Vol. 12 No. 3, pp. 111–132 December 2025

Canadian Food Studies La Revue canadienne des études sur l'alimentation

Research Article

Conceptualizing cultural food security through the experiences of newcomers and service providers in the Halifax Regional Municipality of Nova Scotia, Canada

Meredith Bessey[a], Jennifer Brady[b*], and Manfred Egbe[c]

[a] Acadia University; ORCID: 0000-0002-2348-1949
[b] Mount Saint Vincent University; ORCID: 0000-0003-1481-3902
[c] Acadia University; ORCID: 0000-0003-4646-5690

Abstract

In Canada, food insecurity is defined as the result of inadequate financial resources. However, this definition obscures the many factors that exacerbate the prevalence, and shape the lived experience, of food insecurity among newcomers (i.e., immigrants and refugees) to Canada. This research, conducted in partnership with Common Roots Urban Farm (CRUF), a large urban farm located in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, uses a qualitative descriptive research design and semi-structured interviews with newcomers and providers of settlement services who are located in Halifax, to explore the meanings and experiences of, and barriers and strategies to, accessing culturally appropriate foods and foodways. We draw on three concepts—cultural food security, salutogenesis, and occupational justice—to expand the conceptualization of food security for newcomers beyond financial constraints to include access to culturally appropriate foods and foodways. Overall, our findings indicate that access to culturally appropriate food is intertwined with financial barriers, and is vitally important to newcomers' sense of identity, connection to friends and family, and belongingness.

Keywords: Cultural food security; newcomers; occupational justice qualitative descriptive research; salutogenesis

*Corresponding author: jennifer.brady@acadiau.ca

DOI: 10.15353/cfs-rcea.v12i3.622
ISSN: 2292-3071

Résumé

Au Canada, l'insécurité alimentaire est définie comme le résultat d'une insuffisance de ressources financières. Cette définition occulte les nombreux facteurs qui exacerbent la prévalence et façonnent l'expérience de l'insécurité alimentaire chez les personnes nouvelles arrivantes (immigrantes et réfugiées) au pays. Cette recherche, menée en collaboration avec Common Roots Urban Farm (CRUF), une grande ferme urbaine située à Halifax, en Nouvelle-Écosse (Canada), s'appuie sur une méthode qualitative descriptive et sur des entretiens semi-structurés avec des personnes nouvelles arrivantes et des prestataires de services d'établissement situés à Halifax ; il s'agit d'explorer l'accès à des aliments et à des habitudes alimentaires culturellement appropriés en abordant le sens et les expériences ainsi que les obstacles et les stratégies. Nous nous appuyons sur trois concepts (la sécurité alimentaire culturelle, la salutogenèse et la justice occupationnelle) afin d'élargir la conceptualisation de la sécurité alimentaire, pour les personnes nouvelles arrivantes, au-delà des contraintes financières, et d'y inclure l'accès à des aliments et à des habitudes alimentaires culturellement appropriés. Dans l'ensemble, nous constatons que l'accès à des aliments culturellement appropriés est relié aux obstacles financiers, mais qu'il s'avère d'une importance vitale pour le sens de l'identité des nouvelles et nouveaux arrivants, pour leurs liens amicaux et familiaux et pour leur sentiment d'appartenance.

Introduction

The definition of food insecurity—the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints—on which data collection and monitoring in Canada is based, reflects the firmly established association between food insecurity and economic precarity (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). However, conceptualizing food insecurity as the result of financial constraints alone obscures the many factors that exacerbate the prevalence of food insecurity and shapes the lived experience among equity-deserving populations, namely newcomers (i.e., immigrants and refugees). Newcomers' experience of food insecurity is shaped by a number of factors that include, but also extend beyond and intermingle with, financial constraints. One important factor elucidated elsewhere is access to culturally appropriate foods and foodways. Yet, how access to culturally appropriate foods and foodways shape newcomer settlement and wellbeing are poorly understood.

This research emerged as a partnership between the research team and Common Roots Urban Farm (hereafter Common Roots) and was funded by the Change Lab Action Research Initiative (CLARI). We used a qualitative descriptive research design (Kim et al., 2017) and semi-structured interviews with newcomers and service providers who offer food-related settlement services to newcomers located in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Our work is grounded in three key concepts—cultural food security, salutogenesis,[1] and occupational justice. These concepts inform our exploration of the myriad facets of newcomers' access to culturally

[1] Defined and discussed in more detail later, but in short, this term refers to what contributes to good health (versus pathogenesis, what makes people sick) (Antonovsky, 1987).

appropriate foods and foodways. Our aim with this work is to explore newcomers' experiences and meanings of accessing culturally appropriate food and therein expand the edges of cultural food security as a theoretical concept.

Literature review

In this section we discuss the literature of relevance to: 1) newcomers, food insecurity, and cultural food security in Canada; 2) food, culture, and immigration; and 3) food and foodways as occupational justice. Throughout these subsections, we elaborate the three key concepts that inform this work—cultural food security, salutogenesis, and occupational justice.

Newcomers, food insecurity, and cultural food security in Canada

In 2021, more than 401,000 permanent residents settled in Canada, the highest number ever in a single year. This increase follows focussed efforts by federal and provincial governments to boost immigration to Canada. Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) described immigration as necessary "to drive our economy, enrich our society and support our aging population" (Government of Canada, 2021, para. 5). The population of newcomers is expected to continue to rise; by 2036, newcomers are projected to make up nearly 30 percent of Canada's population, compared to 20.6 percent in 2011, and 21.9 percent in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2017a). Nova Scotia has also sought to increase immigration to the province, particularly in rural areas, to boost cultural and economic development and to fill specific labour needs (Government of Canada, 2022; Ivany et al., 2014; Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture & Heritage, 2017). In 2016, immigrants made up 6.1 percent of Nova Scotia's 908,340 residents (Statistics Canada, 2017b); since then, the number of landed immigrants per year has nearly doubled, with 2019 and 2021 setting records for immigration to the province (Government of Nova Scotia, 2022). However, what is crucial to note and of central concern in this research, is that many immigrants choose to leave Nova Scotia if their knowledge, skills, aspirations, and other human potential is not valued, such as through access to meaningful occupation and employment (Akbari, 2020).

While the boom of newcomers has been cast as a success for Nova Scotia, data related to the health and wellbeing of those who settle in the province, and in Canada broadly, tells a different story, particularly with respect to food security. Data on food insecurity in Canada, collected prior to COVID-19 in the same time period our study was conducted, indicates that 12.7 percent of Canadian households, or about 4 million Canadians, were food insecure (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). The prevalence of food insecurity in Nova Scotia at that time was well above the national average at 15.3 percent (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). Food insecurity has been an issue of increasing importance since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 2022 data suggesting that 17.8 percent of Canadian households experience food insecurity and 21.3 percent of Nova Scotian households experiencing food insecurity during that time period (Li et al., 2023). The prevalence of food insecurity among newcomers who have been in Canada for less than five years was even higher at 17.1 percent in 2019, decreasing to 13.8 percent among

those who have been in Canada for five years or more (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). This trend continued in 2022, with 26.1 percent of recent immigrants to Canada experiencing food insecurity in that time period (Li et al., 2023), indicating that this issue is worsening over time. It is also relevant to note, however, that any increased vulnerability to food insecurity in this population disappears when the analysis accounts for other economic and sociodemographic characteristics (Li et al., 2023). Other research indicates that food insecurity rates vary considerably among various newcomer groups with much higher rates among populations from certain countries of origin (e.g., Mexico and Colombia; Vahabi et al., 2011), newcomers who face additional systemic barriers, namely women (Quintanilha et al., 2019), and refugees (Lane et al., 2019; Tarraf et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, these data are based solely on measures of food insecurity as defined by a lack of access to sufficient food due to financial constraints, and thus, do not reflect the unique factors, such as access to culturally appropriate food, that shape food security for newcomers. The role of cultural factors in mediating food insecurity, though poorly understood (Moffat et al., 2017), are vital to the health and wellbeing of newcomers who may experience dramatic change in the food and foodways available to them (Stelfox & Newbold, 2019; Stowers, 2012). Canadian research has shown that in addition to inadequate finances, newcomers face challenges in adapting to the foods, food customs, and food system in their adopted communities and in accessing culturally appropriate foods (Power, 2008; Tarraf et al., 2017). Power (2008) first proposed "cultural food security" to conceptualize the lack of access to cultural foods and foodways among Indigenous populations in Canada as an important social justice concern that lies beyond food insecurity due to financial insufficiency. Cultural food security has since been used to elaborate the barriers to food security among newcomers. For example, Moffat et al. (2017) applied Power's concept of cultural food security to explore the three pillars of food security—availability, access, and use—among an immigrant population in Hamilton, Ontario. The authors note that newcomers face challenges related to culture within all three of the pillars of food security, and that cultural dimensions of food insecurity must be considered when addressing nutrition and health among this population.

Based on their research with African immigrants to Australia, Wilson and Renzaho (2015) assert that among newcomers, cultural food insecurity also goes beyond the quantity, quality, and cultural acceptability of the foods being consumed to encapsulate disruptions to cultural food practices. Research participants discussed the loss of family commensality after moving to Australia and no longer having a traditional family breakfast in the mornings (Wilson & Renzaho, 2015). Vallianatos and Raine (2008) conducted research with South Asian and Arabic newcomer women to Edmonton, Alberta and found that being disconnected from cultural foods and foodways contributed to their anxieties about immigration and to feelings of social isolation. Women faced a variety of barriers to accessing ethnic foods, including lack of availability as well as language barriers. Ultimately, this research highlights the gaps in the definition, measurement, and monitoring of food insecurity, which fail to capture the unique factors that shape the prevalence and experiences of food insecurity among newcomers.

Food, culture, and immigration

Anthropologists have long studied the relationship between food and culture and have shown that foods and foodways are ritual systems in which patterns and

worldviews of culture are embedded (Meigs, 1987). For newcomers, immigration disrupts established and deeply held ritual systems, including those related to food. Ahmed et al. (2003) describe the process of settlement as "regrounding" whereby newcomers are not starting new lives, but are re-rooting familiar ways of life, knowledge, skills, and aspirations that they bring with them to their adopted communities. Not surprising then, is research that shows that food plays a unique and vitally important role in the settlement process, as well as in the health and wellbeing of newcomers.

A significant portion of the research on newcomers and food focuses on "dietary acculturation," the process by which newcomers adapt to or adopt the "dietary practices" of their new communities (Alakaam & Willyard, 2020, p. 229). Dietary acculturation has been identified as a source of "acculturative stress...defined as a reduction in health status (including psychological, somatic, and social aspects)" of newcomers (Berry et al., 1987, p. 491; Satia-Abouta, 2010; Satia-Abouta et al., 2002). Dietary acculturation contributes to a phenomenon known as the "healthy immigrant effect" whereby newcomers' physical and mental health status tends to decline with length of residence in Canada (Vang et al., 2017; Aljaroudi et al., 2019). Paradoxically, this decrease in newcomers' health status occurs despite data showing that food security increases with length of residence (Li et al., 2023; Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020), which suggests the healthy immigrant effect is not solely due to financial insufficiency and a consequent lack of access to nutritious food. Nevertheless, food insecurity puts newcomers at increased risk for communicable and chronic diseases, poor physical and/or mental health, and compromised nutrition status (Burgess, 2016; Dennis et al., 2017; Islam et al., 2018; Maynard et al., 2018; Weigel & Armijos, 2019). In sum, much of the research on newcomers and food focusses on the pathogenic impact of food insecurity among newcomers.

In contrast, salutogenesis, a term devised by Aaron Antonovsky (1987) to conceptualize not what makes people sick (i.e., what is pathogenic), but what contributes to good health (i.e., what is salutogenic), provides another lens to consider food security for newcomers. Since Antonovsky's introduction of the concept, salutogenesis has been taken up across the life course and in various contexts including healthcare, migration, and policy making (Mittelmark et al., 2022), though has only been explicitly applied in limited ways within the food security literature (Herens et al., 2018). Central to Antonovsky's (1987) salutogenic theory is "generalized resistance resources" (p. 28), the internal and external resources that people possess to cope with stressors, which inform their "sense of coherence" (p. 15), the degree to which people perceive their world to be comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful. Research by Antonovsky and others who have since used salutogenic theory have shown that those with greater generalized resistance resources and a higher sense of coherence enjoy greater health and wellbeing even in highly stressful and traumatic situations (Braun-Lewensohn & Sagy, 2011; Braun-Lewensohn et al., 2011).

Cultural food security can be considered using salutogenic theory; generalized resistance resources include commitment and cohesion with one's cultural roots, cultural stability, and ritualistic activities (Idan et al., 2022), all of which can be supported by engagement in cultural food practices. Given the ways that food-related programs like community gardens can contribute to the health and wellbeing of newcomers (Hartwig & Mason, 2016; Ramburn et al., 2023), this is an area ripe for exploration. One example of research that centres the salutogenic impact of food and foodways, though does not directly engage with

Antonovsky's work, is Hughes' (2019) ethnographic study of refugees from Myanmar living in Australia. Hughes (2019) explores food and foodways as factors that contribute to individual and community resilience, and reports that home and/or community gardening was a vital and multifaceted aspect of newcomers' settlement experience that provided access to traditional foods and ways of life, a means of earning income, and therapeutic engagement with green space, potentially contributing to a sense of coherence.

Connected to the sense of coherence provided by gardening is the concept of placemaking (Ellery & Ellery, 2015); this is a concept that emerged in the 1970s within planning theory, and has been used to discuss the material and non-material elements that contribute to someone creating a sense of place and relatedly, a sense of self (Hughes, 2019), a process that is "central to personal and social existence" (Gray, 2002, p. 39). Hughes (2019) cites gardening as a facilitator of placemaking for their participants, while Minkoff-Zern (2012) additionally found that connection to land and to agriculture is important to newcomer settlement because it provides spaces for "retaining and highlighting agricultural, cultural, and dietary practices and knowledge" (p. 1190). Other researchers, including Jean (2015), Lucas and Li (2020), and Strunk and Richardson (2019), have also emphasized the importance of activities like farming and gardening to the process of placemaking for newcomers, including in Canada.

Jean (2015), in her work with participants of an urban farming program for refugees in Utah, emphasizes the role that farming can play as an act of resistance to cultural assimilation and to acculturation into American food norms. Participants in the program highlighted the familiarity of connecting with land and of planting a seed in the soil, even though the characteristics of the soil in a new place can be different and unfamiliar. Beyond the important connection to cultural foodways, places like community gardens can provide important access to community building and to sharing existing knowledge and skills (Brigham, 2015; Moquin et al., 2016). Lucas (2020) conducted interviews with participants at the Rainbow Community Garden in Winnipeg, Manitoba, as well as urban agriculture professionals. Participants in the research described the garden as a site of healing, cross-cultural and intergenerational exchange, and a way to feel connected to both their home country and their new home, despite what was an unsuccessful and disappointing growing season (Lucas, 2020; Lucas & Li, 2020). This research highlights the importance of relationship to land and others in the placemaking and settlement process, and the salutogenic role that agricultural activities can play for newcomers.

Food and foodways as occupational justice

Scholarly and grey literature identifies employment-related skill development as an important priority for newcomer settlement (Maganaka & Plaizier, 2015). Yet, newcomers bring with them a breadth of knowledge and skills that could strengthen the economies, racial and cultural diversity, and food systems of their new communities, but are often met with barriers that prevent them from sharing these assets (Scultheiss & Davis, 2015). Many newcomers experience a decline in job status related to a mismatch between their education and experience and employment opportunities in Canada (Wilkinson et al., 2016). Thus, it may be that, for at least some newcomers, it is not skill development that is needed, but access to meaningful employment. Nevertheless, settlement includes more than employment and is best approached through the broader lens of occupation.

Following occupational therapy scholars, we understand occupation to include the "day-to-day means through which we exercise health, citizenship and social inclusion" (Townsend & Wilcock, 2004, p. 81). This includes food-related occupation, such as food provisioning and preparation, which are important sources of connection to ritual, tradition, family, identity, etc. for many people, and "are rife with symbolic meaning" (Beagan et al., 2018). We concur that "humans are occupational beings. Their existence depends on enablement of diverse opportunities and resources for participation in culturally defined and health-building occupations," which include, but are not limited to, employment (Townsend & Wilcock, 2004, pg. 76). "Enablement" in this definition connects occupation to social and structural contexts, and thus, positions access to occupation as a matter of justice (Nilsson & Townsend, 2010; Stadnyk et al., 2009; Townsend, 2003; Townsend & Wilcock, 2004; Whiteford, 2003; Wilcock, 2006; Wilcock & Townsend, 2000). Occupational justice occurs when the "rights, responsibilities, and liberties that enable the individual to experience health and quality of life through engagement in occupations" are realized (Wolf et al., 2010, pg. 15). Conversely, occupational injustice describes the lack of occupation or occupational insecurity that "occur[s] when people are denied the physical, social, economic, or cultural resources or opportunities to be engaged in these meaningful occupations" (Wolf et al., 2010, pg. 15). We see access to cultural foodways as an issue of occupational (in)justice, and cultural food security and occupational justice as two mutually reinforcing factors at the heart of understanding, and thus supporting, newcomers' experiences of immigration and resettlement from a salutogenic approach.

Research questions

A key aim of our research is to flesh out cultural food security as a concept by drawing on the experiences of newcomers and service providers with a view to enhancing its use for justice-enhancing research and policy. Hence, our research sought to answer the following questions:

1. How is cultural food security understood by newcomers and social service providers located in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), in Nova Scotia, Canada?
2. What are the experiences of newcomers living in the HRM of accessing culturally appropriate food?

Methodology and methods

Methodology

We used a qualitative descriptive research design to conduct this research because of its alignment with our intention to describe the understandings and experiences of participants through their own voices and with little interpretive analysis (Kim et al., 2017). In this approach, data analysis is low-inference and researchers stay close to the data, with limited transformation occurring during analysis, with the resulting description being straightforward (Kim et al., 2017). This research design is appropriate when

studying concepts like cultural food security which are still in development.

Sampling and recruitment

Service providers were recruited via a selection of settlement services organizations which were identified through an initial environmental scan. Individuals within the organizations were emailed invitations to participate in a sixty-minute interview. Newcomer participants were identified and invited to participate in an interview via an email from Common Roots, a community garden that, at the time that this research was conducted, was centrally located in downtown HRM on land adjacent to and owned by the QEII Health Sciences Centre, a large urban hospital. While at that location, Common Roots comprised over fifty garden plots and operated a weekly Market Garden where gardeners could sell their produce to local residents. Common Roots also operated a program for newcomer gardeners through a partnership with the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), a large centre that offers an array of services and programming for newcomers to the province. Newcomers were offered a cash honorarium of $25 and travel costs for their participation. This study was granted ethics approval by the Mount Saint Vincent University research ethics board.

Data collection and analysis

Interviews with newcomers were conducted by the co-authors (ME and MB led interviews with newcomers; JB led interviews with service providers), in late 2018 and early 2019, using a semi-structured interview guide tailored to each population group. Written consent was collected from each participant on the day of the interview. Interviews with newcomers included questions such as “Are you able to access/purchase the kinds of food you like/prefer/consume here in HRM?” and “What do you consider central to newcomers’ cultural food security?”, while service providers were asked “Do issues of food insecurity come up in your interaction/work with newcomers; what is your understanding of the issue?” and “Do the services/programs you provide consider issues of food security, especially cultural food security for newcomers to the HRM?” among other questions related to newcomer food security. An interpreter was present for newcomer interviews as needed, which were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Newcomer interviews ranged in length from twenty-five to forty-nine minutes, while service provider interviews were twenty-five to eighty-one minutes in length. Interviews with newcomers took place in community settings (e.g., the public library, YMCA centre, etc.); service providers primarily took place in the provider’s workplace. Interview data were analyzed by ME and JB who independently coded each transcript in MAXQDA using both inductive and deductive, based on existing literature on cultural food security and occupational justice, coding before comparing codes and collaboratively developing themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Collaborative decision making around themes was a straightforward process due to our use of qualitative description; there was less interpretation of the meaning of participant's words, and more of an emphasis on finding patterns.

Results and discussion

In total, eight service providers from six different organizations, and ten newcomers participated in an interview (see Table 1 for profile of newcomer participants). Most newcomers had originally come to Canada as refugees. Service providers were employed in a range of organizations, including public health, immigration settlement, community food centres, community gardens, etc. All names used in this section are pseudonyms.

Table 1: Demographic profile of newcomer participants

Pseudonym	**Country of Origin**	**Length of Time in Canada/HRM**	**Immigration Status**
Anitha	Rwanda	4 years/1 year	Permanent resident
Keza	Rwanda	4 years	Permanent resident
Mary	Democratic Republic of Congo	11 years	Citizen
Anga	Tanzania	4 years	Permanent resident
Batsa	Bhutan	7 years	Citizen
Adesh	Nepal	3 years	Temporary resident
Cheetri	Nepal	7 years	Permanent resident
Joseph	Cameroon	7 years/6 months	Citizen
Saania	Syria	3 years	Refugee
Abdel	Syria	3 years	Permanent resident

Through our analysis, we identified three key themes that specifically address our research questions, and which we address in turn in the subsections below: 1) understandings of cultural food security; 2) barriers and strategies to accessing culturally appropriate food and foodways; and 3) growing and sharing as occupation.

Understandings of cultural food security

Culturally familiar food and foodways were routinely talked about by newcomers and service providers as providing a material and symbolic connection to newcomers' past, present, and future lives. Many newcomer participants described the importance of food to "finding home." Food enabled newcomers to maintain and foster a sense of connection, inclusion, and belonging within their communities of origin as well as within their adopted communities, suggesting that food and food practices were important in placemaking, as demonstrated in previous research (Strunk & Richardson, 2019; Vallianatos & Raine, 2008; Xia, 2021), and relatedly, in their development of a sense of coherence. Access to cultural foods and traditions provided a lens through which newcomers could make sense of their life in Canada. Mary captured the essence of newcomers' perspective on the central role of food in stating:

> Without the food, I'm gone. Food is everything. Food is my health, food is money, food is family. Food is the friends. Food comes everywhere. Everything we do, food is at the front line.

Several participants also equated the meaning of food with "culture," "participation," "family," "friendship," and "life." More specifically, for newcomers, food was a crucial and accessible means of maintaining a sense of connection to their families, familiar ways of life, and cultures that were left behind. Conversely, participants highlighted the role of food in building social networks among newcomers of similar national and linguistic origin, the larger community of newcomers, and among the people, places, and ways of life in their adopted communities. Anitha highlighted this important dual role that food and foodways play in connecting newcomers to their adopted and home communities, when discussing her participation in the Common Roots Market Garden:

> We are happy.... We ate our food, we were able to share with the friends, we were able to sell some to people who know that food so, we were connected again with our communities around the world. Also, we were able to express ourselves. Our culture, our food. We were able to teach other people from different countries who are the part of Common Roots program. We were able to teach them how to plant them, how to grow them, how to cook...to eat them.... So, we are so happy.

Anitha's experience speaks to the value of cross-cultural exchange, which can support newcomers in feeling connected to their home country, through continuing familiar food practices, as well as to their new place of settlement, through connecting with other people and sharing skills and knowledge that they have brought with them from their country of origin. This also reflects the imagined garden which Strunk and Richardson (2019) argue "is constructed through social, economic, and cultural interactions that take place between gardeners of different ethnicities, genders, religions, and generations in the garden" (p. 830), facilitating intergenerational and cross-cultural exchange of knowledge. The "imagined garden" expands beyond the biological and material processes of gardening to acknowledge the salutogenic benefits of human interaction and cultural production within a community garden like Common Roots or like the Rainbow Community Garden in Winnipeg (Lucas, 2020; Strunk & Richardson, 2019).

Service providers similarly underscored the importance of culturally appropriate food to fostering coherence among newcomers' past and present lives and a sense of purpose in their adopted communities, highlighting the salutogenic role that access to cultural food and foodways can have. For example, Marta, an employee at an immigrant services agency in Halifax, explained:

> What I see is a vast amount of knowledge and a deep sort of connection with food. People may not even recognize themselves in terms of what they could be contributing to Canadian society. So, for people to actually recognize, 'Oh you know, it's not just that I want the opportunity to buy this or this.' It's that 'I actually have all this food knowledge to contribute, agricultural knowledge, and understanding of how to grow.' And even if you have to adapt your ways of growing to growing in Canada, there's some really basic stuff and really deep knowledge that's in people's bodies that people know how to do.... People are having to start over in so many ways that it can be a really demoralizing process, especially when people have, or are facing all kinds of barriers to meaningful employment or making friends.

Even though newcomers often had to adapt their gardening methods and techniques to their new home in Nova Scotia, this was something that gave them a sense of purpose and familiarity and could foster

meaningful and worthwhile occupation, even when other aspects of settlement may be proving challenging. Connecting with land can feel both different and the same from home concurrently, as also highlighted by participants in Jean's (2015) study when describing the differences in soil between their home country and their place of settlement but the core experience of placing a seed in the earth and fostering its growth. Marta went on to highlight the ways that culturally appropriate food and foodways connect families across generations, and thereby add to newcomers' sense of purpose:

> The seniors that we have in our gardens, people just love it. Like it gives them a sense of meaning to their days and a team. They often don't have other places that they go, so their families, younger people, families will start to get jobs and go to school, but the senior of the family doesn't have much, right? So, going and sitting or going to water their garden and sitting with their friend at the picnic table becomes really important because it's sort of more similar to what they might've done in the past. And it's more what they expected what they would be doing when they came to Canada.... And that it's part of their cultural, like they want their kids to know how to grow food. And—and food that's particular to, particularly important for them, you know, so. And to, it's a way of sharing what life was like back home.

Passing down cultural food traditions to children, especially those born in Canada, can be an important aspect of settlement and placemaking, but can also be challenging in a new place when access to cultural foods is limited (Lucas, 2020; Vallianatos & Raine, 2008). Access to a community garden like Common Roots can provide opportunities for this important intergenerational learning and contributes to the comprehensibility and meaningfulness of participants' lives. Anitha's and Marta's insights exemplify a key finding of this research—that access to culturally meaningful foods and foodways is vitally important to settlement for reasons beyond financial and physiological health which are commonly centred in research.

When asked specifically about what cultural food security means to them, newcomers contrasted cultural food and survival food, whose conceptualizations were informed by culturally rooted ideas of health and edibility. For example, Anga contrasted the foods he eats "for surviving" and what he considers foods "for living." Similarly, Joseph said:

> Cultural food is ah, I just simply see it as something that is part of your culture, you have been doing it. So, that is what I consider, that's cultural food because in that food there is part of your culture, your origin. It's not food just for food; basic food. It's food that narrates a story for you.

For many newcomers', cultural perspectives of healthy food were also a key element of cultural food security, and comprised elements of the food itself (i.e., sugar content, freshness) and the means of growing it (i.e., use of chemicals, environmental impact), as well as the familiarity and trustworthiness of the knowledge used in its production (i.e., cultural foodways versus science). Cheetri explained,

> When I was in my country, we ate all our organic, fresh milk, fresh product, everything is fresh, and the—made in the, you know, made by hand. You use everything, like you know, we grow fresh vegetable, fresh, organic, everything organic, but here is not that kind of, you know, the environment. Like the food, everything, we cannot find, that's why we always miss, you know, our culture, that thing that's the other reason.

Finally, cultural food security was also informed by culturally rooted ideas about the edibility of foods. Anitha joked,

> When I came, in the hotel, it was a big, like, big tray of salad. I said, 'wow, am I a goat?' [everyone laughs].

> Because the animals in my country, they eat raw greens.... True story though [laughter]. We didn't eat; we stayed hungry [laughter].

Although Anitha finds humour in her experience, she also highlights the ways in which food is central to finding a place for herself in her adopted community. Both Cheetri and Anitha's experiences are reminiscent of one participant from Jean's (2015) research who noted that gardening and growing his own food let him and his family eat food "our way" (p. 68) by, for example, growing corn beyond the maturity when it is typically harvested in America. For Cheetri and Anitha, eating food "their way" could potentially be seen as a way of resisting assimilation to Canadian culture and food practices and maintaining their autonomy in this new place of settlement.

What is also clear from this research is that for newcomers, cultural food security extends well beyond the financial accessibility of food, and even beyond access to particular foods, to include culturally rooted ideas of what is edible, what is healthy, and how food should be grown and prepared. Understood through Antonovsky's (1987) salutogenic theory, newcomers' and service providers' insights highlight the role of culturally meaningful foods and foodways, such as gardening and growing food in a communal space, in helping participants to make meaning in their lives, thus fostering a greater sense of coherence. Likewise, newcomers and service providers highlight the interrelated salutogenic value of meaningful occupation that may be fostered through culturally meaningful foodways. We assert that newcomers' access to culturally appropriate foods and foodways is a matter of occupational justice. For newcomers, social and structural supports that enable them to practice culturally meaningful foodways as part of occupation are as important as access to culturally appropriate foods in enabling and sustaining cultural food security, defining identity, connecting individuals to their communities, and facilitating a sense of purpose (Koc & Welsh, 2001; Wright et al., 2021).

Growing and sharing as occupation

For newcomers who participated in this research, opportunities to grow and share food was not just about access to food but also about access to meaningful occupation, defined as "doing things that are perceived as being right, important, and worthwhile" and that provide someone with autonomy and choice over what to do (Ikiugu et al., 2015, p. 47). For some, growing and selling food through Common Roots' Market Garden provided newcomers with a modest financial return that supplemented other forms of income. However, as discussed above, occupation means more than employment and income. In line with conceptualizations of occupational justice, newcomers explained that growing and sharing food is a particularly meaningful way of contributing their knowledge and skills for the benefit of their families, fellow newcomers of similar national or cultural origin, and their adopted communities. This further speaks to the value of the "imagined garden" (Lucas, 2020), where cross-cultural exchange and social connection can occur, benefitting gardeners beyond the physical practice of gardening and food production. Participants spoke to the practice of gardening as a form of meaningful occupation, wherein their engagement with gardening was worthwhile and provided many participants with a sense of autonomy (Ikiugu et al., 2015).

Mary explained that growing food gives newcomers needed opportunities to make use of and to share the valuable knowledge and skills that they bring to their new homes:

> "I think if everyone thinks about the importance of having food closer, so everyone can play an important role.... They have to think about how important these skills that newcomers bring especially, because the Canadians don't care about what they eat. If they can support newcomers to have the support, either from private or from the government, we can do a lot. To improve the food security, to develop our food, to develop our skills, to develop our income. There are lots we can do, but we don't have any permission to do it."

Growing food was also an important means of knowledge and cultural preservation and exchange; newcomers described the importance of practicing culturally familiar foodways as well as opportunities to teach people of other cultural backgrounds. Thus, growing food was described as a form of self-expression, and an important means of maintaining cultural identity while making a new home for themselves in the HRM. Hence, we assert that having access to practice cultural foodways is an important, but often overlooked, component of cultural food security, and of occupational justice, and a way of resisting assimilation into dominant culture (Jean, 2015). Mary went on to explain that growing food is central to her cultural foodways and inextricable from how she thinks about culturally appropriate food:

> So, in my culture, we don't buy food. Even meat we grow; we grow our chickens and the goats, and the...not very much go buying food. So, this was a very much challenge and as well, the taste, because the food is not as fresh, doesn't taste the same.... Last year, I had to touch—touch my hands in the ground, plant, grow my food...I'm telling you I was on depression medication, because I am a survivor of a genocide. I went through lots of things. My brain was in—in pain, like stressed, because of not getting enough of what helps me, but gardening helped me. And I am off the medication. Now, uh, during the year, I started the gardening...I forgot about going to buy food [laughter]...I'm telling you, night, morning, I could get up and water my plants. I watched my tomatoes, and my kales, and my beans, everything, growing. I ate them. I felt that, oh my goodness, I am now home.

Opportunities to practice culturally appropriate foodways provided newcomers with a means to earn a modest income. However, more broadly, opportunities to grow food was a means to engage in meaningful occupation and foster occupational justice, independent of employment or finances, which subsequently enabled newcomers to experience health, quality of life, and belonging in their adopted communities. Mary describes an experience of placemaking, of finding a home, through the practice of growing food and finding meaningful occupation through that practice. However, some participants noted that physical space for gardening is limited and that not everyone in their community has access to adequate land, resources, or, at times, knowledge, presenting an issue of occupational injustice or inequity (Wolf et al., 2010).

Barriers and strategies to accessing culturally appropriate food and foodways

Barriers

Participants identified three key barriers that limit newcomers' access to culturally appropriate foods: 1) the high cost of ethnic foods coupled with inadequate financial resources; 2) a lack of information about where to find culturally appropriate foods and how to substitute with available foods; and 3) lack of information about and/or availability of transportation to ethnic grocers. Considering data on food insecurity among newcomers in Canada (Li et al., 2023; Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020), it is not surprising that newcomers identified financial constraints, which comprised the high cost of culturally appropriate foods coupled with

inadequate income, as a barrier to food access. As is typical for households experiencing food insecurity, newcomer participants struggled to afford a sufficient quantity of food to feed themselves and their families, but were also unable to access a desirable quantity, quality, and variety of culturally appropriate foods, even when such foods were available. Some newcomers added that financial precarity also prevents small-scale ethnic grocers, which are often owned by newcomers, from stocking culturally appropriate foods. Keza explained, "So, the cultural stores are, but they don't have everything. Even those foods, African foods they sell, they don't access them easily here. They have to import it, which is difficult. You cannot get enough because it's expensive."

Keza's point about the inaccessibility of culturally appropriate foods for newcomers and small-scale retailers was echoed by newcomers and service providers alike and points to the multifaceted barriers to newcomers' cultural food security. Vallianatos and Raine (2008) also found similar financial barriers existed in their research with South Asian and Arabic newcomers in Alberta, though they did note that ethnic foods were becoming more available; the availability of food has likely continued to improve in the years since their research was conducted, though the affordability of these items is still in question.

A second key barrier cited by newcomers and service providers was a lack of information about where to purchase culturally appropriate foods. Speaking through an interpreter, Abdel explained the challenges that not knowing where to access Halal food presents: "His first challenge was like to know where exactly to get the Arabic food. And especially like Halal food 'cause he's following like a specific religion that obligate him to do that. And so, when he met his friend in here, so know where those places are, so he was like going to purchase from them the Arabic food."

Anaya, a service provider involved in local food policy advocacy also highlighted the lack of information about where to access culturally diverse foods in the HRM as a barrier for newcomers: "When we did that *Food Counts* report with the Halifax Food Policy Alliance, it was a huge issue, we tried to create an inventory of food stores that serve culturally appropriate foods. It was really difficult; like this is a really under-researched and under—under[sic] served population. And so, the lack of data was very difficult for us."

At the time that the report Anaya referenced was published (Halifax Food Policy Alliance, 2015), the authors reported that there were 64 ethnic food stores (including chain grocery stores like Sobeys, Atlantic Superstore, and Walmart that carry multicultural foods) in the Halifax region, as well as 43 market vendors (who primarily sold baked goods and prepared foods). If this information was difficult to access for professionals who work in the field of food security, it is understandable that this would serve as a barrier to newcomers who have less knowledge of the area and perhaps of the English language. Adding to the lack of information about where to access culturally appropriate foods was a lack of information about how to prepare culturally familiar dishes with ingredients that are available, affordable, and accessible to newcomers in the HRM. Patricia, a service provider with an immigrant settlement organization that, in part, supports newcomers with business endeavours, noted that the lack of information about recipe substitutions also presents barriers to newcomers' entrepreneurial goals:

Most often it happens that somebody comes in and they've decided that they want to open a restaurant that's related to their cultural background. And so...they want to have an authentic [restaurant], because there may be a small community, but they want

to make it like home, not a North American version of it. And so, then they discover as they go to look for the recipes that they're going to make is that those food items aren't available…there is a huge gap as to what's available here and what they need to get somewhere else to do what they want to do.

Where to find culturally appropriate foods and how to use more readily available and accessible ingredients to prepare familiar dishes was a significant barrier and reflects the lack of attention and resources directed toward newcomers and cultural food security.

A third key barrier was a lack of information about how to get to ethnic grocers via public transportation, which was compounded by the expense and additional time required to navigate the city, often by bus; this has also been identified as a barrier to food access for immigrant populations in previous research (Vahabi & Damba, 2013). Helen, a service provider in a local food focussed organization that offers newcomer programming explained:

> I think like transportation can be an issue for many newcomers and so even if particular foods are available somewhere throughout HRM doesn't mean that it's like necessarily really easy to get to that place on a regular enough basis to be able to access it…I think like in an ideal world I suppose there would just be more [culturally appropriate food] readily accessible throughout the city or the province or whatever to be able to access. So, you didn't have to take two or three buses to get to, you know, that one store that you know has those like those ingredients you use.

Helen went on to raise another crucial point about the intersection of gender and the newcomer experience:

> Then if you have children in tow…I think there's like a lot of pressure at times on women to be upholding that aspect of family life.… It's a lot of pressure and it almost feels like a bit of an impossible task to me. Particularly if you don't have the language and you have multiple children that you're having to look after while doing—trying to access food.

The intersections of gender, culture, race, language, and financial precarity undoubtedly shape newcomers' experience of accessing culturally appropriate food. However, like cultural food security generally, how these intersections shape experiences among diverse newcomer populations are poorly understood but are essential to a fulsome conceptual framework that adequately describes cultural food security and that may inform future research supports for newcomers.

A final barrier highlighted by service providers was a lack of clarity about what cultural food security means, how realistic versus aspirational it may be, and the consequent lack of policy and best practices to guide implementation of supports for newcomers. Cleo remarked, "We haven't done a good job I don't think in the food policy work locally and engaging people that work with newcomers or newcomers themselves. So that's maybe one barrier…I think probably some of it comes back to—to [how] cultural food security and cultural appropriateness would be defined…like it would mean different things to each community, so when you're looking at HRM as a whole, how do [you] apply that, I guess. So, it comes back to not having like a way to define it, and best practices like how to promote it."

In other words, not having a conceptual model to describe cultural food security engenders a gap in policy and programming. Research building from this work, as well as that of other researchers like Moffat et al. (2017) and Power (2008), is crucial to elaborating a conceptual model of cultural food security from an intersectional perspective whereby the interplay of gender, race, socioeconomic status, country of origin, immigration category, and other factors that shape

newcomers' experiences may be better understood and addressed through policy and programming.

Strategies

Newcomers overcame barriers using a variety of strategies to piece together culturally appropriate foods from various sources and in various ways that were often precarious, highly seasonal, and that involved significant time and financial burden. Most newcomers interviewed for this project noted that there is no ethnic grocer in the HRM that caters to their culture or cuisine of origin and described needing to visit several ethnic grocers and big box retailers across the city to find familiar and affordable ingredients needed to prepare culturally appropriate meals. When asked where he buys food, Saania described visiting numerous retailers that are scattered throughout the city: "Store Arabic, but now I buy some food Arabic at Superstore and Walmart. Cheaper than store Arabic [laughs]...buy at store Arabic beside Giant Tiger Al-Arz, and [on the] Bedford Highway named Ar-Arif, and Kawther Meat on Bedford Highway for buying meat [and] olive."

Likewise, many newcomers grew food in community garden plots as a way to access culturally appropriate foods. However, for many newcomers, especially those with farming backgrounds or who were accustomed to growing food as a part of their cultural foodways, the size of community garden plots was insufficient to grow enough food for themselves, their families, and others in their communities, paralleling findings by Jean (2015) where the participants' biggest complaint was about the limited physical space provided to them by the gardening program. As an example, Keza noted that: "So, before I started the gardening at the Common Roots, I started it in the community gardening, where they gave me half of a plot...I started growing some greens and then when I was going to harvest, it was just a little tiny [laughter]...it was not enough for my family."

Community gardening is precarious, highly seasonal, and produces limited quantity, and hence, may help to redress episodic financially and culturally related food insecurity, but does little to fulfill the need for year-round, long-term solutions. Anitha also reinforced this by saying that community gardening may be a solution for food security, but only if newcomers are provided with more space, tools, and skills to do so. Thus, like in Lucas's (2020) research in Winnipeg, the actual material benefits of gardening may sometimes be limited, despite the social benefits that newcomers attain from the "imagined garden," such as the happiness that many participants experienced from sharing their food culture and traditions with other members of their community. Additionally, like many Canadians, newcomers may lack time or knowledge to grow food in their adopted communities, and community gardens often have wait lists of those wishing to access a plot (Lucas & Li, 2020). Market and community gardens like Common Roots also deal with uncertainty around funding and financial sustainability; in 2025, as we were working on updating this paper for publication, MetroWorks, Common Roots' parent organization, declared bankruptcy and the gardens were forced to close for several months. As of June 2025, a new parent organization has stepped in, and Common Roots has launched a fundraising campaign to support the 2025 season (Mott, 2025). Without long-term investment in these gardens, they cannot be relied on to solve the issue of food security for newcomers or other groups.

Securing seeds presented another layer of precarity to newcomers' ability to access culturally appropriate foods and foodways. Newcomers who participated in this research primarily drew on contacts in their home countries to source seeds. Keza described the

significance that growing seeds from home had for her and others in her community:

> "[Marcia] from the [community gardening] program, so she start encouraging us to go outside and garden in the community, gave us a small, tiny space for gardening...but we didn't have seeds from home, then we said what are we going to plant? [laughter] We had one friend from our community, she ordered—her friend from Mozambique in the refugee camp where they were living, and then they sent her some few seeds of lenga-lenga and the zucchini [laughter]. So, we shared; we started planting those. That's how we started being connected to our roots again."

A final strategy that newcomers used to access culturally appropriate foods was through an informal economy of sharing and selling produce grown in their community garden plots.

Keza described her experience:

> "We participated in the Common Roots market because we had some Canadian vegetables we grew there, but our home culture foods, lenga-lenga, eggplant, and the zucchini leaves and beans leaves, were sold by word of mouth, and they [customers/community members] would call us, 'hey, is anything there?' So, then they would say 'okay, go prepare for me, I'm coming, I will pick them up from the garden,' or they will say, 'okay, take it home, I'll come to you to grab it on my way home.' So yeah, that's how mostly we sold them."

Selling produce grown in community garden plots provided newcomers with a small income and provided other newcomers with access to some culturally appropriate produce. Nevertheless, the challenges faced by newcomers in growing culturally appropriate food underscores the important, but inadequate, potential of community gardens to resolve cultural food insecurity and support newcomer settlement. Community gardens can help newcomers build social networks and ties to their adopted communities (Brigham, 2015). However, the precarity and seasonality of community gardens means that more is needed to facilitate cultural food security for newcomers.

Conclusion

This research makes a unique empirical and theoretical contribution to understanding the experiences, meanings, and implications of cultural food security as a tool that may inform future research and structural change. The empirical findings of our research shed light on the experience and insight of newcomers and service providers located in the HRM, Nova Scotia, Canada regarding the meaning, experiences of, barriers to, and strategies for cultural food security. Moreover, this research also expands the edges of cultural food security as a theoretical tool in three ways: 1) by incorporating Aaron Antonovsky's (1987) work on salutogenesis, which highlights newcomers' and service providers' view that culturally appropriate food access is fundamental to health and wellbeing, and to finding a sense of meaning and comprehensibility in one's life; 2) by incorporating the work of occupational therapy scholars who have elaborated occupational (in)justice, which underscores the social and economic meanings of food in the lives of newcomers; and 3) by reaching beyond access to culturally appropriate food to include access to culturally appropriate foodways as an element of cultural food security, as well as occupational justice, among newcomers. Hence, this research strengthens the

conceptual foundation of cultural food security which may inform future research and change-making to support enabling conditions that promote access to culturally appropriate food and foodways. This research also underscores what the small pool of related research has reported—access to culturally appropriate food and foodways, including gardening and growing food, is vital to newcomers' sense of identity and purpose; their connection to their friends and family; and to their sense of belonging within their past and adopted communities, all of which are important salutogenic factors that shape the newcomers' settlement experience and wellbeing (Jean, 2015; Lucas & Li, 2020; Vallianatos & Raine, 2008). Although income precarity remains a key barrier to food security for newcomers, financial constraints are intertwined with additional barriers to accessing culturally appropriate food and foodways. Creating conditions that enable newcomers' access to culturally appropriate foods and foodways may help to redress financial barriers, as well as related barriers to meaningful occupation. Newcomers bring knowledge, skills, and aspirations to pursue various occupational activities, including entrepreneurship, in growing and producing culturally diverse foods. Hence, advancing occupational justice by creating opportunities for newcomers to grow, produce, and access culturally appropriate foods and foodways will enhance newcomers' settlement experience and wellbeing, and is likely to add to the diversity and resilience of local food systems. For example, opportunities for newcomers to grow foods that may be new to the region may support economic and entrepreneurial activity through new food product development, which could supply retail, food service, and hospitality and tourism operators, as well as replace the need for and cost of imported foods with locally grown products.

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to thank Jaclyn MacNeil for her work and support on this project, as well as the participants who made this research possible.

Dr. Meredith Bessey, RD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Applied Human Nutrition at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, NS. Her research program is focussed on weight stigma and weight-focussed interventions, such as bariatric surgery, especially as experienced by women in Canada.

Jennifer Brady is an Associate Professor and Registered Dietitian in Women's and Gender Studies and the School of Nutrition and Dietetics. Her work explores the history of home economics and dietetics, cultural food security, and health profession(al)s' roles in socially just practice and advocacy/activism.

Manfred Egbe (PhD.) is the Director of Research and Planning with the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs, within the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage. With over 15 years of experience bridging academic research and community action, Manfred brings a strong focus on participatory approaches to understanding issues that impact African Nova Scotian and African Descent communities. He is passionate about using research and data to drive meaningful, community-led change. His work is grounded in equity, empowerment, and a deep commitment to making things better for all.

References

Ahmed, S., Castaneda, C., Fortier, A.-M., & Sheller, M. (2003). *Uprootings/regroundings: Questions of home and migration*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Akbari, A. H. (2020). Immigration in Nova Scotia: *Who comes, who stays, who leaves Nova Scotia, and why?* Nova Scotia Office of Immigration. https://www.smu.ca/webfiles/3StayersandLeaversSurveyReportFinalOctober23.pdf

Alakaam, A., & Willyard, A. (2020). Eating habits and dietary acculturation effects among international college students in the United States. *AIMS Public Health*, 7(2), 228–240. https://doi.org/10.3934/publichealth.2020020

Aljaroudi, I., Horton, S., & Hanning, R. (2019). Acculturation and dietary acculturation among Arab Muslim immigrants in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research, 80*(4), 172-178. https://doi.org/10.3148/cjdpr-2019-008

Antonovsky, A. (1987). *Unraveling the mystery of health: How people manage stress and stay well*. Jossey-Bass.

Beagan, B. L., Chapman, G. E., & Power, E. (2018). The visible and invisible occupations of food provisioning in low income families. *Journal of Occupational Science*, *25*(1), 100-111. https://doi.org/10.1080/14427591.2017.1338192

Berry, J. W., Kim, U., Minde, T., & Mok, D. (1987). Comparative studies of acculturative stress. *International Migration Review, 21*(3), 491-511. https://doi.org/10.2307/2546607

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis*. Sage.

Braun-Lewensohn, O., & Sagy, S. (2011). Sense of coherence and hope as explaining stress reactions during missile attacks: Comparing Jewish and Arab adolescents. *Community Mental Health Journal, 47,* 300–310. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-010-9314-4

Braun-Lewensohn, O., Sagy, S., & Roth, G. (2011). Coping strategies as mediators of the relationships between sense of coherence and stress reactions: Israeli adolescents under missile attacks. *Anxiety, Stress and Coping, 24*(3), 327-341. https://doi.org/10.1080/10615806.2010.494329

Brigham, S. (2015). Exploring adult learning spaces for refugee and immigrant learners in Canada through photography. In L. Fraser & R. M. Giralt (Eds.), *It's all adult education: 44th Standing Conference on Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults (SCUTREA)* (pp. 60-67). University of Leeds.

Burgess, D. (2016). Immigrant health in Toronto, Canada: Addressing food insecurity as a social determinant of tuberculosis. *Social Work in Public Health, 31*(7), 617-625. https://doi.org/ 10.1080/19371918.2016.1160349

Dennis, C.-L., Merry, L., & Gagnon, A.J. (2017). Postpartum depression risk factors among recent refugee, asylum-seeking, non-refugee immigrant, and Canadian-born women: Results from a prospective cohort study. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 52*(4), 411-422. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-017-1353-5

Ellery, J., & Ellery, P. (2024). Community as a catalyst for healthier lifestyles. In J. M. Rippe (Ed.), *Lifestyle medicine* (4th ed., pp. 1256-1261). CRC Press.

Government of Canada. (2021). *Canada welcomes the most immigrants in a single year in its history*. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2021/12/canada-welcomes-the-most-immigrants-in-a-single-year-in-its-history.html

Government of Canada. (2022). *Atlantic immigration program*. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/atlantic-immigration.html

Government of Nova Scotia. (2022). *New record for highest number of landed immigrants in a year*. https://news.novascotia.ca/en/2022/02/18/new-record-highest-number-landed-immigrants-year

Gray, J. (2002). Community as place-making: Ram auctions in the Scottish borderlands. In V. Amit (Ed.), *Realizing community: Concepts, social relationships and sentiments* (pp. 38-59). Routledge.

Halifax Food Policy Alliance. (2015). *Food counts: Halifax food assessment.* https://justfoodhalifax.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/FoodCounts-Assessment-April14.pdf

Hartwig, K. A., & Mason, M. (2016). Community gardens for refugee and immigrant communities as a means of health promotion. *Journal of Community Health, 41*, 1153-1159. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10900-016-0195-5

Herens, M., Gabrielli, M., Peters, B., Brouwers, J., & Bosch, D. (2018). Farmers' adaptive strategies in balancing commercial farming and consumption of nutritious foods: Case study of Myanmar. *Sustainability, 10*, 4721. https://doi.org/10.3390/su10124721

Hughes, M. (2019). The social and cultural roles of food for Myanmar refugees in regional Australia: Making place and building networks. *Journal of Sociology, 55*(2), 290-305. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783318781264

Idan, O., Eriksson, M., & Al-Yagon, M. (2022). Generalized resistance resources in the salutogenic model of health. In M. B. Mittelmark, G. F. Bauer, L. Vaandrager, J. M. Pelikan, S. Sagy, M. Eriksson, B. Lindstrom, & C. Meier Magistretti (Eds.), *The handbook of salutogenesis* (pp. 93-106). Springer Nature.

Ikiugu, M. N., Hoyme, A. K., Mueller, B. A., & Reinke, R. R. (2015). Meaningful occupation clarified: Thoughts about the relationship between meaningful and psychologically rewarding occupations. South African Journal of Occupational Therapy, 45(1), 47-50. https://doi.org/10.17159/2310-3833/2015/v45no1a8

Islam, F., Khanlou, N., MacPherson, A., & Tamim, H. (2018). Mental health consultation among Ontario's immigrant populations. *Community Mental Health Journal, 54*, 579-589. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-017-0210-z

Ivany, R., d'Entremont, I., Christmas, D., Fuller, S., & Bragg, J. (2014). *Now or never: Anurgent call to action for Nova Scotians*. The report of the Nova Scotia Commission onbuilding our new economy. https://www.onens.ca/sites/default/files/editor-uploads/now-or-never.pdf

Jean, M. (2015). The role of farming in place-making processes of resettled refugees. *Refugee Survey Quarterly, 34*(3), 46-69. https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdv007

Kim, H., Sefcik, J.S., & Bradway, C. (2017). Characteristics of qualitative descriptive studies: A systematic review. *Research in Nursing & Health, 40*(1), 23-42. https://doi.org/10.1002/nur.21768

Koc, M., & Welsh, J. (2001). Food, foodways and immigrant experience. *Toronto: Centre for Studies in Food Security, 2*, 46–48.

Lane, G., Nisbet, C., & Vatanparast, H. (2019). Dietary habits of newcomer children in Canada. *Public Health Nutrition, 22*(17), 3151-3162. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1368980019001964

Li, T., Fafard St-Germain, A.-A., & Tarasuk, V. (2023). *Household food insecurity in Canada, 2022*. Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). https://proof.utoronto.ca/resource/household-food-insecurity-in-canada-2022/

Lucas, L. (2020). Food, diversity, and cultural identity: How a community garden supports new immigrants and refugees in Winnipeg, Canada. *Contingent Horizons: The York University Student Journal of Anthropology, 6*(1), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.25071/2292-6739.112

Lucas, L., & Li, F. (2020). Growing food, sharing culture at the Rainbow Community Garden in Winnipeg, Canada. *Canadian Food Studies, 7*(2), 72-81. https://doi.org/10.15353/cfs-rcea.v7i2.439

Maganaka, A., & Plaizier, H. (2015). Language skills, profiles, and prospects among international newcomers to Edmonton, Alberta. *Canadian Ethnic Studies, 47*(1), 133-154. https://doi.org/10.1353/ces.2015.0010

Maynard, M., Dean, J., Rodriguez, P. I., Sriranganathan, G., Qutub, M., & Kirkpatrick, S. I. (2018). The experience of food insecurity among immigrants: A scoping review. *Journal of International Migration and Integration, 20*, 375-417. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-018-0613-x

Meigs, A. (1987). Food as a cultural construction. *Food and Foodways, 2*(1), 341-357. https://doi.org/10.1080/07409710.1987.9961926

Minkoff-Zern, L.-A. (2012). Knowing "good food": Immigrant knowledge and the racial politics of farmworker food insecurity. *Antipode, 46*(5), 1190-1204. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.1016

Mittelmark, M. B., Bauer, G. F., Vaandrager, L., Pelikan, J. M., Sagy, S., Eriksson, M., Lindstrom, B., & Meier Magistretti, C. (2022). *The handbook of salutogenesis*. Springer Nature.

Moffat, T., Mohammed, C., & Newbold, K. B. (2017). Cultural dimensions of food insecurity among immigrants and refugees. *Human Organization, 76*(1), 15-27. https://doi.org/10.17730/0018-7259.76.1.15

Mott, S. (2025, May 21). *Halifax urban farm staging comeback after parent organization's closure*. CTV News. https://www.ctvnews.ca/atlantic/nova-scotia/article/halifax-

urban-farm-staging-comeback-after-parent-organizations-closure/

Moquin, R., Diduck, A. P., Sinclair, A. J., & Davidson-Hunt, I. J. (2016). Cultivating community through gardening in Kenora, Ontario. *Canadian Food Studies, 3*(2), 70-103. https://doi.org/10.15353/cfs-rcea.v3i2.167

Nilsson, I., & Townsend, E. (2010). Occupational justice—Bridging theory and practice. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy, 17*(1), 57-63. https://doi.org/10.3109/11038120903287182

Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture & Heritage. (2017). *Nova Scotia's culture action plan: Creativity and community*. https://novascotia.ca/culture/Culture-Action-Plan--English.pdf

Power, E. (2008). Conceptualizing food security for Aboriginal people in Canada. *Canadian*

Journal of Public Health, 99(2), 95-97. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03405452

Quintanilha, M., Mayan, M. J., Jarman, M., & Bell, R. C. (2019). Prevalence and experiences of food insecurity among immigrant women connected to perinatal programs at a community-based organization in Edmonton, Canada. *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care, 15*(2), 121-132. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMHSC-09-2018-0064

Ramburn, T. T., Wu, Y. M., & Kronick, R. (2023). Community gardens as psychosocial interventions for refugees and migrants: A narrative review. *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care, 19*(2), 122-141. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMHSC-09-2022-0095

Satia-Abouta, J., Patterson, R. E., Neuhouser, M. L., & Elder, J. (2002). Dietary acculturation: Applications to nutrition research and dietetics. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association, 102*(8), 1105-1118. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0002-8223(02)90247-6

Satia-Abouta, J. (2010). Dietary acculturation and the nutrition transition: An overview. *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism, 35*(2), 219-23. https://doi.org/10.1139/H10-007

Scultheiss & Davis, (2015). Immigrant workers: Career concerns and barriers. In P. J. Hartung, M. L. Savickas, & W. B. Walsh (Eds.), *APA handbook of career intervention, Vol. 1. Foundations* (pp. 259–277). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/14438-015

Stadnyk, R., Townsend, E., & Wilcock, A. (2009). Occupational justice. In C. H. Christiansen & E. S. Townsend (Eds.), *Introduction to occupation: The art and science of living* (2nd ed., pp. 329–358). Pearson Education.

Statistics Canada. (2017a). *Number and proportion of foreign-born population in Canada, 1871 to 2036*. https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/dai/btd/othervisuals/other006

Statistics Canada. (2017b). *Focus on geography series, 2016 census.* https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Index-eng.cfm

Stelfox, K. B., & Newbold, B. K. (2019). Securing culturally appropriate food for refugee women in Canada: Opportunities for research. In K. B. Newbold & K. Wilson (Eds.), *A research agenda for migration and health* (pp. 107-127). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Stowers, S. L. (2012). Gastronomic nostalgia: Salvadoran immigrants' cravings for their ideal meal. *Ecology of Food and Nutrition, 51*(5), 374–393. https://doi.org/10.1080/03670244.2012.696008

Strunk, C., & Richardson, M. (2019). Cultivating belonging: Refugees, urban gardens, and placemaking in the Midwest, U.S.A. *Social & Cultural Geography, 20*(6), 826-848. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2017.1386323

Tarasuk, V., & Mitchell, A. (2020). *Household food insecurity in Canada, 2017-18*. Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). https://proof.utoronto.ca/resource/household-food-insecurity-in-canada-2017-2018/

Tarraf, D., Sanou, D., & Giroux, I. (2017). Immigration and food insecurity: The Canadian experience—a literature review. In I. Muenstermann (Ed.), *People's movements in the 21st century—Risks, challenges and benefits*. https://doi.org/10.5772/66824

Townsend, E. (2003). Reflections on power and justice in enabling occupation. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy, 70*(2), 74-87. https://doi.org/10.1177/000841740307000203

Townsend, E., & Wilcock, A. A. (2004). Occupational justice and client-centred practice: A dialogue in progress. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy, 71*(2), 75-87. https://doi.org/10.1177/000841740407100203

Vahabi, M., Damba, C., Rocha, C., & Montoya, E. C. (2011). Food insecurity among Latin American recent

immigrants in Toronto. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, 13*, 929-939. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-010-9384-y

Vahabi, M., & Damba, C. (2013). Perceived barriers in accessing food among recent Latin American immigrants in Toronto. *International Journal for Equity in Health, 12*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/1475-9276-12-1

Vallianatos, H., & Raine, K. (2008). Consuming food and constructing identities among Arabic and South Asian immigrant women. *Food, Culture & Society, 11*(3), 355-373. https://doi.org/10.2752/175174408X347900

Vang, Z. M., Sigouin, J., Flenon, A., & Gagnon, A. (2017). Are immigrants healthier than native-born Canadians? A systematic review of the healthy immigrant effect in Canada. *Ethnicity & Health, 22*(3), 209-241. https://doi.org/10.1080/13557858.2016.1246518.

Weigel, M. M., & Armijos, R. X. (2019). Food insecurity, cardiometabolic health, and health care in U.S.-Mexico border immigrant adults: An exploratory study. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, 21*, 1085-1094. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-018-0817-3

Whiteford, G. (2003). When people can't participate: Occupational deprivation. In C. H. Christiansen & E. A. Townsend (Eds.), *Introduction to occupation: The art and science of living* (1st ed., pp. 221-242). Pearson.

Wilkinson, L., Bhattacharyya, P., Bucklaschuk, J., Shen, J., Chowdhury, I. A., & Edkins, T. (2016). Understanding job status decline among newcomers to Canada. *Canadian Ethnic Studies, 48*(3), 5-26. https://doi.org/10.1353/ces.2016.0023

Wilcock, A. A. (2006). *An occupational perspective of health* (2nd ed.). Slack.

Wilcock, A. & Townsend, E. (2000). Occupational terminology interactive dialogue. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 7(2), 84-86. https://doi.org/10.1080/14427591.2000.9686470

Wilson, A., & Renzaho, A. (2015). Intergenerational differences in acculturation experiences, food beliefs and perceived health risks among refugees from the Horn of Africa in Melbourne, Australia. *Public Health Nutrition, 18*(1), 176-188. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1368980013003467

Wolf, L., Ripat, J., Davis, E., Becker, P., & MacSwiggan, J. (2010). Applying an occupational justice framework. *Occupational Therapy Now, 12*(1), 15-17.

Wright, K. E., Lucero, J. E., Ferguson, J. K., Granner, M. L., Devereux, P. G., Pearson, J. L., & Crosbie, E. (2021). The impact that cultural food security has on identity and well-being in the second-generation U.S. American minority college students. *Food Security, 13*, 701-715. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-020-01140-w

Xia, J. (2021). *Food at places: Adaptation through placemaking* [Master's thesis, University of Oregon]. Retrieved from Scholars' Bank.