team	*I feel connected with my peers. I love helping others in the class.*
Insular controlling	Isolation	To control from a distance	*What I learn at the sessions, I could have easily learned on their website.*
Partnering	Connection	To partner (primarily with health professionals)	*I want to be a better person, so working with the instructor allows me to do that. It's tailored because the instructor knows me.*
Pragmatic adapting	Acceptance	To adapt	*My life is tough, but I know what to do to make it a little bit better.*
Passive compliance	Guidance	To comply	*The instructor informs my food choices. I listen to what I need to change in my diet and do it, no questions asked.*
	Equality	To encourage mutuality	*The instructor asks a question and we go around the room and each person answers the instructor.*

APPENDIX H

CUSTOMER VALUE COCREATION PRACTICE STYLES (MCCOLL-KENNEDY ET AL., 2012).

Style	Role	Activities	Interactions	Quality of Life[3]
Team management	To assemble and manage team	■ Cooperating (being compliant with basic requirements, e.g., attending sessions) ■ Collating information ■ Colearning ■ Connecting (e.g., with family, friends, doctors, nurses, personal trainer) ■ Combining complementary therapies (e.g., diet, exercise, vitamins) ■ Cerebral activities ○ positive thinking ○ psyching myself up ○ reframing and sense-making ■ Coproduction activities—(assisting with): ○ administering treatments ○ redesigning their treatment programs ○ reconfiguring composition of medical team, including "hiring "and "firing" of doctors	Relatively high number of interactions (deep level) with high number of individuals	Psychological[4]—high positive Existential—moderately to high positive Support—high positive Physical—low to moderately negative
Insular controlling	To control from distance	■ Cooperating (being compliant) ■ Collating information ■ Colearning ■ Combining complementary therapies (e.g., diet, exercise, vitamins) ■ Cerebral activities ○ emotional labor ■ Coproduction activities—(assisting with): ○ administering treatments ○ redesigning their treatment programs ○ reconfiguring composition of medical team, including "hiring "and "firing" of doctors	Relatively low number of interactions with different individuals (at a superficial level—keeps a distance)	Psychological—moderately negative Existential—low positive Support—low positive Physical—low to moderately negative
Partnering	To partner (primarily with doctors)	■ Cooperating (being compliant) ■ Collating information ■ Combining therapies primarily with doctors ■ Cerebral activities ○ positive thinking ■ Coproduction activities—(assisting with): ○ administering treatments ○ redesigning their treatment programs ○ reconfiguring composition of medical team, including "hiring "and "firing" of doctors	Medium level of activities and medium number of inter-actions with different individuals	Psychological—moderately to high positive Existential—moderately to high positive Support—high positive Physical—low to moderately negative
Pragmatic adapting	To adapt	• Cooperating (being compliant) • Collating information (e.g., organizing practicalities of life) • Connecting (primarily with family, friends, support groups) • Changing ways of doing things (e.g., managing long-term adaptive changes) • Cerebral ○ positive thinking ○ reframing and sense-making	High number of interactions with different individuals	Psychological—moderately positive Existential—moderately positive Support—moderately to high positive Physical—low to moderately negative
Passive compliance	To comply	• Cooperating (being compliant) • Collating information (e.g., organizing practicalities of life)	Low level of interactions with few individuals (primarily the doctors and other medical staff)	Psychological—low positive Existential—low positive Support—low to moderately positive Physical—low to moderately negative