Understanding Neighbourhood Food Access: Practices and Perspectives of Residents of Scarborough Village, Toronto

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Geography and Planning
University of Toronto

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Abstract

Within food access research, little attention has been given to the perspectives and practices of residents in food insecure neighbourhoods. Taking a people-centred approach and using semi-structured interviews, this thesis explores food access through the day-to-day practices, strategies, challenges, perspectives, and emotions of residents of Scarborough Village, a low-income and food insecure urban neighbourhood in Toronto, Canada. The findings of this research are used to argue that including the voices of those commonly marginalised in the decision-making process of neighbourhood food environments is an important and valuable step towards a more just food system. To include these voices, more urban food access research and action needs to shift its approach from simplistic understandings of food security toward more comprehensive understanding of food access based on the concepts of food justice and food sovereignty. Only by doing so will urban food access research realise the often complex, context-specific needs of those it seeks to assist.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Food is in many ways the very epitome of how day to day choices, or lack thereof, both influence and are influenced by personal and systematic influences. These include peoples’ bodies, beliefs and values, neighbourhoods, local and international communities, and societal norms. In recognition of these complexities there is a growing approach to food research that seeks to understand the food system through the lived experiences of people within it. This approach is referred to as people-centred food research. As implied by the name, a people-centred approach seeks to place individuals at the centre of food research and subsequent food movements and actions. People-centred food research arguably stems from justice as an underlying and central goal within the contemporary food movement. From calls for fair and safe working conditions for agricultural workers (Patel, 2009; Edelman, 2015), to a more localised, democratic control of food provisioning (Greene, 2009; Romer, 2014), to exploring the influence of race and gender on individuals’ ability to access food (Van Esterik, 1998; Algon & Agyeman, 2011), the food movement seeks to challenge perceived injustices. Moreover, there is increasing awareness of the potential for the food movement to help address intersectional injustices and bring new, more, and marginalised people into the broader social justice movement (Romer, 2014). As Allen (2010) argues, justice cannot occur without the input of those most marginalised.

Despite this increasing interest in the relationships between justice and food, food access research at the neighbourhood-level and in urban contexts has tended to focus primarily on qualitative data, spatial analyses, and the correlation between socioeconomic status and food access. This is true within Canada (for example, del Canto et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2016) and other countries (for example: Ball et al., 2009; Pearce et al., 2009). Moreover, research that does utilise qualitative methods does not often include the voices of neighbourhood residents, instead focusing on high-level perspectives such as store managers and health officials (for example, Latham & Moffat, 2007). Arguably, this narrow focus comes as a consequence of approaching the issue primarily through a food security lens. The current body of research undoubtedly contributes greatly to understandings of food access; however, it does not provide a complete picture of neighbourhood food access. Moreover, it results in movement and action that often
fails to meet the needs of the people it seeks to help. As Ayeb-Karlsson et al. (2016) argue, policy and planning must use lessons learned from people. Yet there remains a lack of research exploring the lived experiences, day-to-day strategies, and perspectives of residents living within food insecure neighbourhoods. In other words, there is a lack or limited body of people-centred food research. This research seeks to contribute to this gap and thereby add to the existing dialogue on localised, small-scale food access.

Individual and household food access within marginalised neighbourhoods may be influenced by several factors, making food access a multifaceted and complex issue even at the relatively small neighbourhood scale. Taking a people-centred approach helps to increase understanding of how residents living in a food insecure neighbourhood both utilise and perceive their local food environment. Practices and perceptions include challenges encountered, barriers to food access, and potential improvements to be made. The goal of people-centred research is not to romanticise residents’ as the holders of the one solution or truth, but rather to acknowledge and allow space for their often inconsistent, contradictory, and complex voices. As Dixon (2014) argues, only in including the contextual surroundings and identities of people can we question and begin to see how they may be impeded in their access to good food. Key challenges and perspectives held by residents help to illustrate the need for food access research to diversify from its long-standing approach based on food security towards approaches based on understandings of food justice and food sovereignty, and consequently the need for increased attention to residents’ perspectives and voices. It is argued that food access research would benefit from approaching food access with a justice-oriented approach and a re-focus on place-specific understandings of food access that are based on the lived experiences, needs, and desires of community members.

This first chapter provides a contextual framework for the research, including the research approach taken, key terms, and a brief introduction to the area of research. As well, a literature review of relevant Toronto-based and neighbourhood-level food is provided in order to identify the research gap in which this research takes place and contributes to. Chapter Two, in turn, provides the conceptual framework within which the research is placed. This framework is an understanding of justice developed by Amartya Sen. This chapter argues that despite being increasingly prevalent in the food discourse and, to some extent, rural food access research, a framework of justice remains underutilised in urban food access research and actions. Chapter
Three outlines the research methods used, including the positionality of myself as the research, the methods and processes of data collection and analysis. This chapter furthermore acknowledges constraints of the research and subsequent limitations of the data and results. Chapter Four presents the findings of the research: interview participant demographics, their day-to-day food routines, decision-making factors and strategies. Next, the chapter summarises the discussions around food-related challenges, barriers, incentives, and motivations; highlights specific trends and topics discussed by participants; and outlines the perceived emotions and sentiments expressed by residents. The last chapter places the findings of the research within the context of existing literature, and discusses the applicability of a justice-oriented framework, and the concepts of food justice and food sovereignty in urban food access research.

1.1. Area of Research

It is important to acknowledge what is meant by the terms community and neighbourhood. The term ‘neighbourhood’ refers to a politically constructed geographic area. In reality, intra-neighbourhood differences are often as significant, if not more so, as inter-neighbourhood differences; likewise, areas crossing neighbourhood boundaries often share many demographic similarities. While there are no hard borders around neighbourhoods in Toronto, the construction of neighbourhood borders and neighbourhood identity has real implications for residents. For the purposes of this research, I chose to focus on the area of Scarborough Village neighbourhood as defined and bounded by the City of Toronto, as it provides a focused research area with existing demographic information. ‘Community’ is likewise a constructed understanding; while the term has multiple and contested meanings in geographic research, it most generally refers to a form of social, often spatial, organization centred on common interests and/or a locale (Castree et al., 2016). There exists an ongoing critique of place-based definitions of community. Nevertheless, place-based community plays an important role in discussing neighbourhood-level food access due to the rise of community-led food initiatives and the ongoing emphasis of geographic proximity in food access. However, I acknowledge that residents within the area can show varying levels of identification with the area as a ‘community’.

In 2014, the City of Toronto released the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020. In this strategy, the City identified 31 neighbourhoods as falling below the Neighbourhood Equity Score (NES), indicating neighbourhoods that require additional support in order to provide their
residents with equitable services in comparison to other Toronto neighbourhoods (City of Toronto, 2014a). The NES scores are determined using 15 indicators across five thematic categories of neighbourhood inequality. One of the newly identified neighbourhoods with a low NES score is Scarborough Village. While the neighbourhood has no hard borders with the surrounding areas, it is located between the Canadian National Railway line to the north and Lake Ontario to the south. Scarborough Golf Club Road is the eastern border, and Bellamy Road and Bellamy Ravine Creek form the western border of the neighbourhood. According to the City of Toronto’s Neighbourhood Demographic Estimates, the neighbourhood has a relatively high proportion of low-income residents, and a 5% higher unemployment rate than the City on average. Scarborough Village also has a relatively high proportion of visible minorities; predominantly South Asian, Black, and Filipino. Just over 60% of the residents in the neighbourhood are immigrants, predominantly from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Philippines, Guyana, and India (City of Toronto, 2014b).

One of the 15 indicators used to calculate NES is “access to healthier food stores”, which are defined by Toronto Public Health (2015) as any supermarket, butcher shop, fish shop, some bakeries, or any smaller food store that sells a significant quantity of fresh produce. The healthier food score is calculated by the average number of healthier food stores within a 10-minute walking distance from each residential block in a neighbourhood (City of Toronto, 2014a). The 2014 NES study ranked Scarborough Village’s healthier food score at 2.2, meaning there are on average 2.2 places selling healthier food within 10 minutes walking distance of the residential area (City of Toronto, 2014a). This score does rank Scarborough Village above the point of healthier food equity determined by the City, calculated as a healthier food score of 1.3 (City of Toronto, 2014a). Nevertheless, Scarborough Village is considered at high risk of food insecurity because of its low healthier food score and its relatively high proportion of low-income and unemployed residents, reliance on social assistance, and social marginalisation of its residents (City of Toronto, 2014b).

1.2. Food Discourses

Broadly, this research is situated within the expansive literature on food security. Most commonly, food security is used according to its definition by the World Health Organisation in 1996, which stated that food security occurs “when all people at all times have access to
sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life” (World Health Organisation, 2015). Food insecurity is hence defined as the absence of these conditions. The common definition of food security is used today in numerous official capacities, including by the Government of Canada in domestic and international food security policies (Government of Canada, 2014) and by international bodies such as the World Health Organisation (2016) and Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (2016). The traditional perspective of food security has focused on the regional, national, and global-scale (Pinstrup-Andersen, 2009; Lang & Barling, 2012), and is often viewed as the 3 A’s of food security: accessibility, affordability, and availability (Lang & Barling 2012; World Health Organisation, 2016). As Ramp (2014) argues, the language and discourse of food security research, activism, and policy shaped and continues to shape the problem of and responses to food insecurity (p. 118). This traditional perspective of food security emphasises limited food availability and affordability (Pinstrup-Anderson, 2009), and therefore focuses on production-based solutions such as agricultural technological innovation and supply-chain efficiency management (Lang & Barling, 2012; Jarosz, 2014).

Food access is the central focus of this research, and is often perceived as a requisite of food security. A traditional perspective of food access echoes the emphasis on availability as heard in traditional food security discussions, and thus focuses primarily on physical proximity of nutritious food within a given area (Breyer & Voss-Andreae, 2013). This perspective has resulted in a wide array of academic literature on the phenomenon of “food deserts”, commonly described as areas or neighbourhoods with limited food retail, especially full-service grocery stores and often an overabundance of unhealthy food options (Raja et al., 2008; Widener & Shannon, 2014). More recently, however, numerous research approaches and findings are contradicting or complicating the understanding of food deserts, challenging the limited definition of a food desert and critiquing assumptions of the effect of living in a food desert (Widener & Shannon, 2014; Tach & Amorim, 2015). Emerging from this new discourse are the ideas of “food mirages”, (Breyer & Voss-Andreae, 2013), “food swamps”, (Ver-Ploeg et al., 2009), and “food brownfields” (Osorio et al., 2013). A contemporary understanding of food access must thus examine the interrelationship of social and individual factors and the local food environment.
Two social food movements are of key note for this research: food justice and food sovereignty. Food justice calls for consumer rights to healthy and appropriate food, and social and environmental justice along all stages of food production and consumption (Lang, 1996). This movement largely arose in recognition that food inequities disproportionately affect marginalised groups, including racialised, gendered, and lower-income communities (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010). Related to food justice is the now global La Via Campesina, or International Peasant’s Movement, and the rise of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty is defined as the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems (Food Secure Canada, 2016). Although there are nuances within the food movement, generally work around food justice, sovereignty, and security are differentiated by the scale of change: food justice envisions systems change, while food security is focused on the community and individual scale.

This research also explores decision-making and coping strategies of residents in food insecure neighbourhoods. This focus is based on the understanding of coping strategies as “specific efforts, both behavioural and psychological, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events” (Taylor, 1998). In food security research, coping strategies more specifically refer to behaviours, activities, and decision-making processes used by individuals or households to obtain food (Petchers et al, 1989; Tawodzera, 2012). While most coping strategy research looks at the decision-making of individuals in the context of short-term, and often extreme, situations, this research chooses to examine decision-making strategies under two assumptions: first, that living within a food insecure neighbourhood results in stress for individuals and households; and second, that in order to be effective, local food access work needs to understand coping strategies behind neighbourhood residents’ day-to-day food choices. Decision-making strategies can reveal otherwise overlooked values, concerns, and practices that influence residents’ food access. What’s more, day-to-day choice and the decision-making process of choice is fundamentally linked to an understanding of justice. Moving towards a just food system arguably means a move towards greater individual choice around food. At the same time, Lang (2009) argues that that choice must be understood within the realities of contextual and existing inequalities and imbalances of power in the contemporary food system. This argument provides another rationale for people-centred food research.
1.3. Food Access in Toronto

There exists a growing body of literature examining the complexity of food insecurity in Toronto. Recent data indicates that food insecurity affects two-thirds of families in a sample of Toronto’s high-poverty neighbourhoods (Kirkpatrick & Tarasuk, 2010). Furthermore, there has been a geographic shift in food insecurity over time. The 2015 annual report of the Daily Bread Food Bank, a significant charitable food provider in Toronto, has raised concerns over the shift of high food insecurity from Toronto’s inner core to its suburban areas: Etobicoke, North York, and Scarborough. While the inner core of Toronto has seen a 16% decrease in food bank usage over the past seven years, suburban areas have seen a 45% increase (Daily Bread Food Bank, 2015). Echoing past concerns over the geographic shift of poverty to suburban Toronto (Hulchanski, 2006), Daily Bread Food Bank attributes the increase in suburban food insecurity largely to rising housing costs in the inner core, thus shifting the proportion of low-income and newly arrived residents to suburban Toronto.

Within the Canadian literature, there exists an array of research examining food access. In Montreal, Canada, Bertrand et al. (2008) found that access to a vehicle significantly increased residents’ access to fresh produce. Paez et al. (2010) make use of the literature on accessibility to produce individualised multivariate, spatially expanded models of distance travelled in examining food deserts in Montreal in order to similarly highlight the effect of vehicle ownership for accessibility to food services. Smoyer-Tomic et al. (2006) use minimum distance and coverage methods to determine supermarket accessibility within the city of Edmonton, Canada, and found that, on average, high-need neighbourhoods had better accessibility to supermarkets than the rest of the city; however, six high-need neighbourhoods were identified as having poor supermarket accessibility. Also in Edmonton, Wang et al. (2014) use spatial analysis to argue that, to an extent, community gardens and farmers’ markets can improve food accessibility for inner-suburban neighbourhoods. Contradicting research, however, has emerged from Calgary, Canada, where researchers found that farmers’ markets have a limited overall alleviating effects on healthy food access for neighbourhoods identified as food deserts (Lu & Qui, 2015).

Canadian literature on urban food environments often focus on the relationship between the food environment and the health of its residents, primarily risk of overweight or obesity. In Toronto, Canada, Larsen et al. (2015) examined the relationship between children’s BMI and the retail
options in the local food environment, and found that increased density of healthier food outlets and supermarkets decreased risk of overweight or obesity. A study in Edmonton similarly found greater access to fast-food restaurants in high unemployment, low-income, and renting neighbourhoods (Hemphill et al., 2008). Challenges this relationship, however, an examination of the relationship between food retail options and neighbourhood deprivation in southern Ontario found that, in Toronto, unhealthy food retail options were in fact more plentiful in less deprived neighbourhoods (Polsky et al., 2014). Moreover, a systematic review of 71 studies assessing the relationship between obesity to the food environment in the US and Canada found “limited evidence” for an association between the local food environment and obesity, albeit with a positive relationship between low-income children’s risk of obesity and fast food availability (Cobb et al., 2015).

The majority of research found on the Canadian, urban food access and food environments remain focused on the proximity of food to residents of an area. This remains largely true despite conflicting findings on the relative importance of physical proximity (Dubowitz et al., 2014). Rather, new studies argue that physical proximity to food, whether from a retail, charitable, or community source, does not necessarily equate to either food access or security. For example, a study by Kirkpatrick and Tarasuk (2010) found that proximity to food retail stores or community food programmes did not mitigate rates of food insecurity. Other factors, including affordability and quality of food, are increasingly understood as major influences of food access (Tach & Amorim, 2015). Dachner et al. (2010) found that 83% of surveyed low-income families in Toronto lived within two kilometres of a discount supermarket; thus, they argue, the primary barrier to food purchasing is economic, not geographic proximity. Similar findings reveal low usage of charitable food services, with Loopstra and Tarasuk (2012) finding that while 75% of low-income families in Toronto reported some level of food insecurity, less than 25% of them used a food bank. This is consistent with a study examining food bank and community food programming usage across Canada between 1997 and 2007, which argued these services fail to reach food insecure households (McIntyre, 2012). This is notably concerning as increasing rates of food bank usage in suburban Toronto, therefore, also potentially indicate significant numbers of food insecure families who choose not to, or cannot, use food banks. Reasons for not using a food bank are numerous, including physical and information barriers, perceptions of not having reached an adequate level of need, unsuitable food in terms of appropriateness and quality, and
feelings of degradation over using charitable food banks (Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2012). Social factors similarly influence food access decision-making. For example, LaChance et al. (2014) found that peer pressure was a significant factor in adolescents’ food choices in low-income Toronto neighbourhoods. Polsky et al. (2014) conducted an analysis of neighbourhoods across Toronto, Brampton, Mississauga, and Hamilton, and found that the proportion of unhealthy food outlets was generally unrelated to the level of neighbourhood deprivation; rather, more deprived neighbourhoods had higher proximity to all kinds of food outlets. Interestingly, this study found that more well-off neighbourhoods in Toronto had higher numbers of unhealthy food retail outlets, suggesting a more complex relationship between neighbourhood wealth and the neighbourhood food environment.

Another group of relevant literature focuses on qualitative data gathered from specific groups of Toronto residents. For example, Gaetz et al. (2006) interviewed over 250 homeless youth in Toronto in order to highlight their experiences of food insecurity and their perspectives on existing solutions. This study found that homeless youth are not satisfied with the existing food relief programming available, nor are their daily food requirements being met by the existing programming. While not specifically focused on food, a Toronto Public Health research initiative (2011) gave voice to the experiences of low-income parents in Toronto and their specific challenges and coping strategies in accessing adequate food for themselves and their children. While many of the challenges experienced by parents are shared by others, parents also face unique or increased challenges. For example, many parents spoke of the challenge of inadequate transportation to and from grocery stores or food banks being exasperated when also having to take children along. Other challenges highlighted by parents include the cost of healthy food such as fresh fruit, vegetables, milk, yoghurt, and meat; the cost of formula; lacking options for culturally specific foods; and the poor quality of food available at food banks. Many of these same challenges were highlighted by Iman et al. (2015) in their comprehensive assessment of food access experiences of the vulnerable residents in two Toronto neighbourhoods: Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park. Through questionnaires and focus groups conducted with at targeted establishments, such as food banks and community centres, the study highlights the perspectives of residents, their lived experiences and practiced coping mechanisms, as well as their insight into potential improvements to food access.
The existing literature shows increasing food insecurity in Toronto’s suburban neighbourhoods and low usage rates of community and charitable food services. Yet there are only a few studies within the Canadian context examining how community members make use of their food environment, including coping strategies of residents in low-income, food insecure, and suburban neighbourhoods. These few include the previously mentioned assessments done in Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park (Iman et al., 2015). Coping strategies of food insecure households have been relatively unexplored within the Canadian, urban context. Exceptions include Michalski (2003), who found household coping strategies across Canada include going hungry once a month, having children go without sufficient food, doing without resources such as telephones and bus fare, forgoing recreation, and relying on social networks such as neighbourhood or family members for food and financial assistance. Likewise, Tam et al. (2014) found reliance on social networks to be a significant coping strategy for Aboriginal and Canadian children facing food insecurity. McIntyre (2012) argues that coping strategies are increasingly internalised by households as food insecurity is perceived as a private matter. In the United States, researchers similarly have found lacking attention paid to the micro-level food access decision-making in low-income neighbourhoods. In one attempt to fill this gap, Tach & Amorim (2015) assessed food-related coping strategies of the urban poor and found strategies included searching for sale items, bulk purchases, and making multiple trips to multiple stores in order to find the best quality for the lowest price.

There is thus a strong rationale for people-centred food research in suburban Toronto, including, but not limited to the Scarborough Village neighbourhood. This research could help to fill the gap of residents’ perspectives and experiences in Canadian food access research, and provides the theoretical and case study framework for continuing and expanding the approach in future research initiatives. To begin, the following chapter provides an outline and argument for a conceptual framework of justice in food access research.

1.4. Research Approach

As it is further developed and discussed in Chapter Two, the framework for this research is an understanding of justice as developed by Amartya Sen. Building from this framework, the research engages a people-centred approach. A people-centred approach to research is a growing interest within both the fields of health (for example, Sturmberg & Njoroge, 2017) and
development (for example, Høgh-Jensen et al., 2010). Within both sectors, this approach stems from increasing understanding that traditional approaches and practices are producing limited knowledge that often fails to meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries. People-centred research is offered as an alternative that may produce more contextually useful knowledge and outcomes with the goal of serving people (Sheikh & Gibson, 2014; Høgh-Jensen et al., 2010). For this research, a people-centred approach pulls from the existing literature and practices of action-based and feminist approaches. Defined by Reason and Bradbury (2001), action-based research pursues practical solutions to issues raised by individuals and their communities. This research approach tests knowledge in action and by the community involved, thus ideally increasing the validity of knowledge produced (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003). A feminist approach is used here to mean an approach that includes a concern for justice, the cultural construction of difference, a focus on relationality, attention to power dynamics, and the intersection of other forms of identity (Nagar et al., 2002; Coddington, 2015). Within food research, a feminist approach offers a justice-oriented lens that sees gendered roles and work as socially constructed and seeks to facilitate empowerment (Hovorka, 2013). This approach also engages the post-structural concept of fluid, contingent, and multiple truths (Moss, 2012). In other words, each story of experience collected through this research is viewed as a perspective of truth rather than an “exhaustive statement” of the local food environment (Slocum, 2008).

People-centred research refocus the construction of knowledge on the research subjects themselves, respecting people’s knowledge and understanding of issues in their communities (Reinharz, 1992; Moss, 2012). As Ayeb-Karlsson et al. (2016) argue, it is fundamental to understand peoples’ behaviours and experiences in order to help increase community resilience. This research therefore uses the perspectives and experience of community members as a source of knowledge. People-centred research respects the complexity of local situations and for knowledge from everyday life (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003). As McCall (2005) similarly argues, stories of experience can reveal the connections between ideas and reality, while Smith (1997) argues that knowledge told from experience is “local knowledge of everyday life” (Smith, 1997). Experience as a source of knowledge is thus appropriate for this research, as it seeks to understand the everyday reality of use and perception of the neighbourhood food environment. This methodology views the research subjects as participants in the research process and connects the research results to community-oriented goals (Reinharz, 1992).
To understand food as a manifestation of (in)justice, one must use a definition of food that goes beyond its biomedical understanding as the “materials that [are] ingested to produce energy, stimulate growth, and maintain life” (Macer, 1997), and even beyond food’s role as the “universal requirement” across all life forms (Mepham, 1996, p.104). Food is, of course, a necessity for human life, and this necessity differentiates food from other consumer commodities. Anthony Wilson (1993) argues that food is unlike other consumer commodities because it is an intimate process and product; “…in the process of [consuming food and drink] we take them inside our very bodies, a fact that gives them special significance denied such “externally” consumed commodities” (p. 4). For most people, however, the meaning of food goes beyond a natural requirement to sustain life. As Martin (2010) argues, humans make choices about what to eat, and the question of ‘what ought I to eat’ is radically different from basic hunger or the experience of hunger. Rather it is an “invitation for reflection and deliberation” (p. 284). This reflection extends the role of food well beyond a basic necessity, and food often plays a central role for individuals in terms of how identity is constructed, moral and ethical commitments determined, and self-image perceived (Chadwick, 2000). Food can also be understood as a bridging factor between individual identity and broader society. Levkoe (2005) argues that food is a “powerful metaphor” for how people organise and relate to society, as well as an “entry point” for individuals to enter into larger societal debates and discourses.

Justice is one such discourse in which food provides a rallying point of shared concern and action. Participation in such dialogues and action can encourage strong civic virtues, critical perspectives, and strengthen participants’ confidence, political efficacy, knowledge, and skills in engaging in democratic social change (Levkoe, 2005, p. 4). Eden (2012) similarly argues that food is a strong focus for instilling social change practices because food is “immediately tangible and relevant to [people’s] daily lives”, and could be used as a vehicle for moving discussion to more abstract goals. Indeed, food has been centred or used to initiate many philosophical, moral, and ethical dialogues.
2.1. Understanding Justice

A search for justice is arguably at the centre of most, if not all, food initiatives, ranging from programmes to eliminate hunger and malnutrition, to the quest for a democratic global food system. Justice is similarly at the centre of this people-centred food research of Scarborough Village, both as the normative rationale for conducting the research and as the conceptual framework in which this research lies. In laying out this framework, this chapter first discusses seminal discussions of justice by Amartya Sen, specifically drawing upon Sen’s argument for a capabilities approach to measuring justice. Next, I show how justice plays an increasingly central role in the food discourse by outlining the changing dialogue on food security, food justice, and food sovereignty. I argue that despite the changing dialogue, practices of understanding urban food access remain rooted in a limited approach based on the narrow framing of food security. A framework of justice and an approach based on food justice and food sovereignty instead offers an alternative, nuanced, and people-centred approach to understanding urban food access.

Amartya Sen argues that since a perfectly just society is not likely to exist any time soon, nor is it possible to transition straightaway from an unjust to a just society, it is necessary to create a practical and usable theory of justice that can move society from being ‘unjust’ to ‘less unjust’ (Osmani, 2010). Sen argues that the justness of a society should be judged by the capabilities and freedoms that people are able to enjoy, not the commodities or resources they can command (Osmani, 2010). Rejecting the claim that freedom should be valued independently of the values and preferences of the person whose freedom is being assessed, Sen’s concept of justice focuses on individual agency, and respects individual choice in determining what is meaningful and valuable (Spring, 2011).

Sen’s capabilities approach has been justly critiqued for upholding an individualistic approach to justice. Dean (2009) argues that this detrimentally prioritises individual liberty over social solidarity, and distances the individual from the context of power relations, social, and environmental constraints in which they live. In food discourse, this is not a critique unique to Sen’s capabilities approach. According to Ceva & Bonotti (2015), the majority of existing normative literature on food production, distribution, and consumption has focused on the individual morality of food choices, and there has been little discussion of the role of institutions in achieving food-related justice. Returning to justice, Nancy Fraser (2012) argues that such
focus on individualisation over structural forces can also result in victim-blaming discourses when injustices are perceived. A focus on individualism and self-responsibility thereby deters collective action, and results in further silencing and marginalisation of those harmed by injustice (Fraser, 2012). They go on to argue that approaches to justice must move beyond Sen’s capabilities approach and its focus on distributive justice to also include questions of recognition, notably recognition of differences such as ethnicity, race, and gender (Fraser, 2012).

Conversely, Robeyns (2003) rebuttals that Sen’s capabilities approach to justice adequately includes issues of distribution and recognition. Social justice, according to this interpretation, is judged in terms of the real opportunities people have— including the social, environmental, and personal factors influencing their opportunities. Measuring justice, or working towards justice, does not assume the impact of contextual and structural factors of difference; thus, Sen’s capabilities approach incorporates aspects of both distributive justice and recognition of differences (Robeyns, 2003). A further interpretation of Sen (2009) is given by Barnett (2011) to argue that justice can be understood as practices enacted in response to on-the-ground injustices. Indeed, the context and practices of residents in the neighbourhood is central to the understanding of justice taken for this research. While this research takes a people-centred approach, this should not be confused with an approach limited or constructed around the decision-making of individuals. Rather, this research seeks to understand the individual decision-making and food access practices of residents as they occur within the institutional and environmental context of Scarborough Village neighbourhood. As Williams (2017) argues, seeking justice is context-specific, and often “messy and contingent” on the surrounding political, social, and physical environment.

2.2. Seeking Justice in the Food Literature

This section outlines the increasing prevalence of justice-oriented discussions within the food literature. The rise of justice within food security and the encompassed food access discourses are first outlined, followed by the food justice and food sovereignty movements. Yet urban research has underutilised justice in its approach to analysing and understanding food access. This section thus serves to illustrate the usefulness and applicability of a justice-oriented framework in urban food access research and action.
2.2.1. Food Security

Food insecurity can be perceived as injustice from Sen’s capabilities approach, as a state of food insecurity is by definition being in a state of reduced capabilities to choose what, when, and how to eat or feed a household. Yet the traditional framing of food security as a predominantly supply-side issue has been strongly critiqued for ignoring or underplaying the complexity of the food system (Lang & Barling, 2012). Critics have emphasised that the food system is not a single designed entity, but rather a collection of interacting parts; food security policy and activism thus needs to take a broader perspective in seeking to understand causes of insecurity. The traditional perspective has furthermore been critiqued for relying on relatively crude and static understandings of global food security and reinforcing the dominant institutionalised agricultural practices (Tomlinson, 2013); for ignoring social justice and equity concerns (Ramp, 2014; Lang & Barling, 2012); and for avoiding discussion of the social control of the food system (Patel, 2009). The traditional perspective has also been critiqued and subsequently shifted by feminist studies for obscuring gender inequities within the food system, arguing that globally, women are disproportionately affected by hunger and food insecurity (Deepak, 2014; Phillips, 2009). This is problematic because as Deepak (2014) argues, it is “impossible to have food security if the people affected…don’t have a say about [it]”.

The Centre for Studies in Food Security (2012) furthermore positions food security as not just a supply or management issue, but one of food utilisation and nutrition. This understanding emphasises individual agency and food acceptability, seeing groups not as “population aggregates to be supplied with or given access to foodstuffs, but subjects with collective as well as individual rights to judge acceptability” (Ramp, 2014, p. 121). Similarly, the Canadian national non-profit, Food Secure Canada, seeks to increase food security beyond a traditional understanding of food security, but instead through three goals: zero hunger, a sustainable food system, and health and safe food (Food Secure Canada, 2016). This shift in understanding of food security is notably relevant for the scope of this research because of its consequential attention to how current food systems influence contextual urban food security (Heynen et al., 2012; Alkon & Agyeman, 2011). Many critiques and subsequent shifts in food security dialogue also echo Sen’s focus on individual autonomy as a foundation of justice, in that they emphasise individuals’ right to choose what foods, and what means of food production and consumption, are meaningful and valuable (Spring, 2011). The term food security can thus be seen as having a
fluid and changing definition depending on the geographic and political-economic context in which it is being applied (Jarosz, 2014; Mooney & Hunt, 2009).

At the same time as many critics have called for a broader and more complex understanding of food security, there has been a simultaneous shift in attention to food security as it occurs at the individual, household, and community-level (Heynen et al., 2012), due to the increasing understanding that food adequacy at a regional scale does not necessarily ensure adequacy at the individual or household level (Charlebois et al., 2014). This shift, amongst other things, thus called for additions to the definition of food security to include individual food adequacy and agency in food provision (Rocha, 2008); the contextual cultural acceptability of food, local cultural diversity of food (Kyeyune & Turner, 2016); and subjective perceptions of well-being (Anderson & Cook, 1999; Heynen et al., 2012). Contemporary understandings of food security are thus rooted in a search for justice, and share with the food justice movement a perspective of food rights as something to be taken by people, rather than something “done for them or on their behalf” (Ramp, 2014, p. 121).

### 2.2.2. Food Justice and Sovereignty

The aims of food justice are to scrutinise power and resource control, unequal participation within the food system, and call for alternative (often) grassroots solutions to food concerns (Allen, 2010). The food justice movement thus reflects a concept of justice in its concern for the least advantaged, or most marginalised, individuals in society and for localised autonomy and democratic choice in how the food system operates. Food justice advocacy occurs at multiple scales of the food system, from broader critiques of the dominant global food system and calls for alternatives, down to regional, household, or individual narratives of food producers and consumers (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010; Dixon, 2014). A push for localised food justice narratives is also arguably pragmatic for food activism, in that stories can used to elicit solidarity or support because “ideally…food justice narratives elicit sympathetic responses to individuals and their plights. By emotionally engaging the audience, such stories may facilitate an understanding about what matters ethically” (Dixon, 2014, p.183). Moreover, stories of food justice or injustice can draw attention to similarities and differences between contexts, groups, or people facing food insecurity (Dixon, 2014).
Related to food justice is the now global La Via Campesina, or International Peasant’s Movement, and the rise of food sovereignty. Similar to food justice, La Via Campesina has highlighted on a global scale the power relationships and imbalances in food systems (Clendenning et al., 2015). This movement argues that the cause of food insecurity is not underutilised food production, but rather food inequity, specifically in a lack of entitlement and inequitable distribution of food (Deepak, 2014). Food sovereignty today is rooted in Sen’s capabilities approach to justice as it calls for the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture systems, and to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods (Via Campesina, 2016; Food Secure Canada, 2016).

It is important to acknowledge that food justice and food sovereignty are not heterogeneous movements, nor are they immune to critique or differences. Most simply, Gottlieb and Joshi (2010) point out that “[p]utting together the two words food and justice does not by itself…necessarily create a clear path to advocating for changes to the food system”. Most significantly for this research, there have been calls for food justice to be understood in more participatory terms, recognising that increased participation of social, political, and economically marginalised groups in food advocacy as being central to a more just food system. As Loo (2014) argues, in order “[t]o properly diagnose and address disparities in food systems, those concerned with food justice must examine the participative inequalities that are the basis of … injustices” (p.788), as justice requires that all relevant parties are included in deciding how benefits and burdens are shared (p. 789). This reflects a difference within food justice between those focused on distributive justice, namely a focus on equalising distribution of food to ensure all individuals have access to healthy, safe, and nutritious food, and those concerned with participative justice, or how differences in power between individuals and groups lead to distributional inequalities (Schlosberg, 2004). Sen’s concepts of justice are used for this research to focus on participative justice. By giving space to residents’ voices, this research seeks to increase their decision-making power and autonomy over their neighbourhood food environment to strive towards increased justice.

2.3. Practicing a Theory of Justice

As shown in the literature review in Chapter 1, the dominant approach taken within food access research and actions remain grounded in a classic understanding of food security despite both
increased recognition of justice in the food security literature and the rising prevalence of food justice and food sovereignty dialogues. These classic approaches often focus solely on geographic proximity, and therefore risk missing the array of financial, temporal, social, and personal factors influencing food access. This is not to undermine the importance of assessing physical food access within urban food environments. However, the existing literature tends to overpower the voices of residents within food insecure neighbourhoods. As Dubowitz et al. (2014) argue, “…relatively little is known about how individuals, and especially individuals who live in food deserts, interact with and may be affected by their food environment” (p. 2220). The idea of justice articulated by Amartya Sen is used in this research to provide a framework to food access within the neighbourhood of Scarborough Village. This approach seeks to understand how nuanced social, economic, and political factors at the individual, community, and societal level affect food access. This research also makes use of an understanding of justice as occurring only when justice is met for the least advantaged in society, both within the City of Toronto by focusing on the relatively disadvantaged neighbourhood of Scarborough Village and by maintaining a focus on those least advantaged within the neighbourhood. This research thus seeks to contribute to the literature on urban food access by making use of a conceptual framework for understanding food access that is grounded in a justice-oriented framework and the concepts of food justice and food sovereignty. For this research, a concept of justice is used that draws upon Sen’s capabilities approach. This will first be done by focusing on the level of justness of a society as being measured by the least-advantaged individuals or groups as representative of the area. The research area of Scarborough Village is already disadvantaged relative to other neighbourhoods in Toronto, according to the City of Toronto socio-demographic statistics (City of Toronto, 2014). Within the neighbourhood, however, there are social and economic differences between households and individuals. Here, recruitment decision-making focuses the research on the well-being and capabilities of those with the least advantages within the neighbourhood. The level of neighbourhood justness will be measured by Sen’s focus on the capacity of individual capabilities to access and enjoy food of their choosing. Currently, the concepts of food justice and food sovereignty remain underutilised in the sector of urban food access. Yet food justice and food sovereignty offer alternative approaches that moves the dialogue of urban food access beyond physical proximity of food access to a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of food access decision-making (Mares & Pena, 2011). This approach can highlight the agency and resourcefulness of residents in food insecure
neighbourhoods, identify community food assets to be utilised in food security work, and give community members space to voice their food needs (Tach & Amorim, 2015).
Chapter 3
Methods: Understanding Food Access from Residents’ Perspectives and Practices

This chapter outlines the research methods used and based on the research goal of increasing understanding of the lived experiences of the neighbourhood food environment held by residents of Scarborough Village. In approaching this research question, a framework of justice was used to build a people-centred approach. The research methods outlined here thus reflect this framework and approach. To begin, this chapter outlines the positionality of the researcher to situate the research. This chapter next outlines the methods and process of data collection: the chosen research area, personal observation, and interview recruitment and practice. Next, the method of data analysis is outlined, including transcription, coding, and mapping processes. Throughout, this chapter includes acknowledgement of research constraints, including those of chosen methods and processes, and thereby acknowledges the limitations of the data collected.

3.1. Positionality of the Researcher

An argument has long been made by feminist researchers for acknowledging the position of the researcher within the broader socio-political context of the research (Kaufman, 2014). With the premise that all research occurs within a broader socio-political context, acknowledging the researcher’s positionality and perspectives importantly draws attention to the narratives, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the research questions, goals, methods, and outcomes (Harding, 2004; Kaufman, 2014). This first section attempts to acknowledge a number of the positions and contexts from which the research was conducted. Thus, this chapter is written in the first person so as to acknowledge that this research was designed and conducted by myself, and so was shaped by my personal positionality, perspectives, limitations, and abilities.

First, I draw on feminist literature, practices, and approaches to research because of my own identity as a feminist scholar. For one, I attempt to position myself simultaneously as a researcher and a participant in the research (Brown et al., 2013). In other words, I saw the interview process not as an extraction of information from participants, but rather as a collaborative conversation in which me as the researcher and the participant created the information to be used for the research. In practice, I attempted to use my own anecdotes and perspectives as means of furthering the conversation with participants, while still maintaining the
focus on the experiences and perspectives of neighbourhood residents. Both the recognised involvement of myself as the researcher, and the focus on residents’ perspectives was chosen in part to challenge the idea that only unbiased, objective information is valuable (Moss, 2012). However, I recognise that, in practice, even refocusing research on the participants’ voices does not level the power dynamics inherent in research. It is important to thus recognise that many of my own privileges influenced the research, namely my privilege as a University of Toronto graduate student; as white; as someone from a middle-class background; and as a researcher. These identities are important to acknowledge because privileges can obscure problematic assumptions being made through the research process (McCorkel and Myers, 2003). Furthermore, these aspects of my identity likely influenced which residents were willing to engage in discussion with me about the research process and whom I was able to interview.

The Scarborough Village neighbourhood has a high proportion of immigrant households: 60% of the neighbourhood, according to the latest City of Toronto (2011) report. Many of these individuals do not speak English as their native or home language, 47% and 45% respectively (City of Toronto, 2011). I only speak English, and so this limited who I was able to speak with about the research goals and subsequent recruitment. Furthermore, the recruitment posters used were only printed in English, which likely influenced the response rate and diversity of participants. To exemplify this restriction, there were several occurrences during door-to-door recruitment in which I encountered residents who did not speak English and so I was unable to communicate with. Although hiring a translator would have resolved this barrier to participation, I chose not to do so because it would have been impractical to have a translator during door-to-door visits; the range of languages spoken in Scarborough Village and the financial cost of hiring a translator constrained this approach as a solution to the language barrier.

In addition, I entered the research process from an outsider position, not having previously lived, worked, or otherwise been involved in the Scarborough Village neighbourhood. This positioning potentially affected my research in a number of ways. For one, I am not personally connected to any store, food programme, or organisation in the neighbourhood. As a result, participants may have felt more comfortable discussing their perspectives on the local food environment, as there may be less concern over repercussions for criticising a local organisation. I felt this to be true in several encounters with both participants and residents who chose not to participate; people often wanted to know where I was coming from and what my intentions for the research were. Some
individuals may have chosen not to participate, or may not have felt comfortable discussing certain aspects of their experience in the neighbourhood, because I am unfamiliar to them and to the space. This was one rationale for including snowball sampling as a strategy to recruit interview participants, as snowball sampling has the benefit of potentially reaching individuals I would otherwise not be able to reach through other recruitment methods (Descombe, 2010). As will be discussed later, however, attempts to use snowball sampling methods were very limited and so were insignificant in attempting to reduce participation limitations. Furthermore, my positioning as a University of Toronto researcher likely influenced which residents choose to engage in discussion. Although I was not explicitly aware of such dynamics, there may have been occurrences in which residents were not comfortable engaging in University research for a number of reasons.

Lastly, I entered the research process with a number of personal values and assumptions that must be acknowledged. For one, I am politically supportive of what is often referred to as the “alternative food movement”: work involving social and environmental justice within the food movement. As such, I personally support food programmes such as farmers’ markets, community gardens, and locally-owned stores. While remaining politically neutral is arguably not an achievable nor particularly desirable goal as a researcher (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000), I do acknowledge this personal political bias and recognise that it influenced my perspectives of residents’ stories of food access and food provision. One anecdote to exemplify this influence is as follows: one participant frequently mentioned that they never learned to cook and so felt very limited in their food preparation and subsequent eating habits. During the interview and in later coding of the interview, I felt a sense of pity for the participant because of my own high value in cooking and food knowledge. I thus coded “lack of knowledge” as a constraint or barrier, and coded the emotion of the participant as “sad”. However, another interpretation could potentially read the participant as desiring foods they felt comfortable preparing, and valuing easy meal preparation. Although I felt justified in my interpretation of the participants’ answers because they also stated they “sometimes think [they] should have more variety” (participant 1), it is important to acknowledge the role my own perspectives had on conducting and analysing the research. At the same time, conducting this research has itself influenced my own understanding and perspectives of the value of food and food qualities, as well as definitions of food access at the neighbourhood level.
3.2. Using Reflexivity

As Brown *et al.* (2013) state, the researcher is generally included in the research process and outcome through their own experiences, thoughts, and feelings about the research. The goal of reflexivity in research is to acknowledge and examine the researchers’ own position and perspectives and their influences on the research (Gullion, 2016). Thus, I attempted to practice reflexivity by documenting my own fluid understanding of the research topic and context throughout the research process (Koboyashi, 2009). I did so by keeping notes of my own perspectives and reactions throughout the research process alongside other field notes, personal observation, and interview notes. This process was done in order to keep track and make explicit ongoing changes in the interview process, my interpretations of interview contexts and situations, and observations of power dynamics between myself as a researcher and the participants. In practice, this process primarily aided my memory and understanding of the changes in the data collection process over time, between research participants, and my own perspectives on what potential key themes or narratives may be. Maintaining a documented narrative of my own thoughts during the research displayed my changing understanding, and contextualised the shifts in how the research was conducted. For example, an initial goal of the research was to create collaborative maps with research participants. My own notes during the first several interviews document how, in practice, this method was not overly useful or practical for participants. I therefore made the decision to instead personally map the collective interview responses’ after they had been conducted.

3.3. Area of study

I chose to conduct this research in Toronto, Ontario for a number of reasons. First, I have lived in Toronto for 10 years and was interested in conducting my research on an area I have personal connections with. As well, Toronto is a city well-known for its cultural diversity (City of Toronto, 2016), which is an important factor in understanding demands of urban food security. Likewise, it is a growing and expanding city in terms of population, size, and international recognition (City of Toronto, 2016). I chose furthermore to focus my research on the suburban areas of Toronto specifically because these areas are experiencing population growth and diversity shifts in ways contextually different from the downtown core of Toronto. The Daily Bread Food Bank (2015) annual report on hunger and food insecurity in Toronto highlighted a
significant geographic shift in food insecurity, noting that suburban areas have seen a 45% increase in food bank usage since 2008 while the inner core of Toronto experienced a 16% decrease over the same time period. Yet, while food insecurity is arguably shifting to suburban Toronto, much of the existing food access and food environment research conducted on the City of Toronto has focused on the downtown core and immediate surrounding area. I therefore sought to expand the scope of existing Toronto-based research by focusing on a suburban area of the city.

For the scope of a Masters’ thesis, I chose to scale my research to one neighbourhood in the suburban areas of the City of Toronto. Scarborough Village was selected after comparing several suburban neighbourhoods and ranking them based on accessibility for myself as the researcher. As seen in Figure 1, the neighbourhood of Scarborough Village is located in the south-east area of the City of Toronto. Shown in Figure 2, the neighbourhood is bordered by the Canadian National Railway line to the north, Lake Ontario to the south, Scarborough Golf Club Road to the east, and Bellamy Road and Bellamy Ravine Creek to the west. The main roads running through the neighbourhood are Eglinton Road, running east-west; Markham Road, running north-south; and Kingston Road, running parallel to Lake Ontario.

**Figure 1: Location of Scarborough Village, Toronto**

*Source: Neighbourhood Demographic Estimates, Scarborough Village. City of Toronto: 2011*
Moreover, Scarborough Village was chosen due to its current ranking of food security and well-being according to the City of Toronto and discussed in Chapter 1 (City of Toronto, 2014). Scarborough Village’s healthier food score is ranked as 2.2, meaning there are on average 2.2 places selling healthier food within 10 minutes walking distance of the residential area (City of Toronto, 2014a). While this score does rank Scarborough Village above the point of healthier food equity determined by the City, calculated as a healthier food score of 1.3 (City of Toronto, 2014a), the neighbourhood is considered at high risk of food insecurity because of its low healthier food score and its relatively high proportion of low-income and unemployed residents, reliance on social assistance, and social marginalisation of its residents (City of Toronto, 2014b).

According to the City of Toronto’s Neighbourhood Demographic Estimates, the neighbourhood has a relatively high proportion of low-income residents, and a 5% higher unemployment rate than the City on average. Scarborough Village also has a relatively high proportion of visible minorities; predominantly South Asian, Black, and Filipino. Just over 60% of the residents in the neighbourhood are immigrants, predominantly from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Philippines, Guyana, and India (City of Toronto, 2011).

3.4. Personal Observation

Personal observation of the neighbourhood and its food environment was the first step of my data collection. The goal of this method was to better understand the location, proximity, diversity, and physically and financial accessibility of various food resources, or as Denscombe...
(2010, p.208) describes it, “holistic observation” of the neighbourhood food environment. This was important as I was previously unfamiliar with the neighbourhood of Scarborough Village. I therefore first spent several days visiting the neighbourhood, walking around, and observing the demographics, the physical and social geographic differences amongst the neighbourhood, and locating central and community spaces. During this time, I also observed and documented the different prepared foods and grocery options around the neighbourhood, including what food was offered, the demographic information of the clientele, and my own subjective perspectives of the different spaces. This personal observation was used to form my own perspectives of the neighbourhood and the food environment in order to relate and discuss these topics with interview participants.

3.5. Interview Recruitment

Semi-structured interviews with residents of the neighbourhood was the primary method of data collection. Thirty interviews in total were conducted between May and August, 2016. Participants for the research were recruited through two methods: posters advertising the research goals and need for participants, and door-to-door recruitment. In May 2016, I put research recruitment posters (shown in Appendix A) with tear-away information slips in public and community hubs located in Scarborough Village, including the Scarborough Village Recreation Centre, Catholic Cross-Cultural Services, Polycultural Immigrant & Community Services, and on public notice boards in bus shelters, grocery stores, and major intersections. This recruitment method was very successful with eight participants recruited through the posters. The vast majority of responses came from one location- the Scarborough Village Recreation Centre. Only one response was from a poster sighting from a different location, and specifically came from Catholic Cross-Cultural Services. All of the responses from poster sightings were successfully scheduled for an interview at a later day and time and at a location of the participants’ choosing. One interview was conducted at the participants’ home, one was conducted at a nearby coffee shop, one was conducted at a different community organisation, and the remaining four were conducted at the site of the poster viewing.

I began door-to-door recruitment for research participants after the incoming calls from individuals who had seen the recruitment posters stopped, approximately two weeks after the initial posters were put up. Overall, door-to-door recruitment was highly successful. However, a
number of constraints did influence this method. Firstly, from previous work experience in door-to-door charity canvassing, I was aware of the time commitment involved in door-to-door recruitment due to people being out of the home, otherwise engaged, or uninterested in participating. As Scarborough Village is located approximately 90 minutes from my own residence, I was also under personal constraints in the days I was able to spend in the neighbourhood. Because of these constraints, I therefore chose to visit every house on selected streets rather than randomise the selection of houses visited. This was done in order to increase the likelihood of finding willing and able research participants. While this choice did increase the speed at which I was able to conduct and complete the necessary number of interviews for my research, I acknowledge it also limited the geographic range of participants involved the research as not every street in the neighbourhood was represented.

A conscious choice was made early in the data collection period to focus on the northern half of the Scarborough Village neighbourhood, or the area north of Kingston Road. Through personal observation of the neighbourhood, and discussions in several of the initial interviews, it became apparent that there exists a notable difference between the north and south of the neighbourhood. South of Kingston Road is primarily quiet residential streets with large, expansive housing, whereas north of Kingston Road is primarily residential streets with moderate houses and apartment buildings, as well as the larger shopping plazas and busier intersections. While the well-being of residents living both north and south of Kingston Road should not be assumed due to housing size, initial interviews with residents did reveal a perceived difference in income and employment between the two areas of the neighbourhood, with those living south of Kingston Road perceived to be wealthier, upper-class compared to a mix of middle- and lower-class north of Kingston Road. I therefore chose to interview those living north of Kingston Road. This decision stems from my conceptual framework of justice in which a focus on the well-being and capabilities of those with the least advantages is used to measure justness, in this case within the Scarborough Village neighbourhood (Reisch, 2002). This goal, however, was also limited by my choice in recruitment strategy because the choice to recruit primarily through door-to-door visits restricted the research participation to those living in houses. In other words, the voices and perspectives of residents living in the many apartment buildings in the neighbourhood was limited to a few participants recruited from posters. Again, the well-being and income of residents cannot be presumed from their housing situation; indeed, the residents recruited
through door-to-door visits displayed a range of income levels. However, the low representation of those living in apartment buildings is a notable limitation of this research. While the goal of the research was to focus on the least-advantaged in the neighbourhood, it would be more accurate to describe the final participants as a mix of least-advantaged and moderately-advantaged.

While conducting door-to-door visits, I left small flyers (shown in Appendix B) advertising the research and need for participants at houses with no answer and with almost all individuals who did answer the door but were unable at that moment to commit to an interview at the current time or a later date. This was the least successful recruitment tactic used, as I only received one inquiry about participating from an individual who received the flyer in their mailbox. This low rate of return was perhaps due to people perceiving the recruitment flyer as junk mail, whereas the recruitment posters were perceived as more legitimate because of their location on public notice boards. Nevertheless, door-to-door recruitment proved to be the most effective method of recruitment. Over half (a total of 21) of the final participants were recruited through door-to-door visits. All of these interviews were conducted inside or outside of participants’ homes.

My final recruitment technique was the snowball method, in which several participants were asked to refer other potential participants either to me directly or by sharing my information and the research goals with others. While almost all participants showed enthusiasm and a positive response when asked to do so, this method had limited success in recruiting new participants. Most often, the individuals referred to me did not respond to my communication, or were uninterested or unable to participate. Despite many participants telling me they would or had told others about my research, only one participant was recruited through word-of-mouth from a previous participant. This interview was conducted at a coffee shop located in the neighbourhood.

3.6. The Interview Process

Before beginning the interviews, I made sure that participants were told the research goals, process, and potential uses for the research. I either read the consent form, shown in Appendix C, to participants, or gave it to participants to read themselves. After this, participants were asked to sign their consent to participating in the research or were asked for verbal consent. At the same time, I asked participants if they would be comfortable and consent to audio recording of the
interview, and explained that the audio file would be used only for transcription purposes and deleted immediately after. Signed or verbal consent was given before starting the recording. The majority of interviews were audio recorded, with only five interview participants declining the audio record option. Third, participants were asked to fill in the personal information sheet, shown in Appendix D. Participants were told that filling in this sheet was entirely optional, and they were free to answer only the questions they wished to. Only one participant chose not to fill in any of the information, while twelve of the participants left one or two of the sections unanswered.

Initially, I had planned to conduct interviews that would last approximately 60-90 minutes in length, including the introductory explanation of the research goals, participant consent, and collection of relevant personal information. This time commitment was advertised on the recruitment posters that were displayed around the Scarborough Village area and on the majority of recruitment flyers handed out door-to-door. In practice, however, the interview length ranged from 40 minutes to 90 minutes, with the majority of interviews lasting approximately 45-60 minutes including the introductions. While there existed a range of interview lengths and depths amongst all recruitment techniques, on average the interviews with participants recruited through door-to-door visits were shorter than interviews with participants recruited from posters. There was also a smaller difference between door-to-door interviews that were conducted immediately at the time of the visit compared to those scheduled for a later day and time. This result was unsurprising as those who participated immediately had not planned for the interview and so were, on average, less willing to commit 60-90 minutes compared to those who scheduled a later interview and therefore allocated the 60-90 minutes.

Although having such a range in interview lengths was not ideal for the research process, I allowed for fluctuations in timing because of the semi-structured interview technique being used and because the people-centred approach with which this research was conducted emphasised the participants’ experience and perspectives as the source of knowledge. I therefore did not wish to overtly control the interview or pressure participants for more information than they were willingly giving. However, I did attempt to get a depth of information from each interview through various follow-up questions, comments, and personal anecdotes or comparisons. This technique was not used to control the interview process but rather to expand the depth of information obtained in each interview. The extent to which I probed for further information
varied across interviews depending on my own subjective perspectives of how comfortable the participant was during the interview process and questions, potential for response biases such as seeking to appease me as the researcher, and the amount of time the participant had agreed to commit.

Acknowledging and embracing that the interview is a subjective process, I approached my interviews as semi-structured conversations with participants in which personal stories, anecdotes, and discussions were encouraged as long as they broadly related to the research topic. This choice in approach had both positive and limiting implications for the research results. Allowing the participants to guide the interview process allowed for their voices— including both practices and opinions— to stand as the primary source of knowledge in this research. At the same time, this choice in approach occasionally limited the breadth and/or depth of information collected from each interview as I allowed for less detailed responses to some questions depending on time constraints, subjective interpretations of the responses, and subjective interpretations of the participants’ main interests. For example, a small number of participants did not wish to talk in detail about the options for prepared foods in the neighbourhood— many of these interviews instead discussed at length other topics, such as food safety or food-related health implications.

3.7. Transcribing the Data

As previously mentioned, five interview participants declined the audio recording option. For these five interviews, as detailed as possible notes were hand-written throughout the interview using the interview question sheet as a guide. These notes were later transcribed into Microsoft Word documents. For the remaining audio recorded interviews, the process of transcription occurred throughout the data collection period. Audio recordings were transcribed into Microsoft Word documents. I chose to transcribe the interviews close to verbatim, with only small edits being made. For example, I chose not to transcribe all filler words used by participants unless I deemed the pauses or hesitations as important to the meaning conveyed. The majority of the audio recordings were transcribed within 1-2 weeks of the interview, with the longest delay between the initial interview and later transcription being 3 weeks. All audio recordings and hand-written notes were transcribed into Word documents by mid-August.
3.8. Coding the Data

Before beginning coding, I followed Esterberg’s (2002) advice to re-immmerse myself in the data by reading the transcripts as a complete story rather than phrase by phrase as would occur during the coding process. For earlier interviews, four months had passed since the interview had been conducted and transcribed. Re-reading all the interview transcripts not only allowed for re-immersion into the research as a whole, but also brought back experiential memory of the data collection process. These memories played an important role in how I understood and subsequently coded the data. For the data analysis process, I chose to make use of QDA Miner Lite—a computer-assisted analysis program. I chose to use this program as it allowed for greater efficiency both in coding the data and in the iterative process of subsequently editing and modifying the codes and categories used to better understand the data.

For the analysis of my data, I chose to use a form of both grounded theory and narrative analysis; in practice, this meant relying on the data collection process and data collected as the basis for developing codes in order to depict stories of how the interview participants’ make use of and perceive their food environment (Denscombe, 2010, p.280). The initial codes used were therefore induced from key words, phrases, and concepts taken from the data itself (Denscombe, 2010, p.283). The first round of coding focused primarily both what was being stated by interview participants in terms of their routines, opinions, and perspectives, as well as interpretation of their emotions and sentiments during the interview process and discussion derived from field notes and memory of the interviews. Coding was therefore not an objective exercise, but rather a practice of what Schiellerup’s (2010) calls “sense making”: a balance of interpretation and analysis. For example, a narrative analysis approach uses subjective interpretations of words and stories to develop understanding of the implied meaning behind words, phrases, and perceived emotions (Denscombe, 2010, p.280). Second, potential themes and concepts had already begun to emerge through the process of data collection and interview transcription. These potential themes and concepts were therefore looked for during the first round of coding. Grounded theory allows for this as these potential themes and concepts still arose from the data collected and the process of collection.

Once the 30 interviews had been coded, an iterative process of merging, re-defining, deleting, and shifting the codes began. Appendix E illustrates the changes made to the coding list and
definitions over time. Changes were made to the coding list for a number of reasons. First, code merges were made in order to conglomerate similar codes under more usable umbrella terms and definitions. This was done both in order to reduce the number of codes to a practical quantity, and in order to modify the code list into broader trends and patterns rather than more specific concepts. For example, codes “comfort”, “transparency”, and “routine” were merged into one code because they all described a broader trend: that participants’ desired feeling at ease with their food choices and experiences. Merges were made both by merging whole coded sets together, or as re-coding data under several alternative codes. Several rounds of refining the coded data followed, before beginning to write the findings section of the research. Subsequent rounds of changes were also made during the findings writing process as gaps, inconsistencies, and opportunities for refinement became more apparent. For example, when writing the findings, it became clear that coping strategies had not been adequately explored with the existing codes, and so a new code set was created specifically for food coping strategies and more general food procurement strategies used by participants. A small number of codes were simply deleted, primarily because they were deemed too specific and not reflective of larger trends across the participant group. For example, codes were deleted when the data within the code was only reflective of three or fewer participants and was not deemed important to a larger trend. Appendix F shows the final code list and definitions used for the research findings and discussion.

3.9. Mapping the Data

Following the first round of coding, a second round of coding was done in order to geographically analyse the data. Each interview was coded for the range of locations discussed or mentioned by the participants as sources of food- both in terms of grocery items and eating out options. This was done in order to better visualise the geographic range of food options used by the interview participants, as well as to highlight any key geographic areas or locations used or, just as importantly, not used by the interview participants. An online mapping program was then used to map out the various locations named by participants. These maps are shown in the findings chapter (Chapter Four). Part of this mapping process involved online searches for more accurate names or locations of places mentioned by participants- for example, many participants simply stated major intersections when asked for location, so more accurate addresses were found through online searches and comparison. Two maps were created to show the data. One
was created to show the locations of grocery stores, food banks, and markets mentioned by participants. This map also included any general area descriptions, such as “downtown Toronto”. A second map was created to show the geographic locations and range of eating out options discussed by the interview participants. Again, this process involved some online searches and comparison to specify locations and places, and also included general area descriptions. While care was taken to match participants’ descriptions of stores and location with online data, it should be acknowledged that there exists the possibility of error in marking exact location, notably when general descriptions of a place, not exact name, were mentioned by participants’.

Not shown on either the grocery or eating out map are the locations named by participants without further information on location. In addition to the geographic range, the maps created also show the number of participants who use each location noted through the use of numeric markers. Each marker indicates how many participants use each location.

### 3.10. Writing Up

Understanding research analysis and writing up as “making sense” (Schiellerup, 2010) of the research data allowed me to begin the process of writing up while remaining open to ongoing additions, edits, and changes to the data coding. In fact, the process of turning the interview data and codes into a meaningful narrative allowed me to see where further modifications and additions to the data coding were necessary in order to show the narrative trends. The following two chapters respectively outline the research findings and results, and discuss these narrative trends within the broader urban and neighbourhood food access literature.
Chapter 4
Usage and Understandings of Scarborough Village’s Food Environment

This study set out to explore the practices, perceptions, and opinions of the neighbourhood food environment held by residents of Scarborough Village. With an overarching framework of justice-oriented research, the goals of the study were to better understand how residents of a food insecure neighbourhood make use of and perceive their food environment. This includes the day-to-day practices of obtaining food, challenges encountered, and potential improvements to be made to the neighbourhood. To do so, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 residents of Scarborough Village. This chapter outlines the findings of these interviews, supplemented by personal observation of the neighbourhood, and post-interview mapping of locations discussed in the interviews.

First, this section outlines the demographics of the interview participants and illustrates the participants’ representation of Scarborough Village through comparisons with the City of Toronto (2011) neighbourhood demographics. Next, in order to better understand the day-to-day practices of residents of Scarborough Village, the frequency and geographic range of the stores, markets, and food banks visited by participants for groceries is outlined and illustrated, followed by the same for eating out locations discussed. To move beyond geographic data, an outline is then given of decision-making factors and strategies used by participants to meet their food needs. Third, this chapter summarises the participants’ discussions relating to challenges, barriers, and frustrations experienced in and around getting food; this is followed by a summary of positive incentives, motivations, and sources of satisfaction discussed. The fourth section of the chapter outlines specific trends and topics discussed by interview participants: dietary needs and health; pricing and the value of food; and transportation. Finally, an outline is given of sentiments and emotions discussed or implied through the interview process, as well as suggestions for potential improvements to the food environment.

4.1. Demographics of participants

Within social research, it is important to know the demographic information of the research participants and how representative they are of the population of interest more broadly - in this case, of the Scarborough Village community (Connelly, 2013). In addition, demographic information can bring attention to similarities or differences within the research participant
group, as well as between this study and other research (Hammer, 2011). Thus, the following section will outline the demographics of the research participants and of Scarborough Village more broadly.

In total, 30 interviews were conducted with residents of the Scarborough Village neighbourhood or immediate surrounding area. The resulting array of participants display a diverse range in terms of age, ethnicity and country of origin, employment status, and income as summarised in Appendix A and as follows: from the 30 interview participants, 21 identified as female and eight identified as male, while one participant left the question unanswered. When asked to identify their age, three participants chose not to answer. Of the 27 participants who did respond, ages ranged from 21 to 74, with just over half of participants aged 50-69 years old. Of the remaining participants, two were aged between 20-29 and two between 70-79, while three participants were aged 30-39 and three between 40 and 49 years old. In terms of residency status, 21 of the participants’ identified themselves as Canadian citizens, four identified as permanent residents, one identified as a refugee, and four participants chose not to answer. The majority of participants did not identify as being originally from Canada, and responses when asked for their country of origins reflected a geographically diverse range. When these responses were grouped into geographic regions, eleven participants were born in Canada, four were from South Asia, four from the Philippines, one from the Caribbean, three from West Africa, and four from Europe. Three participants chose not to answer this question. When asked to identify their race and/or ethnicity, eight participants chose not to answer; three identified as white Canadians; seven identified as white Europeans; one identified as black; three identified as black Africans; three identified as Filipino or Malay; three identified as Sri Lankan, Tamil, or Bengali; and two identified as Chinese. Finally, participants were asked for their employment status and annual incomes. Ten participants identified as working full-time; seven identified as working part-time, casual, or freelance; two identified as unemployed; eight as retired; and three chose not to answer. Almost half of participants (twelve) chose not to identify their annual income, but the remaining 18 displayed a range of income levels between >$20,000/year and <$60,000/year, with close to equal numbers of participants in each income range respectively.
4.2. Participant Demographics vs. Neighbourhood Demographics

Overall, the demographics of the research participants were fairly reflective of the neighbourhood demographics as reported by the City of Toronto in 2011. As shown in Figures 3 and 4, an exception to this was the disproportional representation of female participants in the research (70%) in comparison to the City of Toronto (2011) statistics for the Scarborough Village neighbourhood: 51%. This may reflect gendered differences including gendered work roles that disproportionately place household work, including food provision, on women (McIntosh & Zey, 1989).

Second, there was a disproportional representation of those aged 50-69 (57%) within the research participants, when compared to the City of Toronto (2011) statistics in which this age group is just 15% of the total neighbourhood population. As shown in Figure 5, the representation of the other age groups- 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, and 70-79- all more closely reflect the City of Toronto (2011) statistics. The high representation of those aged between 50 and 69 years is unsurprising, however, given the data collection methods. For one, poster recruitment was done in areas primarily visited by older populations- the Scarborough Village Recreation Centre, for example.
offers numerous activities specifically for community members aged 55 and older (City of Toronto, 2016). As well, the majority of door-to-door calls took place during working and school hours, when younger demographics were more likely to be out of the house.

Direct comparisons between the research participants’ ethnic background, illustrated in Figure 6, and the Scarborough Village population, as shown in Figure 7, is constrained by differences in identifying labels used, demographics reported, and grouping of ethnicities. For example, the City of Toronto (2011) only reports the top-5 ethnic origins in Scarborough Village, which does not include many of the countries of origin identified by the research participants. The City of Toronto (2011) data also does not include demographics for the proportion of white residents, and groups residents who identify as “black” under one category regardless of ethnic background. Despite these differences in reporting demographic information, what comparison is possible shows that the ethnic backgrounds of the research participants correlate closely to that of the Scarborough Village neighbourhood as a whole. Of the 30 participants, 37% identify as being born in Canada, compared to 41% of the neighbourhood as reported by the City of Toronto (2011). Furthermore, 13% identify as being from South Asia, compared to 18% reported by the
City of Toronto (2011); and 13% identify as being from the Philippines, compared to 10% (City of Toronto, 2011).

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**Figure 6: Participant Country of Origin**

*n=30*

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**Figure 7: Top-5 Ethnic Origins**

*Scarborough Village, 2011*

*n=16,609*
The self-identified ethnicity or race of participants was also fairly reflective of the neighbourhood demographics, albeit acknowledging that almost one-third of participants chose not to identify their race or ethnicity. Nevertheless, comparisons can be made to the reporting of ethnic minorities in Scarborough Village (City of Toronto, 2011), as illustrated by Figures 8 and 9. Overall, 13% of the participants identified as black, compared to 29% of the Scarborough Village neighbourhood overall. South Asians are most underrepresented, as they make up 52% of the neighbourhood, but only 10% of the research participants. Chinese residents are slightly overrepresented, making up 7% of the 22 participants but 4% of the neighbourhood. Filipinos are accurately represented, making up both 10% of the research participants and the neighbourhood overall.

Figure 8: Participant Ethnicity/Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity/Race</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Asian</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asian</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=30
Only two participants (6%) in the research identified as unemployed; however, this percentage increases to 9% if the eight participants who identified as retired are removed from the participant “labour force”. This more closely mirrors the 14% unemployment rate in Scarborough Village as identified by the City of Toronto (2011). To compare the reported income of participants to the overall neighbourhood statistics, the 12 participants who chose not to identify their annual income can be removed from the data. Although this is inconsistent with other comparisons previously made, this allows more accurate reflection of the income range of participants who chose to disclose their annual incomes. When this is done, the representation of income levels of participants very closely mirrors those reported in the City of Toronto (2011) demographic information, as shown in Figure 10. The higher proportion of lower and middle income in comparison to the neighbourhood demographics is a result of the research conceptual framework and subsequent recruitment methods. In order to do so, poster recruitment was done primarily in locations more likely to be frequented by lower- and middle-income residents, and
door-to-door recruitment was done in primarily the lower- and middle-class areas of the Scarborough Village neighbourhood.

As a key component of this research was to better understand the day-to-day practices of residents in Scarborough Village, the following section gives an overview of the geographic range and frequency of locations visited by participants for groceries and for eating out. A more detailed discussion is given in Chapter 5 of the implications of the following information on where and how often participants get food, and how it can help to illustrate and ground the day-to-day influence of challenges and incentives discussed by participants.
Figure 11: Grocery Stores, Markets, and Food Banks Visited by Participants
4.3. Stores, Markets, and Food Banks

Overall, 72 different places were discussed by participants as a place they would go to or had been for groceries. These places ranged from specifically named grocery stores, food banks, or markets, to more generalised geographic areas or descriptions of place-type. Descriptions of place type named by participants were “African shops” (participant 21), Hungarian and Polish shops (participant 8; 15), “the health food store” (participant 26), “something from wherever” Asian stores (participant 16; 22; 24). Similarly, a number of stores were named without specifying which location. These responses are therefore not included on the geographic map of responses, but included FV Foods (participant 11), Food Basics (participant 2; 16; 14), FreshCo (participant 8; 16), No Frills (participant 2; 6; 8; 11; 15; 16; 23; 24; 30), T&T (participant 14), and Walmart (participant 6; 27). (participant 13), “Chinese grocery” (participant 2; 11), downtown area (participant 6; 13), and st-

A wide range of places to get groceries were discussed by participants in terms of geographic location and place type. Figure 1 displays the geographic range of places discussed by participants, as well as more detailed maps of the main cluster of places and the Scarborough Village neighbourhood. The number on each flagged point indicates the number of participants who named the location as a place they visited. Participants named locations as far ranging as Mississauga to the west, Markham to the north, and Pickering to the east. The largest cluster of locations named, however, were located between Victoria Park Avenue, Morningside Avenue, and Ellesmere Road to the north. 34 different locations were named that fall within this area. Two smaller but still significant clusters of locations are also worth noting: one cluster- made of seven different locations- was located between downtown Toronto and Greenwood Avenue, representing the downtown and east-side areas of Toronto. The second cluster- with six different locations- was located around Markham City, between Markham Road and the 404 Highway north of Steeles Avenue. Within the Scarborough Village neighbourhood, as defined geographically by the City of Toronto (2011), seven locations for groceries were named by participants. Compared to data collected through personal observation and mapping of the neighbourhood, this includes most, but not all, of the stores selling grocery items.

Metro was by far the most named grocery store by participants, with 26 out of 30 participants naming Metro as somewhere they get groceries from. Both the Walmart located in the
neighbourhood and the No Frills located just north of the neighbourhood were the second most frequented location, with 15 participants saying they sometimes or often got groceries from each location. These numbers may underrepresent the actual number of participants using those stores, as nine participants mentioned shopping at No Frills but not specify a location, while two participants mentioned shopping at Walmart but did not specify the location. These responses may or may not have been referring to the specific No Frills and Walmart locations most frequently mentioned by participants. The third most frequented location to get groceries was Skyland, located north-east of the Scarborough Village neighbourhood, with ten participants mentioning this as a location for grocery shopping. 18 locations were named by two to seven participants each; these locations ranged from specific stores or locations, such as Top Foods (participant 10; 14; 19; 23), to more general descriptions or unspecified locations of specific stores, such as Hungarian and Polish stores in Mississauga (participant 8; 15) or East-Asian stores (participant 16; 21; 22; 24). Finally, 49 locations were mentioned by only one participant. With the exception of three general descriptions of store type- “the health food store” (participant 26), “African shops” (participant 21), and “something from wherever, whatever area I’m in” (participant 13)- the majority of these individual cases were named as specific locations such as Evergreen Brickworks Farmers’ Market (participant 4).

Only two participants said they made use of food banks in the neighbourhood, and both of these participants expressed that food banks were only an occasional supplement to their regular grocery shopping practices (rather than their main or relied upon source of groceries). Other non-grocery store locations included several farmers’ markets, speciality food stores, and one community garden. All of these were also discussed as occasional, supplementary sources of food rather than a main or relied upon location.

4.4. Eating Out

A total of 70 different locations were named by participants as locations they go to or had been to eat out, referring to purchasing and consuming any pre-made food. These included restaurants, cafes, takeout, as well as pre-made foods bought from grocery stores that are eaten out such as prepared salads and deli items. Similar to the grocery options named by participants, the eating out options named ranged from specific locations to more general descriptions of food type or area. General mentions of geographic areas that participants visited to eat out included
downtown Toronto (participant 3; 4; 9; 15; 23; 26), the Danforth and Greektown (participant 8; 30), Kensington Market (participant 12), the Beaches (participant 3), Oakville (participant 12), Roncesvalles (participant 12), and Whitby (participant 9). While general areas were included on the map of participant eating out locations, there were six eating out descriptions named that were not included on the map because the location was not specified. These included pizza (participant 1; 6; 9; 10; 14; 19; 25), Chinese restaurants (participant 7; 10; 13; 17; 21; 22), Indian restaurants (participant 13; 21), Vietnamese restaurants (participant 6), West-Indian restaurants (participant 7; 17), and Wendy’s (participant 12).

As illustrated in Figure 12, the geographic range of responses for where participants eat outside the house ranged widely, from Oakville to the west, Whitby to the east, and the 401 Express highway to the north. Figure 10 shows a closer look at the main cluster of locations, followed by the Scarborough Village neighbourhood. Again, the number on each flagged point indicates the number of participants who named each location as a place they visited. Similar to the responses for where participants got groceries, the vast majority of responses were located between Pharmacy Avenue to the west, the 401 Express to the north, and Meadowvale Road to the east. Within the boundaries of Scarborough Village, 17 different locations were named. There are notable clusters of locations named by participants along major roads, including Eglinton Avenue, Lawrence Avenue, and Ellesmere Road. It should be noted that there exists room for error because of the interpretative nature of map-making, especially given that not all places were discussed with specific locations. Deductions of the exact location given the conversation context was occasionally used to locate some places on the visual map. Having said this, several responses are not visualised on the map because no description or context of location was given—for example, when participants described the type of food they ate without specifying from where.

Of specific locations voiced by participants, McDonalds was the most frequently mentioned place visited by participants as a location to get food, with fifteen of the participants saying they often or occasionally visited McDonalds. Tim Hortons was the second most frequented eating out option, with twelve participants naming it as somewhere they often or occasionally went. Pizza Pizza was the third most frequently mentioned, with ten mentions. This number may underrepresent the number of participants who visited Pizza Pizza, as another seven participants mentioned pizza more generally as a food that they often or occasionally ate. Swiss Chalet was
Figure 12: Eating Out – Locations Visited by Participants
the fourth most frequently mentioned specific location, with eight participants saying they occasionally visited or got takeout from there. Overall, however, Chinese food was the most frequently named eating out option used by the participants- 24 of the 30 participants mentioned that they got Chinese food occasionally or often, either generally or from specifically named restaurants. Eight participants mentioned West-Indian or Caribbean food as a takeout food they ate, while seven participants mentioned Indian food. Buying prepared, ready-to-eat foods from grocery stores was mentioned by five participants, with the specific grocery stores mentioned being M&Ms (participant 1), Metro (participant 1; 12), Superstore (participant 27), and Top Foods (participant 10).

It was commonly expressed by interview participants that they don’t perceive themselves as eating out very often. When asked for an approximation of how often they ate out, the answers ranged from “maybe once a year” (participant 20) to “I’d say I eat [out] everyday” (participant 27). Interestingly, many of the participants first expressed that they “rarely eat out” (participant 24), “don’t really eat out much” (participant 9), or “just prefer to not eat out” (participant 4). The range of what participants perceived as rarely eating out varied from “just once a year maybe” (participant 19), “2-3 times a month” (participant 11), “maybe once a month” (participant 21), “maybe once a week” (participant 9), and finally to “once a week” (participant 10).

4.5. Decision-Making and Coping Strategies

Beyond insight into the geographic range and frequency of the food practices of residents of Scarborough Village, this research sought to better understand the motivations and perceptions influencing residents’ food access. Coping strategies, broadly referring to behaviours, activities, and decision-making processes used by individuals or households to obtain food (Devine et al., 2009), help to reveal both the day-to-day practices of residents and the motivations and influences affecting their food choices. A number of strategies were discussed or implied by participants throughout the interview process. The following section outlines these strategies, illustrated through quotes from participant interviews.

One common strategy used by participants was travelling outside of Scarborough Village in order to meet their food needs and desires. This is shown in the wide geographic range of locations discussed by participants and illustrated above, and further exemplified by the number of participants who expressed sentiments such as, “when I want to eat, usually I’ll drive. Like for
dinner. I’ll drive out of here” (participant 27), or more bluntly “[I] don’t go shopping in Scarborough Village” (participant 4). Of the 30 participants, half of them specifically discussed their willingness to travel further to get the food desired- either for specific food items, the quality of food desired, or for the price of food. However, the number of participants who frequently travelled outside the neighbourhood of Scarborough Village specifically to get groceries is much higher than the number who discussed their willingness to travel. Given the neighbourhood boundaries as defined by the City of Toronto (2011), only two participants did not travel outside of the neighbourhood for groceries, and even those two participants mentioned shopping for the occasional or speciality item at stores outside of the neighbourhood.

A second strategy commonly used was to visit more than one location in order to meet their food needs and desires, predominantly around grocery shopping. All but one of the 30 participants discussed going to multiple places in order to meet their main grocery needs, often in addition to occasionally shopping at various other speciality stores. For example, every week participant 25 goes shopping at “No Frills or [the Indian grocery]. We move from both places. We have to.” Rationales for doing so included visiting more than one place in one trip in order to get all the food desired and/or at the quality desired; visiting different places on different trips depending on proximity or timing; and visiting different places on different trips depending on the sales or promotions offered.

Frequency and size of grocery trips was another strategy used by participants to meet their grocery needs. On the one hand, seventeen of the participants discussed purchasing smaller amounts of groceries more frequently. This rationale for this shopping strategy ranged from reducing costs, getting the quality of food desired, and as a necessity due to transportation constraints. To reduce costs, both in terms of immediate price and food waste produced, some participants stated that they, for example, “now go grocery shopping based on what I need for the day or the next day” (participant 6). Some participants also discussed purchasing smaller amounts in order to or as a result of wanting certain qualities, such as organic or fresh food. For example, participant 3 stated that because they were eating a lot of fresh fruit and vegetables, they “would go [grocery shopping] a couple of times a week”. Finally, this strategy was used by participants because of transportation constraints; for example, one participant explained that because they don’t have a car, they “are more limited. So [we] only… buy those that we can carry in one trip” (participant 11). Conversely, eleven of the 30 participants said they preferred to
purchase larger quantities of groceries less frequently. Interestingly, the rationales for doing so also included reducing costs, and as a necessity due to transportation constraints. For example, buying “in bulk...when they have sales” (participant 17), while participant 4 said that they “do big shopping about twice a month.... because I don’t have a car anymore, and so I don’t want to be making a whole bunch of trips”. Other rationales for large, infrequent shopping trips included general convenience of having food available, and seasonal considerations; for example, “I would buy, stock up, a lot of canned food so I wouldn’t have to go out as often, walk on that snow and ice” (participant 20).

Cost-saving strategies were a common theme amongst the 30 interview participants. Seventeen of the 21 participants who talked about sales, promotions, and reward programs specifically discussed these as a main decision-making factor in what food they chose to purchase or the location they chose to visit. For example, buying whatever items that were on sale: “every week they have something on sale. So we just buy that” (participant 17). Several participants also discussed going to more than one store or comparing prices beforehand in order to get the lowest price or best quality. For example, participant 27 said they will “check the ads, and I’ll just go to the store that has it, or use the ad match”. Lastly, two participants said they use food banks to supplement their grocery store purchases in order to meet their food needs and reduce costs. Other less commonly used strategies discussed by participants included buying premade food (6 participants); gardening or hunting for their own food (4 participants); getting help from family members (2 participants); and bringing their own food instead of eating out (2 participants).

4.6. Challenges, Barriers, and Frustrations

When asked what they disliked, wished to change, or find demotivating about food- both generally and in the neighbourhood- participants voiced several challenges and complaints. Many of these challenges were voiced or implied as being significant enough to decrease participants’ satisfaction with the food options available to them. High or higher prices was the most commonly expressed challenge, with 24 of the 30 participants expressing that this is negatively affecting their food choices. This was expressed as either a partial or total constraint on where participants got food: for example, when asked where they get groceries, participant 26 expressed that they, “can’t afford to go to Metro. So I’ll go occasionally, but not often”, and participant 2 said, “never those expensive ones”. Time constraints were discussed by 23
participants, including long line-ups meaning “you have to wait so long” (participant 25); inconvenient or limited prime opening hours so that “if you [go] at the wrong time the shelves have been picked off” (participant 3) or “either you have the leftovers…or they’re closed” (participant 7); and generally having “limited time” (participant 6) to get food due to other obligations. Distance, transportation, and location of places was mentioned or discussed by 22 of the participants as a challenge or negative factor influencing certain food choices. For example, participant 11 found the food options accessible to them “more limited” “because [they] don’t have a car”. Similarly, participant 2 found getting the food they desired “a challenge” because they “can’t just go hopping from one grocery store to another…because of the lack of transportation”. Even participants with access to cars frequently mentioned that desired places for food are “too far with the drive” (participant 23) or “you have to be in the mood to drive that far” (participant 3) to get desired foods. Another significant barrier voiced by 21 participants was a discussed or implied lack of trust, often due to a lack of transparency around nutrition, cleanliness, and food safety; for instance, that foods contain “hidden calories, salt, sodium” (participant 12), “you don’t feel like everything is clean” (participant 21), and “you don’t really know what you’re getting” so “[they] just don’t trust anything” (participant 4).

A significant two-thirds of participants raised each of the following as concerns or challenges: lack of food knowledge including cooking or preparation skills; food not meeting their personal tastes; and food being unavailable, either occasionally or chronically, from certain locations or generally. Other concerns or challenges raised by the participants included food being unaffordable; having a lack of variety; food not being fresh; food or places not being perceived as clean or sanitary; portion sizes not suiting participants’ needs; the corporate structure of food companies or stores; general poor quality of food; limited quantities being available or places running out of foods; unsatisfactory service or general poor environments being offered; displeasing smells; parking; and personal prejudices against certain (types of) place or foods.

4.7. Incentives, Motivations, and Enjoyment

When asked what they liked about places they visited, found motivating around food choices, or what influenced their food decision making, participants voiced a number of incentivising factors. There were many factors shared by almost all of the participants. Most commonly expressed was convenience in terms of distance- “I go for Metro and Walmart because they’re
just nearby” (participant 11); location- “if we’re driving by we’ll go in and…get stuff from there” (participant 9); and ease of access- “whatever is close and nearby, I’ll just go there” (participant 23). All but one participant voiced this as a motivating factor in their food choices. 27 of the 30 participants discussed enjoying certain shops because they have “a lot of varieties of food” (participant 10) or “a good selection” (participant 22) of food options. The taste of food, specific cravings for kinds of food, or curiosity about new foods was discussed by 26 of the participants; while a more general need for food was discussed by 25 of the participants, for example “to fill my fridge” (participant 29) or get “what I need for the day” (participant 6). Going to a certain place because the food was “comparably cheaper” (participant 11) or “at a better cost” (participant 26) was important to 24 participants, while 20 of the 30 participants discussed some or all food as being affordable in their current financial situations. 24 participants discussed the freshness of food, often discussed as high turnover rates, and 23 mentioned overall good quality as positively influencing their food choices. For example, participants going to a certain store because “the produce is very, very good because it’s a high turnover, it’s always fresh” (participant 29) or simply because “it’s a better quality” (participant 27).

Nineteen participants discussed each of the following as influencing their food choices: comfort, transparency, and routine in getting food; home cooking; sharing food or spending time with friends or family; the environment or experience of getting food; and cultural food preferences such as going to shops “with some products from my country” (participant 21). Other motivations discussed included general availability of food; local food or seasonal changes in food choices; convenience in terms of premade or easy to prepare food; having choice; efficiency or speed; convenience in terms of timing; wanting high-end food or fine dining; cleanliness and sanitation; having a selection of stores or places to go; and ethical or moral considerations.

4.8. Dietary Need and Health

Of the 30 participants, 24 discussed having a specific dietary need that influenced their food choices. These needs ranged from religious influences, including eating Halal and fasting; health concerns such as diabetes, allergies and sensitivities, overweight, aging, and other diet-impacted health concerns; and following specific diets such as vegetarianism. Furthermore, 26 of the participants discussed health as a major influence over their food decisions. This includes general attempts to eat healthy, mostly discussed as reducing fat, sugar, and salt intake. For example,
participant 11 said that when grocery shopping, they “make sure that the meat should not have so much fat”. Similarly, participant 18 said they “don’t buy frozen foods because [they’re] loaded with sugar and salt”. A number of participants also discussed specific health influences, such as buying organic foods because of “all the pesticides” (participant 26) or “seldom cook[ing] that much meat…because all of us [are] already seniors” (participant 10). A common dietary influence discussed by thirteen of the participants was organic or natural food. However, perspectives on the benefit or value of organic foods varied widely between participants. Discussions on organic or natural foods included those for whom it was “very important…. Eating healthy and organic stuff and that” (participant 26), those who admitted they “haven’t got hooked in to the organic thing yet” (participant 12), and opinions that “when you're buying organic…you're wasting your money” (participant 30). Overall, four of the participants who discussed organic or natural food were not convinced that it was beneficial nor valuable, while another three participants discussed wanting to purchase more organic food but were limited by their current budgets or the higher price of organic versus conventional products. The remaining six participants did buy organic food, although not exclusively and to varying extents.

4.9. Pricing and Value of Food

In addition to the price of food influencing participants’ food choices, a number of other conversations were commonly had related to the cost or price of food. For one, 17 of the 30 participants discussed having a budget either generally or specifically related to food purchasing. More frequently discussed were sales, promotions, and reward programs. Just over two-thirds of the participants discussed using some sort of promotional offer, either occasionally or frequently, as a strategy to reduce their food budget. Sales were often mentioned as a motivation for buying certain foods or going to a certain place. For example, “every week they have something on sale. So we just buy that” (participant 17). Most commonly discussed was price matching, also called ad matching- in which stores offer to match the lowest offered price of goods. The ability to price match was commonly expressed as a motivation for participants to grocery shop at certain stores; unsurprisingly, not being able to price match was also voiced as something participants did not like or found negatively influencing about certain stores that do not offer the program: “they don’t ad match, which is a big thing for me” (participant 26).
Price was also frequently discussed in comparison to other aspects of food, including quantity and quality. First, seven participants discussed balancing quantity of food received for the price, both positively— for example, “you get so much food for the price” (participant 26)— and as a challenge, for example, “if I were to buy in large quantities it would be cost prohibitive” (participant 29). This relationship was also discussed as a benefit of bulk stores, which “would help for people who are on a budget and don't want to buy a whole package of anything” (participant 7). A more commonly discussed relationship was that between the price of food and perceived quality. 22 of the 30 participants directly discussed or implied a relationship between price and quality of food, including freshness, safety, nutrition, and specific qualities such as being organic or locally grown. This was often discussed as a direct relationship in which case lower priced food was perceived to be lower quality, while more expensive food was perceived to be of higher quality. Examples include participants stating that “if food is too cheap, [I] doubt the quality of it” (participant 13) and “if you want the good one…. you’re going to pay a lot of a heck more” (participant 27). Often, this conversation was correlated with participants discussing their personal budgets and priorities for food purchases— for example, “I wouldn’t mind paying for good quality stuff… just as long as we know its good” (participant 6) or “I definitely have [organic] in mind…once my budget is higher” (participant 7). A trend within these conversations were frustrations that participants could not afford or did not want to spend more money on perceived higher quality of food, again referring to either general higher quality or specific qualities such as organic. These conversations were had about food from specific locations as well as about food more generally. For example, “I hear the produce is really good but…uh, I can’t stand the cost” (participant 26) and “But those good fish, oh, very expensive” (participant 19).

4.10. Transportation

Transportation and accessibility of the neighbourhood, and of the various food options, was discussed in some form by all of the participants. When asked how they generally got to and from places, driving was discussed by twenty of the thirty participants, walking by fifteen, and taking public transport by eight participants. Only two participants mentioned cycling, but both discussed it as a recreational activity rather than a means of transporting food. While accessibility of the neighbourhood was not a central topic discussed in the interview process, many of the participants mentioned or discussed ease of access as positive aspect of living in
Scarborough Village. In terms of transportation to and from getting food, participants who drove were generally satisfied. Although many also expressed a desire for closer, more convenient options (as shown in the frequency that convenience in terms of location and transportation was raised), most participants who drove said they had no problem getting to and from places: “…they are all accessible by car. 5 minutes, 10 minutes drive, and there they are. So I find this place, fortunate to have all these stores around” (participant 23). Conversely, opinions on the public transportation options in the neighbourhood varied between participants. A small number of participants lauded the convenience of the neighbourhood even without a car: “Well this little location here, around Markham Road, is central for anybody that doesn't drive. We have good bus service” (participant 20). However, many of the participants who relied on walking or public transportation mentioned challenges or inconveniences in getting around the neighbourhood or to their chosen places for food. Challenges included the increasing price of public transportation, “the inconvenience of lugging a cart or buggy on the bus” (participant 2), and being “more limited” to only buy what “we can carry in one trip” (participant 11). As discussed previously, transportation and/or proximity of food options was commonly discussed as a limitation of the neighbourhood food environment regardless of participants’ mode of transportation; albeit with the impact of this limitation varying between an inconvenience to a constraint on available food options.

4.11. Sentiments and Emotions

The interview transcripts were additionally coded for common sentiments and emotions displayed by participants. It should be acknowledged that the following is the researcher’s interpretation of participant sentiments and emotional responses, based on what participants were saying, how it was expressed, as well as on memory and field notes taken of the interview process. Emotional reactions to the food options and food environment were quite divided between participants. Just over half of the participants discussed or displayed sentiments of feeling happy to content with the food options available to them, while eight participants expressed stronger feelings of enjoyment or appreciation in the food and food options available to them. At the same time, just over half of the participants also displayed feelings of dissatisfaction with the food options available, and six participants displayed or discussed stronger negative feelings such as frustration or hatred. Five of the participants expressed or implied feeling sad or tired when it came to the neighbourhood and its food options. A further
Seven participants expressed a more neutral sentiment of being “used to” the food options and the food environment of Scarborough Village.

The most common sentiment about the food in Scarborough Village was that things were just “okay”. All but two of the participants expressed some moderate attitude of “making do” or being “used to” the food options the way they currently exist in the neighbourhood. This is perhaps best exemplified by one participant when asked how they felt about the food options: “I would say satisfactory, like just not even above average, just a satisfactory” (participant 23). While this “okay” sentiment was shared by most of the participants, the context of this attitude varied between acceptance, neutral, and slight displeasure in how things are. Attitudes also ranged between negative and optimistic acceptance; an example of the latter was when discussing a lack of fresh fruit and vegetables compared to their home country, one participant said, “[a] lot of fruits we can't find here. So yeah. Yeah. But that doesn't matter, right, because we live here. So we eat whatever is available here, right” (participant 16). Such sentiments of “making do” and that things are “okay” were often shared immediately after or while simultaneously voicing challenges or displeasures about the food options. For example, “Sometimes the produce [is] not fresh but it’s still okay. Cheap but it’s still okay” (participant 19) or “but no apart from that it’s pretty good” (participant 22). This can be read as an outcome of participant bias: protective attitudes about their home neighbourhood, trying to please the researcher with positive responses, or an unwillingness to fully disclose dissatisfaction to an unfamiliar person/individual from outside the neighbourhood.

4.12. Potential Changes and Improvements

The final question asked of participants was what potential changes and improvements they saw as means to better the food environment and options in Scarborough Village. Two-thirds of the participants raised a variety of opinions on what would improve their own experience or perception of the food environment, while ten participants said that they did not need any changes. Of these ten participants, eight responded that they were content; that everything is “okay the way it is” (participant 1) or they “don’t have any problems” (participant 19). The other two participants were not satisfied but doubtful that any positive changes would occur in the foreseeable future. Of the potential changes voiced by participants, the most common was increased number and access to socially-oriented food events, including farmers’ markets, food
trucks, food festivals, and community days. Nineteen participants voiced or implied that such events would be a positive change to the neighbourhood, and that they would occasionally or regularly attend such events. Suggestions ranged from farmers’ markets for local produce (participant 29); community festivals like “Taste of the Village” or neighbourhood parties to “share dishes” (participant 24); community discount cards for Scarborough Village retailers (participant 4); food trucks for both produce (participant 20) and prepared foods (participant 6); and public or private community gardening opportunities (participant 22). The second most commonly expressed change, voiced by fourteen participants, was to add more variety and more options to the neighbourhood, ranging from adding “fine dining restaurant[s]” (participant 23); “more takeout” (participant 17); “more individual stores, like fish mongers, butchers, etc.” (participant 18); more variety in the neighbourhood restaurants (participant 12); and requests for specific stores or store types, including “bulk sections” or a “bulk place” (participant 7), an “ice cream parlour” (participant 9), and “one big grocery, where you know…it is organic” (participant 8).

Third, a few suggestions for transportation-related improvements were made, including subsidised food delivery through FoodShare (participant 4); “affordable food delivery” and “free shuttles” to major grocery stores (participant 2); and more “drive-through options” (participant 6). Relatedly, three participants stated that they would like to see certain stores or store types closer to the neighbourhood. Fourth, suggestions were made for services related to food stores or nutrition, including programming for seniors (participant 22), accessible facilities at grocery stores (participant 23), home visitation campaigns to promote healthy food choices (participant 23), increased government support for the agriculture industry (participant 29), and increased city councillor support for neighbourhood businesses (participant 4). Finally, three participants said they would like to see improved safety and sanitation efforts made, including more frequent government inspections (participant 21), “more labelling” and “more transparency” (participant 3; 26); and improved education for food-providers (participant 3).

4.13. Unique Findings from the Scarborough Village Case Study

This section outlines four concerns raised by Scarborough Village residents that are less-commonly discussed in the existing food access literature. These four examples are discussed in Chapter 5 to highlight the need for a connection between food access work and an approach
based on food justice and food sovereignty. The four topics discussed are: the practiced usage of neighbourhood food options; a desire for high quality foods and food services; a desire for choice in the available food options; and a related desire for transparency in food provision.

The first trend is that there were notable differences in how residents made use of different grocery options. First, none of the participants made use of small, convenience stores primarily because they “find they're too expensive” (participant 22), with the occasional exception being, for example, if it’s “a holiday and everything is closed and it's something that I really need” (participant 7). This is consistent with the existing food access literature, which has found that food in convenience stores cost more than in grocery stores (Chung & Myers, 1999), and that interviewees across three communities did not perceive convenience stores to be “real” food stores (Freedman, 2009). Second, there are interesting trends in residents’ usage- in terms of frequency and motivation- when it comes to their surrounding food environment. Out of the 26 participants who named Metro as a store they do visit, just half of these participants named it as one of their main stores for getting groceries. Half of the participants who named Metro as somewhere they shopped, specified that they went there only “in some cases when we are in a hurry” (participant 23), “when I’m desperate” (participant 26), “just to pick up little things” (participant 10), “one or two items, not more” (participant 16), or only when “there’s deals” (participant 7), “only…what’s on sale” (participant 27), or “because [it’s] closer, [it’s] right there” (participant 9). Overall, Metro was discussed by 4 participants as somewhere they would never or very rarely shop at, and 10 participants as only occasionally or infrequently shopping there. Moreover, several the participants only named Metro as a place they got groceries from when asked a second time to name any places they got groceries from, or asked specifically if they went to shops located in the neighbourhood itself. Similarly, the Walmart located in the neighbourhood was often named as somewhere participants go “if something is urgent” (participant 25), “if [I’m] in there for something else already” (participant 14), or “because [it] is…just down the street” (participant 29). Overall, 2 participants specifically said they never or very rarely shopped at Walmart, and another 7 said they only occasionally bought groceries there. In comparison, No Frills, a grocery store located outside of the Scarborough Village neighbourhood, was mentioned as the main and regular grocery store for just over half of the participants.
A second trend arising from the interview data was that of a strong desire for high quality food or food carrying certain qualities—referring broadly to freshness of food, healthiness of food, and other ethical or moral factors such as animal rights, local production, and organic production. This sentiment was expressed about food available in grocery stores, at food banks, and in eating out options. While previous sections have exemplified residents’ desired for fresh produce and food, the discussions around “high quality” food went beyond the freshness and aesthetic values of food. For example, showing support for local farmers was important to community members, such as participant 23 who saw markets as an opportunity for “farm producers [to] bring their products and people have a chance to buy from them directly. That’s good”, and participant 12 stating that they “really dig local, you know support local”. Many more participants showed support for local food for personal consumption reasons: they like “fresh, homegrown food” (participant 12), for example “because the Ontario [strawberries] are so sweet” (participant 6). Participant 20 also noted that farmers’ markets and other similar food events are “community boosting”, and as a means of sharing space and food with neighbours: “if anyone wants to come garden in my house they’re welcome to… they can take plants home, they can take veggies home” (participant 22). Similarly, a small number of participants in Scarborough Village discussed community or home gardening as a positive source of food because they provide food otherwise not available—“…our vegetables back home… [Like] the leaves of the bitter melon you cannot buy fresh there in the Chinese [grocery store]…. So we have to plant to get the fresh” (participant 19), and for the freshness and diversity of food offered through home-grown foods: “one thing I love about this area, our backyards are like orchards… everybody has different kinds of cherry trees. Peaches, plums, apples… yeah we have like five different kinds of apples in our backyard” (participant 17).

The third trend found through discussions with participants is that satisfaction with the neighbourhood food options was shown to be relative to surrounding areas. Participants in Scarborough Village often compared their food options to other neighbourhoods and areas. For example, participant 3 said that “Markham has the good food, I’ll tell you”, while participant 25 expressed that “we [go] downtown, we see they are very healthy. They are fresh food, made right there…. I don’t know about the suburbs. They might be putting stale food….”. This was equally true of eating out options for residents of Scarborough Village; with participants commonly expressing that “there’s not really any nice, sit-down restaurants in this area” (participant 9), that
“our only choice when it comes to fine dining is to go downtown” (participant 23), and “[we have] very limited options. But if you go a little bit far away from here, you get more options” (participant 16). Participant 29 summarised this sentiment, saying that, “Scarborough [Village] is really crappy in terms of good quality restaurants. You go downtown if you want to go to nice restaurants”. Thus for some residents the lack of good quality eating out options meant leaving the area, while for others the lack of options “prohibit[s] me sometimes…. because it’s too far with the drive, just to look for fine dining” (participant 23).

A desire for simply more options was voiced by many participants in terms of both grocery and eating out options. These conversations further reiterated the need to understand neighbourhood food access in relative terms to the surrounding context, as the desire for a wider selection and diversity in the foods available within stores often arose when participants compared different places for groceries. For example, participant 12 expressed that “as much as [they] like ValuMart…. It doesn’t have the selection” compared to other stores, while participant 6 said “the reason [they] go to the Chinese grocery store is that the No Frills and Food Basics don’t offer the food I want, like the international, that kind of thing”, while participant 11 expressed that “if you be shopping only at Metro, you won’t have the variety… they’re limited”. Moreover, when asked what they liked about places they visited for groceries, responses included “they have a good selection” (participant 22), “they have a lot of stuff…they cater to everybody’s culture that comes around” (participant 20), and “…they always have everything. Whatever you need, they’ve always got it” (participant 9). Most participants also stated that the range of eating out options available to them in Scarborough Village did not meet their needs or desires. This was not unanimous- a few participants were satisfied with the options available, expressing that “there’s pretty good variety” (participant 9). More commonly, however, participants said that “in this area there is not much” (participant 23), that there are “very limited options” (participant 24), and that “the restaurants…. they’re not so plenty” (participant 11). This sentiment was summarised by participant 12 when asked what improvements could be made to the neighbourhood eating out options: “Restaurants? I’d just like to see more.”

Notably, not all participants voiced direct support for more local and/or ethical food options; and many voiced concerns about the cost of such foods. In the case of organic, for example, participant 21 pointed out that “organic foods are very expensive” (participant 21), while participant 7 expressed that “certain fruits and vegetables [they] would like to be organic. It’s not
something [they] can do right now on a budget”. Similarly, and more commonly, many residents stated directly or indirectly a trade-off between higher quality food and price: “Metro fruit and veg [is] fresh but very expensive” (participant 14), while participant 12 noted that “sometimes the worst food is the cheapest. That’s the unfortunate part”. The desire for high quality food thus needs to be realised simultaneously with financial accessibility; to do otherwise would be to ignore the socio-economic context and needs of the neighbourhood residents. This was recognised by participant 29, who noted that “it would be nice if there were… [community] gardens like that, right. But not get [food] for free because you have to have some money to get the garden going right. But so it's affordable for local families right”.

Interestingly, a different desire for choice in food also became apparent when discussing food delivery as a potential addition to the Scarborough Village food environment. A number of participants with whom this topic was raised showed hesitation or dislike for food delivery because they “still like to physically pick my stuff” (participant 26), and prefer to “go to buy and see the food for [myself]” (participant 14), in order to “pick the best ones” (participant 10) and to “verify the price” (participant 5). As stated by participant 4, “I don’t know how many people would go for delivery…because that kind of takes away your choice, you know, seeing what specials are on and that.” In terms of variety between stores, most participants expressed satisfaction with the number and range of stores. However, others stated there could be improvements made, including adding “farmers’ markets” (participant 30), “bulk stores” (participant 7), and specific kinds of services like “the dollar items” (participant 2) or “the deli section” (participant 22).

Finally, a strong trend about transparency and trust in the food system became apparent throughout the data collection and analysis process. Just over two-thirds of participants expressed concerns about a lack of transparency in the food options available to them and a consequential lack of trust in the food. In Scarborough Village, food safety and trust concerns were voiced about both grocery options and eating out options. A significant number of the distrust stemmed from concerns about food handling and safety within the food establishments, both grocery and eating out, where participants shopped: “you don’t feel like everything is cleaned” (participant 21), “I really don’t trust…the food handling” (participant 4), “maybe who knows…maybe cooking something it fell down, don’t have time to wash again [so] he just throws it in, who knows (participant 5). For one participant, lack of trust was mentioned as a
barrier to supporting local food producers, an otherwise desirable food choice: “I wouldn’t mind supporting the locals… it’s just… let’s get this trust going…” (participant 6).

There was additional significant concern voiced by residents around trust and transparency in other forms. A number of residents voiced a distrust of genetic modification- for example, participant 6 voiced an increasing distrust because “the food industry is really messing with our food… GMOs, and everything has sugar in it”- and many of whom desire for more and clearer labelling of food, especially nutrition information, organic and genetically modified foods. For example, participant 26 said, “I watch out for genetically modified stuff, I read labels, I read ingredients, you know. I spend a lot of time doing that”, and further expressed that “what I would really like is for all of Canada to have GMO labels on everything… Definitely more labelling and monitoring for Health Canada”. Thus a related desire for more and stronger government regulation around food was revealed. A number of conversations with Scarborough Village residents raised this suggestion, including more and improved “labelling and monitoring” (participant 26), inspections of food establishments (participant 21), and calls for “healthy campaign…to remind people how important food is in their lives” (participant 23).

Beyond transparency, many participants revealed distrust in the food system. For example, participant 21 stated that “even if you read the labels or everything on it…I’m still not very sure whether the information there is everything”. Beyond just labelling, participant 6 expressed concern that “the hardest part with food…especially if you’re trying to look for better options…you know even know who’s telling you what and if it’s true”. The same participant later stated more strongly that they “gave up” on buying organic foods because they “just can’t trust anyone anymore” (participant 6). Similarly, there was a desire for more transparency around “social issues…so if they’re treating chickens wrong or that kind of thing” (participant 12); misinformation in food health and safety research (participant 21); and safety and handling of imported food. Participant 23 most directly vocalised this concern, saying that “Something that we get scared of was…many of these foods are imported, right….so sometimes we have a little bit of apprehension on whether they were properly screened by the government…so they are not contaminated”, and said that “it affects sometimes” what food they choose to purchase or at least gives them “second thoughts when we buy that stuff”. Finally, some level of distrust was expressed around the quality and pricing of food. This was mostly discussed around food delivery, but participant 5 exemplifies the distrust when they said “if I don’t see face to face,
how can I believe they are giving me [the] exact price or not? I don’t know, I can’t verify the price”.

In the next chapter, related studies and cases are used to examine thematic similarities and differences within the literature. Doing so both reveals strengths of the existing literature and gaps in the contemporary approach to food access research. Second, the final four major themes discussed by Scarborough Village residents are discussed in relation to justice in order to show the relevance of making use of the concepts of food justice and food sovereignty as an alternative, contemporary approach to understanding urban food access.
Chapter 5
Discussion and Conclusion

The goal of food access work is fundamentally based on an understanding of justice, and specifically that every person has the right to eat food that meets their needs and desires (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011), and the right to decision-making power about their food environment (Lee, 2014). Thus, justice can be used as a framework to improve understanding of food access at various scales. As discussed in Chapter Two, this research makes use of an understanding of justice based on the works Amartya Sen. Sen argues that the justness of a society should be judged by the capabilities and freedoms that people are able to enjoy, not simply the commodities or resources they can command (Osmani, 2010). In terms of food justice, this means that food access must be re-understood as the capability and freedom of individuals to obtain and eat the food they need and desire. This moves beyond analyses of food access based only on availability and cost, and rather understands the achievement of food access based on individuals’ satisfaction with their food options. Moreover, food justice emphasises the satisfaction of individuals least-advantaged by the status quo. This research therefore sought to better understand the neighbourhood food environment of Scarborough Village from the perspectives and lived experiences of neighbourhood residents themselves. Yet the findings of this research have value beyond the Scarborough Village neighbourhood boundaries, as will be further discussed below.

First, this chapter places the findings of this research within the context of existing literature on neighbourhood-level food access, including similarities and differences across communities. Doing so highlights both the similarities in challenges encountered at the local level, while also illustrating the unique perspectives and context-specific needs of communities as voiced through discussions with community residents. Second, this chapter shows how interviews with residents of Scarborough Village highlight less-discussed challenges, incentives, and day-to-day realities influencing residents’ food access strategies and decision-making factors. A number of topics are discussed, including the geographic proximity of food, a desire for quality food and individual choice, and a desire for transparency within the food system. These concerns and topics highlight the need for a re-understanding of food access that moves beyond food security, and is instead rooted in an understanding of food justice and food sovereignty. This chapter thus concludes with the argument that urban food access initiatives, activism, and research can benefit from a
justice-oriented approach and a consequential re-focus on place-specific understandings of food access that are based on the lived experiences, needs, and desires of community members.

5.1. Comparing the Literature: Toronto and Beyond

This first section places the results of this research to other similar work on local food access, and specifically work that focuses on residents’ perspectives and opinions. This approach to understanding food access is grounded in Amartya Sen’s concept of justice, which argues for the importance of individual choice in determining what is meaningful and valuable (Spring, 2011). Comparisons are made first to Freedman et al.’s (2015) framework for local food access, then to similar Toronto-based food access research, and finally to rural community food access research. These comparisons broaden the scope of this research by identifying similarities and broader trends in local food access challenges and improvements. Placing the results of the Scarborough Village research within the scope of existing similar research can further help identify weaknesses or gaps in this specific research and in local food access research more broadly, and can thus identify possible future research improvements and areas of interest.

By comparing the Scarborough Village findings to similar research, this section finds that the challenges in neighbourhood food access are broadly well understood, and that frameworks of food access can be useful tools to identify challenges. At the same time, these comparisons also reveal the place-specific needs of communities that are revealed through discussions of the day-to-day experiences of residents. As well, these comparisons show that residents’ perspectives on potential improvements to neighbourhood level food access tend to be less-examined. Given that the success of food access improvements is largely dependent on their use to those they seek to assist, future research on food access should therefore focus on seeking the input of neighbourhood residents on what improvements they would like to see.
**Figure 13: Comparison of Factors Affecting Food Access**

Research Findings from Freedman et al. (2013) and Scarborough Village (2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Service Delivery</th>
<th>Spatial-Temporal</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Personal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Households finances  
  - Budget  
  - Food costs  
  - Unaffordable  
  - High(er) prices  
  - Affordable  
  - Cheaper  
  - Store incentives  
  - Sales/promotions/price-matching  
  - Perceived value of food  
  - Quality vs Price  
  - Quantity vs Price | - Quality and variety of foods sold  
  - Lack of availability  
  - Lack of variety  
  - Limited quantity  
  - Not fresh  
  - Poor quality  
  - Portion sizes  
  - Run out  
  - Freshness  
  - Good quality  
  - Store selection  
  - Variety/food selection  
  - Organic  
  - Staff and service  
  - Corporate structure  
  - Poor environment/service  
  - Efficiency  
  - Environment/experience  
  - Presentation of store and customer base  
  - Not clean/sanitary  
  - Smells  
  - Other people  
  - Clean/sanitary  
  - Environment/experience | - Boundaries of local food environment  
  - Distance/transportation  
  - Diversity of food options available  
  - Lack of availability  
  - Lack of variety  
  - Limited quantity  
  - Choice  
  - Fine dining  
  - Store selection  
  - Variety/food selection  
  - Available  
  - Seasonal/local food  
  - Number of stores  
  - Organic  
  - Travel time and transportation resources  
  - Transportation  
  - Distance/transportation  
  - Parking  
  - Convenience re: distance/transportation/location  
  - Time costs  
  - Line-ups  
  - Time constraints  
  - Convenience re: time  
  - Efficient/one-stop | - Cultural foodways, traditions, and norms  
  - Personal prejudice  
  - Personal taste  
  - Cultural preference  
  - Discriminatory practices reducing access  
  - Relationships and social networks  
  - Recommendation  
  - Together | - Health status  
  - Diet/food needs  
  - Food and nutrition knowledge  
  - Food knowledge  
  - Lack of transparency/trust  
  - Comfort/transparency/routine  
  - Food-related identities  
  - Personal taste  
  - Cultural preference  
  - Ethics/morals  
  - Preferences  
  - Personal taste  
  - Diet/eating habits  
  - Organic  
  - Healthy food  
  - Authentic  
  - General need  
  - Taste/craving |

**Colour Key:**
- Results from Freedman et al. (2013)
- Discouraging factor results from Scarborough Village (2016)
- Motivating factor results from Scarborough Village (2016)
- Neutral factor results from Scarborough Village (2016)
First, the challenges and the incentives voiced by participants in Scarborough Village can be compared to the factors of food access developed by Freedman et al. (2013) in their framework for understanding factors of urban food access. As a central goal of Freedman et al.’s (2013) study was to develop a model of food access factors and implications based on qualitative interviews and focus groups with consumers, the results of the study are a useful comparison to the results of the Scarborough Village research. Freedman et al.’s (2013) resulting compilation of factors affecting food access are illustrated in Figure 13. As shown, these factors are divided into five categories: economic, service delivery, spatial-temporal, social, and personal. Using Freedman et al.’s (2013) framework shows both congruency with the Scarborough Village research results, while also illustrating the place- and person- specific nature of food access decision-making and influences.

Freedman et al. (2013) and the Scarborough Village residents share similarities in the factors found to influence food access, but the factors voiced in the Scarborough Village research can be allocated to multiple categories under Freedman et al.’s (2013) framework. For example, “personal taste” can be allocated to both “cultural foodways, traditions, and norms” under the “Social” category, and “food-related identities”, and “preferences” under the “Personal” category. The congruency of the factors raised by participants in the Scarborough Village research with the results found by Freedman et al. (2013) shows the significant similarity between food access factors at the neighbourhood or community level- and even between otherwise markedly different contexts; in this case, communities in the southern region of the United States and suburban Toronto.

The results of this research are also consistent with much of the existing Toronto-based literature. Toronto Public Health’s (2011) research on coping strategies of low-income families found that many experienced challenges around food, including inadequate transportation to and from grocery stores or food banks; the cost of healthy food such as fresh fruit, vegetables, milk, yoghurt, and meat; the cost of formula; lacking options for culturally specific foods; and the poor quality of food available at food banks. As discussed in Section 4.6, Chapter Four, several of these same challenges were raised by residents of Scarborough Village: for example, participant 26 encountered challenges in transportation: “if I just want to go for a walk with the kids, then I'll walk [to the grocery store]. But if I'm buying actual things I have to drive, because otherwise I won't be able to carry it back”. In Section 4.9., Chapter 4, a number of participants voiced
concerns over the price of healthier or better quality food, such as participant 19 expressing that “vegetables is a little bit...expensive. Vegetables today, oh...more expensive than meat. Fish is expensive too sometimes.... Those good fish, oh, very expensive” and participant 23 expressing that “the fruits itself, it’s gone up [in price] as well... vegetables as well”. When comparing the analyses conducted in two other Toronto neighbourhoods by Iman et al. (2015), similarities emerge between the challenges raised by residents. The four themes in food access challenges that emerged from Iman et al.’s (2015) study were, for the most part, echoed in the Scarborough Village research: high cost of foods, lack of availability of foods, poor quality of foods, and insufficient education about food preparation and nutrition. Likewise, many of the potential improvements were voiced by residents in all neighbourhoods, including food trucks, food markets, food delivery, and community food assistance such as that offered by FoodShare (Iman et al., 2015).

At the same time, Scarborough Village is a suburban neighbourhood of Toronto and, as such, faces unique challenges around food access that the relatively wealthier urban core of Toronto may not. Indeed, Osorio et al. (2013) argue that underserved neighbourhoods are more likely to have food that is unsafe, poor quality, and/or overpriced than more privileged neighbourhoods. As previously noted, much of the literature on food access, and especially those making use of justice-oriented frameworks, take place within rural communities. Sen’s (2009) capabilities approach and its focus on the external environmental and social influences that affect (in)justice allows for comparison between underserved urban neighbourhoods and rural communities. In both contexts, injustice is manifested in inequality between the area of study and other areas. Indeed, many of the same challenges voiced by residents of Scarborough Village- and other marginalised urban neighbourhoods- were also identified in food access studies conducted in rural areas. The similarity of challenges faced by underserved urban neighbourhoods and rural areas is interesting because of its implications for potential opportunities for research collaborations, comparisons, and contrasts for food access research and action. Making use of this existing knowledge broadens the available scope of comparison and can contextualise the findings of this research.

For one, a study by Smith & Morton (2009) found that residents of two rural communities in the United States perceived their food environment being constrained by a lack of competition and inadequate food resources; transportation issues; high cost of food, especially healthful food;
lack of variety of food choice at both retail grocery stores and restaurants; food quality issues; and access to alternative food options such as community gardens and roadside stands. The study furthermore found that “the lack of variety and high cost of food … compelled some of the participants to travel out of the county to shop for food” (Smith & Morton, 2009). These challenges were all voiced by some or many of the residents of Scarborough Village (see Section 4.6, Chapter Four). An example of this is the coping strategy of travelling outside the community to meet their food needs, albeit acknowledging that “travelling outside the community” implies very different distances between rural communities and suburban neighbourhoods. Personal observation and the input of residents in Scarborough Village show multiple food locations within the neighbourhood; rural residents, on the other hand, reported having no fresh food grocery stores for 10-15 miles (Rodriguez & Grahame, 2016). Similarly, a study of low-income residents in a rural community in Pennsylvania identified the location of food outlets, cost of food- especially healthier food options, access to services, and food-related information as significant challenges for residents (Rodriguez & Grahame, 2016). The Pennsylvania study found that residents without a vehicle encountered challenges and increased cost in getting food; for example, those who walked to stores expressed that this limited their purchases to what they could carry, resulting in more frequent trips (Rodriguez & Grahame, 2016). In Scarborough Village, participant 29 similarly expressed that “when I didn’t have a car, I would go shopping every two days…[because] I’d carry two bags of groceries at a time”.

The similarities of concerns and challenges voiced by participants across food access research areas, and across rural and urban contexts, draw attention to key themes of food accessibility challenges: price, quality, and choice. The similarities in research findings also demonstrate the research saturation when it comes to understanding food access challenges encountered at the local level. Moreover, the similarities between all of the above food access research strongly illustrate the usefulness of frameworks such Freedman et al.’s (2013) for more quickly assessing or understanding factors influencing neighbourhood-level food access.

5.2. Limitations of the Literature

At the same time, the different categorisation of factors as positive, negative, and neutral within Freedman et al.’s (2013) framework begin to show the context-specific nature of food access at the local level, as well as the subjectivity of food access factors- many, if not all, of the factors
raised by community members could be categorised under multiple categories and sub-factors. For example, “sales/promotions/price-matching” was raised by Scarborough Village residents as both a positive, neutral, and negative factor affecting food access, and could be categorised under “food costs”, “store incentives”, or “staff and service”. Clearly, while different areas may share many of the same factors in food access, the extent and even direction (positively or negatively) that various factors impact individuals and groups may differ substantially. The nuance in food access factors are more easily examined and understood through conversations with residents of the area of interest. Furthermore, it would be a mistake to assume that shared challenges and common factors also imply universal solutions. While rural and urban spaces share many food access challenges, notable differences also exist within the challenges encountered and thus between the potential solutions most appropriate in each space. For example, general food knowledge, although identified as a challenge for Scarborough Village residents, was substantially more limited in rural communities. Thus, potential improvements raised in these communities included public educational programming on general healthy eating and nutrition (Rodriguez & Grahame, 2016), whereas Scarborough Village residents, who overall displayed strong knowledge of healthy eating habits, instead voiced a desire for more transparency in the food system to accurately utilise their knowledge in their food choices. Within Toronto neighbourhoods, as well, potential improvements voiced were unique to each area: for example, community kitchens and food education programming were popular potential solutions amongst the Thorncliffe and Flemingdon Park research participants (Iman et al., 2015); contrarily, the residents of Scarborough Village voiced more support for community food events such as farmers’ markets and festivals. Another difference was in food education: while residents of all the neighbourhoods voiced concern over the lack of transparency on food labels, Iman et al.’s (2015) study found strong support for education programmes designed to improve residents’ comprehension whereas Scarborough Village residents voiced strong support for government and corporate-led labelling and transparency initiatives. As well, the residents of Thorncliffe and Flemingdon Park desired a food map of the neighbourhood food assets, while residents in Scarborough Village displayed strong knowledge of their food environment. This difference may be due to demographic differences between the two study groups, with a higher proportion of newcomers in Iman et al.’s (2015) study. Nevertheless, the influencing factors raised by Scarborough Village residents arguably show the contextual and more specific food access challenges and factors within the neighbourhood. In other words, there is no one-size fits all
improvements to community food environments. Rather, improvements should be suited to residents expressed needs and wants to be most effective. This reveals a pragmatic rationale for including the voices of those typically left-out of the decision-making processes. Without making space for these perspectives, food actions and decisions risk failure. Furthermore, reinforcing the marginalisation of residents’ voices in decision-making risks perpetuating injustice in their local food environment.

5.3. From Food Security to Food Justice and Sovereignty

The majority of work done on neighbourhood-level food access remains grounded in an understanding of food security—defined by the World Health Organisation (1996) as occurring “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”. Food security work commonly revolves around availability of adequate food (Charlton, 2016). This work is necessary and important to neighbourhood food access, as shown by the number of factors raised by residents of Scarborough Village that focus on financial accessibility and geographic proximity of food. Yet the decision-making of Scarborough Village residents is not influenced by these factors alone. A number of the other voiced perspectives and lived experiences of residents in Scarborough Village were discussed through the research. Many of these influences align with the food justice and food sovereignty movements: the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems (Food Secure Canada, 2016); and consumer rights to healthy and appropriate food, and social justice and environmental justice along all stages of food production and consumption (Lang, 1996).

The relationship between justice-oriented food work and urban food access has been explored by other research. Block et al. (2011) argue that food sovereignty has the potential to construct community-led solutions to food insecurity in urban neighbourhoods in the United States. More broadly, an approach grounded in food sovereignty offers the potential for “a more collective approach to food politics capable of limiting the power of the corporate food regime, eventually transforming the food system into one built on foundations of ecological production, community control, and the multiple meanings of justice” (Alkon & Mares, 2012 p.358). Without a grounding in justice, as offered by food justice and food sovereignty approaches, actions towards food access risk at best ignoring and at worst strengthening the existing and underlying issues
that cause injustice in food access (Block et al., 2011). In addition, solutions offered that do not meet the needs or wants of the residents, and so fail to address the issues faced by residents (Block et al., 2011). The following section reiterates four key concerns raised by Scarborough Village residents as outlined in Section 4.13., Chapter 4, and highlights the connection between an understanding of food access grounded in food justice and food sovereignty. These four topics are the practiced usage of neighbourhood food options; a desire for high quality foods and food services; a desire for choice in the available food options; and a related desire for transparency in food provision.

5.3.1. Geographic Proximity and Practices

An understanding of justice measured not by commodities or resources, but by Sen’s (1993) capabilities approach demands that the food access literature and action move beyond assessing physical proximity of food as a measurement of food access. This is not to say that geographic proximity should not be accounted for in food access. Indeed, the Scarborough Village findings were often consistent with existing food literature. For example, the low usage of convenience stores because of high prices is consistent with Chung and Myers (1999) findings that convenience stores food cost more than grocery store food, as well as Freedman’s (2009) study that found participants did not feel convenience stores were “real” food stores. As well, high rates of travel outside the Scarborough Village neighbourhood are consistent with other similar studies. Dubowitz et al. (2015) found that “nearly all respondents” in two urban neighbourhoods did their major food shopping outside the neighbourhood, and primarily by car. As well, the number of residents in Scarborough Village who raised accessibility as a concern or challenge support the need for such work to continue (see Section 4.10., Chapter 4).

However, existing approaches are insufficient for understanding the lived experiences of residents. A geographic focus within food access work can be enhanced through an inclusion of residents’ day-to-day practices and perspectives. As voiced by Scarborough Village residents, including the voices and experiences can reveal influences related to geographic proximity and practices that are currently underplayed in the existing literature. Research that looks only at the geographic proximity of food risks missing the range and nuance in the lived practices and perspectives of residents. Dubowitz et al. (2015) argue that focusing only on food options closest to resident’ homes limits the understanding of food access due to residents’ tendency to travel
outside of the neighbourhood. This is true even of work with a more nuanced understanding of food access, such as those that include the healthiness of food; the City of Toronto for example is interested in “access to healthier food stores”, referring to any supermarket, butcher shop, fish shop, some bakeries, or any smaller food store that sells a significant quantity of fresh produce (Toronto Public Health, 2015). This research, for example, showed that for many residents in Scarborough Village, the proximity of Metro, Walmart, and a few other smaller and ethnically-diverse grocery stores— all of which are “healthier food stores” as understood by the City of Toronto (2011) — have not resulted in satisfaction with the neighbourhood food environment, and that all the participants discussed travelling outside of the neighbourhood to get the food they want and need.

This topic within food access is related to a large body of literature examining consumer behaviour and satisfaction in grocery shopping (Hsu et al., 2010; Martinez-Ruiz et al., 2011). This body of literature is more aimed at increasing store competition and profitability through customer satisfaction, rather than a justice-oriented approach to increasing food access, and can thus be criticised for placing the economic needs of corporate bodies above food provisioning (Alkon & Mares, 2012). Having said this, many of the findings of such consumer behaviour research are consistent with broader food access research. As Hsu et al. (2010) discuss, consumer choice of food establishment to visit is based on a number of trade-offs, including both distance travelled and overall satisfaction with the quality and environment provided. This study found that distance travelled was not more important to customers than other factors such as price and selection (Hsu et al., 2010). Similarly, Dachner et al. (2010) argue that the primary barrier to food purchasing is economic accessibility, not geographic proximity. These findings echo sentiments voiced by Scarborough Village participants who, for example, discussed Metro as being too expensive for their day-to-day food needs, and therefore not a location they frequently visit: “[I] can’t afford to go to Metro. So I’ll go occasionally, but not often” (participant 26). When asked if they were satisfied with the food options, participant 9 said, “Yeah. Just not Metro. It's too expensive”. These conversations with residents reinforce the need to understand both financial and physical inequality as significantly and simultaneously affecting residents’ food access. Sens’s (1993) capabilities approach can be utilised to examine economic inequality and physical proximity of food as interrelated factors affecting residents’ ability to meet their food needs.
A justice-oriented approach to food access furthermore includes the effect of the broader social environment on residents’ perspectives and practices. For example, Kirkpatrick and Tarasuk (2010) found that food insecurity is indicative of low perceived social capital within neighbourhoods, and that proximity to food retail stores or community food programmes alone did not mitigate rates of food insecurity. Again, it is only in discussions with residents that these concerns or challenges are brought to light, and yet overall feelings of community may impact residents’ perspectives of their surrounding food environment. A lack of neighbourhood community was indeed voiced by some participants in the research. For example, participant 4 talked about the “huge” divide between the neighbourhood, including being “shunned” if you lived “on the wrong side of the tracks”, while participant 13 said there is “not much sense of closeness in [the] community”. Many of these same residents expressed dissatisfaction with the Scarborough Village food options. For example, participant 4 also expressed that, “Everything down here is just sketchy, and I wouldn't even want to walk into it”. A potential relationship between overall neighbourhood satisfaction and food access satisfaction is thus revealed through dialogue with residents.

5.3.2. Quality food

A commonly expressed sentiment by residents in Scarborough Village was that the food available in the neighbourhood was of poor quality—referring to freshness of food, healthiness of food, and other ethical or moral factors such as animal rights and organic production (see Section 4.6.; 4.7., Chapter Four). This sentiment was expressed about food available in grocery stores, at food banks, and in eating out options. It can be acknowledged that “good” or “high quality” food is a subjective description, and can refer to many interrelated qualities of food, including edible, fresh, and safe food (Webber, 2014). At the same time, consumer trend research shows increased demands for food that also meets ethical ideals, such as environmental, animal rights, and fair and ethical labour conditions (Korthals, 2001). As discussed in Section 2.3., Chapter Two, these demands are consistent with the goals of food sovereignty movement, which seeks the protection of natural resources and the environment and re-prioritisation of local food production and markets (Alkon & Mares, 2012, p.349), as well as food justice which includes a desire for social and environmental justice along all stages of food production and consumption (Lang, 1996). These concerns and goals were indeed present in the interviews with Scarborough Village residents, which show a range of concerns and desires around the moral and ethical qualities of
their grocery and eating out food choices. A few environmental and animal rights concerns were voiced by participants, including “all the pesticides” and “growth hormones and antibiotics” (participant 26) used in conventional animal agriculture, as well as “animal farming….and the carbon footprint” (participant 4).

Re-prioritising local food markets, community food needs, and simultaneously dismantling monopoly control by corporations was a theme discussed directly or indirectly by many residents in Scarborough Village. As previously discussed in Section 4.7., Chapter Four, supporting local food was the most direct vocalisation of this, with participant 29 advocating for more investment in agriculture, “anything that would…encourage local produce”. The strong support for local farming and community food actions voiced by many Scarborough Village residents echoes the food sovereignty approach to food access as a social, not an individual, concern (Alkon & Mares, 2012, p.350). As Allen (2008) argues, this voiced desire for more localised- even personal- control and local food options in the food system is a primary way in which consumers echo the goals of food justice through resistance to increasing consolidation and corporate control of the food system.

It should be again acknowledged, however, that not all participants voiced direct support for more local and/or ethical food options, primarily because of the perceived or actual higher cost of such foods. The desire for high quality food thus needs to be realised simultaneously with financial accessibility; to do otherwise would be to ignore the socio-economic context and needs of the neighbourhood residents that influence their capacity to access their desired food. Moreover, as is increasingly widely recognised by food researchers and activists, financial affordability must consider more than the retail price of food, but additional costs from additional demands for transportation, time, health care, and faster food spoilage costs often imposed on lower-income residents (Osortio et al., 2013).

5.3.3. Relative Food Access and Food Choice

Next, many residents expressed disappointment and frustration that other neighbourhoods they visited had perceived better food options and resources (see Section 4.11., Chapter Four). This voiced dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood food options and feelings of inequality in terms of good food availability is congruent with the food sovereignty movement, which often focuses on the spatial inequalities of food (Block et al., 2012). This disparity in access to high quality food
has been described in similar community-based food access studies; for example, Block et al. (2012) found high awareness of the disparities between their communities and other more affluent neighbourhoods, with several participants believing they get a better variety and better quality of food when they left the neighbourhood. These findings show that while it is valuable to explore the food available and accessible within the neighbourhood of interest in food access research, it is also important to understand the food availability relative to the surrounding food environment and residents’ own experiences. Perceived inequality in the food available between neighbourhoods, nearby areas, and past experiences with food are significant influences on residents’ perception of food access within their own neighbourhood. This is reflective of Nancy Fraser’s (2012) argument that injustice is only seen as such when those impacted can contextualise, compare, and interpret their situation. In this case, residents of Scarborough Village see their food access as limited in comparison to their own experiences outside of the neighbourhood.

Scarborough Village participants furthermore voiced a strong desire for more personal choice and decision-making capacity in their food choices (see Section 4.13., Chapter Four). Food justice allows space for these conversations, in that it seeks to address inequalities including control of the food system (Allen, 2010). These conversations with Scarborough Village residents go beyond food security’s goals of ensuring adequate, appropriate food availability, and rather is aligned with a food justice and sovereignty vision of increased localised control of the food system, and consequent or simultaneous lessening of food system power held by corporations (Heynen et al., 2012; Via Campesina, 2016). As Block et al. (2012) state, food sovereignty includes the right for individuals to define and choose their own food system, including their neighbourhood food environment.

5.3.4. Transparency and Trust

As discussed in Section 4.6.; 4.11., Chapter Four, just over two-thirds of participants expressed concerns about a lack of transparency in the food options available to them and a consequential lack of trust in the food. Consumer perspectives and understanding of food safety are a well-established topic within the broader food literature. In Scarborough Village, food safety and trust concerns were voiced about both grocery options and eating out options. Unsurprisingly, research has found a positive relationship between consumer perceptions of food safety and
consumer food demand (Grunert, 2005). Several studies have looked specifically at the influence of consumer perceptions of food safety, primarily referring to hygiene and food handling, on consumer food practices. Knight et al. (2009) found that concern about food safety issues, thinking about food safety, and prior experiences of food poisoning negatively affected the likelihood of consumers eating at places outside the house. This relationship is unsurprising given the results of a similar study by Worsfold (2006), which found that consumers widely believe that eating out may result in food-borne illness. This belief was evident in Scarborough Village residents, most clearly stated by participant 4 saying that “anytime I’ve had food poisoning, which has been several times, it’s always been because of other people…either poor food handling or poor food storage”. The Worsfold (2006) study furthermore found that consumers assessed hygiene standards primarily on aesthetics on dining establishment. Thus, perceptions of cleanliness and safety have a significant impact on residents’ perceptions of their neighbourhood food environment, and consequently their satisfaction with the food options available to them. However, there is little discussion of food safety concerns within the academic food access literature. Within the framework developed by Freedman et al. (2013), food and store cleanliness are briefly mentioned as influencing factors within the umbrella of service delivery and store presentation, while food safety is not mentioned at all. Similarly, the neighbourhood-level analyses conducted in two Toronto neighbourhoods discuss a significant concern over the prevalence of spoiled or rotten food in grocery stores; yet there is no discussion of food safety concerns related to spoiled foods or other safety concerns (Iman et al., 2015).

A smaller number of studies examine consumer perceptions of food technology concerns in Canada (Henson et al., 2008). This study argues that consumers weigh the potential benefit and risk of new technologies, and are sceptical of many perceived high risk-low benefit technologies including genetic modification (Henson et al., 2008). There was additional significant concern voiced by residents around trust and transparency in other forms. Many of these concerns echo the findings of studies such as McGregor’s (2003) on consumer-based improvements for Health Canada, which found that users wanted, amongst other improvements: independent risk assessments, consistent standards across food and health products, continued monitoring of food and health products after they have been marketed, and increased monitoring of industry marketing practices. This desire for more and stronger government regulation was broadly
reflected in a number of conversations with Scarborough Village residents, as discussed in Chapter Four.

Improved food labelling practices and regulation by both government and food agencies are just one manifestation of this desire as voiced by Scarborough Village residents. Food labels are not a silver bullet for increased consumer knowledge and trust, and have been critiqued for prioritising individualism and reinforcing the idea of consumption as a means to good health (Mayes, 2014), for creating more confusion than clarity (Engels et al., 2010), and for primarily benefiting already health-conscious, wealthy consumers (Freeman, 2015). Despite these critiques, the voiced desire of residents of Scarborough Village for more transparency, via labelling and other means, highlights the need for further exploration of mechanisms for building a relationship between retailers and consumers. Furthermore, insofar as the goals of transparency include seeking a more just food system, Freeman (2015) argues that transparency cannot only include disclosure of food ingredients and processes, but also expose inequalities and injustice. This is reflected in the voiced concerns of Scarborough Village residents, which included not only the desire for full ingredient information, but also transparency around food sourcing, procurement, and processing conditions (see Section 4.13., Chapter Four). Understanding food access from a framework of justice gives space in conversations for these desires for increased transparency. For one, Amartya Sen argues that a democratic environment is a requisite for a just society, including freedom for critical thinking and free exchange of information (Sen, 1993; Osmani, 2010). Within the topic of food, this includes the ability and freedom of citizens to access all desired information on the food they buy and consume.

5.4. Taking Action

While the central goal of this research was to increase understanding of food access from the perspectives and experiences of neighbourhood residents, the research also made use of people-centred and action-based research approaches. Primarily, this research embodied a people-centred approach through its focus on residents’ perspectives and experiences. As Brydon-Miller et al. (2003) argue, research that collects and tests knowledge in action and with the community involved ideally increases the validity and usefulness of knowledge produced. Secondly, I chose to share the research results with the research participants if they were interested. At the time of the initial interview, I asked each participant if they would like to receive the results either in
hard copy or through email. I will distribute the completed research to those interested participants by the end of August, 2017. Third, I will be writing a concise summary of the research findings and will make it available to relevant and interested organisations in the Scarborough Village and surrounding area, including the Scarborough Village Recreation Centre, Catholic Cross-Cultural Services, and Polycultural Immigrant & Community Services, as well as neighbourhood grocery stores who may be interested in the results of the research. Ideally, the results may contribute to a changing food environment more appropriately matching the needs and desires of the residents. Fourth, the research results will be shared with Toronto Public Health and Toronto Food Policy Council as a contribution to their ongoing “Food by Ward” project-an initiative to publicly document food resources, assets, challenges at the neighbourhood-level with the goal of more equitable distribution of food assets and access (Toronto Food Policy Council, 2017). In online and in-person conversations with Toronto Public Health staff, several members of the Food by Ward project have expressed interest in the research results. I am in discussions with members about how best to share the findings, which may be used by activists and policy-makers to improve food access across Toronto. Finally, the results will be sent independently to Toronto Public Health’s Food Strategy Division, who have expressed interest at the time in reading and potentially using the final research results.

5.5. Conclusions

This research contributes significantly to the expanding body of literature on urban food access. Although justice is increasingly prevalent in the food literature, practiced food access research and actions have largely remained focused on a narrow approach based on food security. Furthermore, when food justice and food sovereignty concepts are utilised in research, this occurs primarily within the rural context. Yet this research demonstrates the value in a people-centred approach and a framework of justice within the context of suburban Toronto. The specific perspectives, challenges, and opinions of residents discussed in this research demonstrate how a justice-oriented approach to neighbourhood level food access can enhance food access work. As Rodriquez and Grahame (2016) argue, information provided by residents themselves is often not available from traditional analyses. Justice can be used successfully as a framework to better understand urban neighbourhood food access, the needs of residents, and their perspectives on what changes can and should be made to the local food environment. Moreover, grounding this work in the goals of food justice and food sovereignty requires the
food access movement to evaluate and understand the roots of food inaccessibility, and to focus on empowerment of those made most vulnerable by the current conditions of food access. Significantly, further research is necessary to better understand the impact of factors such as gender, race, and class on residents’ perspectives of their food environment. Second, more research examining residents’ perspectives and practices in comparable urban contexts would be useful in order to demonstrate the transferability and applicability of the Scarborough Village research findings to other areas of interest. In addition, each key theme discussed by residents of Scarborough Village could be expanded upon to include a wider demographic of the neighbourhood, as well as changes in perspectives and practices over time.

In conclusion, when residents are granted the space to voice their concerns, challenges, and perceptions, the information can provide insight into the day-to-day practices and decision-making that residents of a food insecure neighbourhood make. After all, if the goals of food access are to genuinely include values of choice, sovereignty, and empowerment at the neighbourhood-level, then the food movement must make room for the voices of the people living there. By including the voices of those most marginalised in the decision-making of their local food environment, we can make a substantial step towards realising a more just food system.
References


Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Poster

Participants wanted for research on food options in Scarborough Village

Participate in a 60 – 90 minute interview about:

- where you grocery shop and go out to eat
- your perspectives on the neighbourhood food options
- what you would change or add to the food options in the area

**Why?** To better understand residents’ perspectives of the food options in Scarborough Village, and potentially provide feedback for organisations working to improve the neighbourhood food options.

*Your identity will be kept anonymous and all information shared will be kept confidential*

In appreciation for your time, you will be given a $10 gift-card to a grocery store or restaurant of your choice.
# Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer

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<tr>
<th>Participants wanted!</th>
<th>Participants wanted!</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>For research on the neighbourhood food environment of Scarborough Village</strong></td>
<td><strong>For research on the neighbourhood food environment of Scarborough Village</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What?</strong> A 60 – 90 minute interview about:</td>
<td><strong>What?</strong> A 60 – 90 minute interview about:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• where you grocery shop and go out to eat</td>
<td>• where you grocery shop and go out to eat</td>
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<tr>
<td>• challenges or barriers you have experienced in accessing the food you want</td>
<td>• challenges or barriers you have experienced in accessing the food you want</td>
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<td>• what you would change or add to the area’s food options</td>
<td>• what you would change or add to the area’s food options</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Why?</strong> To better understand residents’ perspectives of the food options in Scarborough Village, and potentially provide better understanding for organisations working to improve the neighbourhood food options.</td>
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<td>&quot;Your identity will be kept anonymous and all information shared will be kept confidential&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Your identity will be kept anonymous and all information shared will be kept confidential&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>As a token of appreciation for your participation, you will receive $10 in cash or a gift-card to a food store of your choice.</td>
<td>As a token of appreciation for your participation, you will receive $10 in cash or a gift-card to a food store of your choice.</td>
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If you are interested in participating or would like further information, please contact:
- Rebecca Jacobs
- 647 208 1405
- rebecca.jacobs@mail.utoronto.ca

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If you are interested in participating or would like further information, please contact:
- Rebecca Jacobs
- 647 208 1405
- rebecca.jacobs@mail.utoronto.ca
Appendix C: Information letter and Consent Form

Title:
Understanding the Community Food Environment: Residents’ Perspectives in Scarborough Village, Toronto

Researcher:
Rebecca Jacobs, Masters candidate, Department of Geography and Planning, University of Toronto, Sidney Smith Hall, 100 St. George Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. M5S 3G3.

Research purpose:
The purpose of this research is to explore how residents in a low-income, food insecure suburban neighbourhood of Toronto make use of and perceive their local food environment, referring to the quantity and quality of food options in a given area, including what food stores and restaurants are nearby, food affordability and quality, the availability of healthy foods, and the variety of foods to meet dietary preferences.

What are participants asked to do?
You are being asked to participate in research for a Master’s thesis through an interview that will last approximately one hour. During the interview, you will be asked a series of questions relating to your practices and perspectives of the neighbourhood food environment. You will also be asked to map your use of the food environment, as well as barriers to food access or opportunities for improvement.

Potential benefits:
Your participation may contribute to the understanding of how residents of a food insecure neighbourhood make use of the food assets in their neighbourhood, as well as perceptions of barriers and opportunities for improvement to the neighbourhood food environment. The results of the data collected will be made available to you, either electronically or in hard-copy form, and will also be given to community organisations working to improve food access in the Scarborough Village and/or surrounding areas.
Potential risk:

The researcher does not foresee any risks associated with your participation in the research. Additionally, if you experience anxiety or discomfort during the interview you may immediately withdraw without any consequence.

Confidentiality:

All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence. No identifiable information will be used in the final research and confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible. All information provided by you will be safely stored in a locked facility that only the researcher will be able to access, and destroyed at the completion of the research.

Voluntary participation and withdrawal:

Participation in the research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to respond to specific questions or to remove yourself from the interview at any time without consequence.

Contact information

If you have concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact Rebecca Jacobs via telephone: 647 208 1405 or email: rebecca.jacobs@mail.utoronto.ca.

In order to verify or report the researcher, please contact the researcher’s supervisor, Dr. Thembela Kepe, by telephone: 416 287 7281 or email: kepe@utsc.utoronto.ca. The office of research ethics at the University of Toronto has reviewed this research and may also be contacted via telephone: 416 946 3273 or email: ethics.review@utoronto.ca.
Documentation of informed consent:

I ____________________________________ consent to voluntarily participate in this interview conducted by Rebecca Jacobs. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature or verbal consent indicates my willingness to participate.

I will permit the interview to be audio recorded.

Initials: ______  Verbal: yes/no

________________________________________  ________________________
Participant’s signature / verbal consent: yes/no  Date

________________________________________  ________________________
Researcher’s signature  Date
Appendix D: Personal Information Question Sheet

Please fill in the following information. All information will be kept confidential and your identity will remain anonymous. You may leave any of the questions blank if you do not wish to answer.

Age:

Gender:

Residency status: Canadian citizen/permanent resident/temporary resident/other

Country of origin:

Employment status: Full-time/part-time/casual/unemployed/retired

Annual income: <$20,000 / $20-30,000 / $30-40,000 / $40-50,000 / $50-60,000 / $60,000 +

Ethnicity:

Race:

Postal code:

Address:
Appendix E: Interview Guide

1. How long have you lived in this neighbourhood?
   a. Can you tell me about why you moved here?

2. How would you describe the neighbourhood?

3. Where do you regularly get groceries?

4. How often do you visit each of these places?

5. When getting groceries, how many people are you typically getting them for?

6. What kinds of foods do you typically get at each of these places? What does a typical shopping trip look like?

7. Can you tell me about why you go to these places?

8. Are you able to get all the food that you want? Why or why not?

9. Are there any other places in the neighbourhood you go for groceries?

10. Are there any grocery options in the neighbourhood which you do not visit? Can you tell me about why you do not use these places?

11. Can you tell me about whether you are satisfied with the grocery options in the area, and why/not? Do these places generally meet your [household] needs? Why or why not?

12. Are there any barriers or challenges you have encountered in getting the food you want?

13. Are there any foods you are unable to get that you would like to?

14. Is it easy or not easy for you to where you want to go? Can you tell me about why/why not?

15. Do you ever eat outside your home? Where do you typically go?

16. How often do you eat at each of these places?

17. Can you tell about why you eat at these places?

18. Can you tell me about whether you are satisfied with the options for eating out in your area?

19. Can you tell me about any challenges or barriers to eating out, if it’s something you would like to do/more?

20. Can you tell me about what factors influence your food choices?
   Price, personal preference, health needs, convenience…

21. What motivates you to choose food?

22. What discourages you from choosing a food?

23. What, if anything, would you want to change about the grocery options in the area?

24. What, if anything, would you want to change about the options for eating out in the area?

25. How would you like to see the barriers you mentioned being addressed? What improvements could be made?

26. Are there food options that currently do not exist, but that you would use or go to if they did?
   Examples: farmers’ markets, more grocery stores, culturally-appropriate stores…
   a. Can you tell me about why you want that?
27. Is there anything at all you’d like to add about the existing food options, barriers or challenges to getting food, or what you’d like to see added?
## Appendix F: Code List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th># Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenges/Barriers/Disincentives</td>
<td>Corporate structure</td>
<td>Participant describes dissatisfaction or unease with the corporate nature of a location.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distance/transportation/location</td>
<td>Participant describes the distance, means of transportation to and from, and/or the location of a place as a disincentive to going</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food knowledge</td>
<td>Participant describes a lack of knowledge about food, including cooking skills, nutrition, food handling and preparation</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High(er) prices</td>
<td>Participant describes increasing prices - temporal, spatial, and perceived changes.</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of availability</td>
<td>Participant describes difficulty finding or not being able to find a certain food, food type, or food at a certain quality</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of transparency/trust</td>
<td>Participant describes unease at not knowing how food is grown/transported/prepared or how decisions around food are made.</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of variety</td>
<td>Participant describes a lack of variety in food options, food types, and/or specific foods</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited quantity</td>
<td>Participant describes a shortage in certain foods/types of foods- either periodic or chronic</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not clean/sanitary</td>
<td>Participant describes a perceived lack of cleanliness or sanitation as disincentivising food choices.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not fresh</td>
<td>Participant describes unsatisfactory levels of freshness of certain foods or foods from certain places as disincentivising food choices - stale, rotten, spoiled, or tasteless foods.</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>Participant describes parking as a challenge that influences food choices.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal prejudice</td>
<td>Self-described or implied negative feelings about a certain food, type of food, or place.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal taste</td>
<td>Participant describes certain preference for food/taste of food/type of food and challenge in meeting that preference</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor environment/service</td>
<td>Participant describes dissatisfaction with the general environment or service provision.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor quality</td>
<td>Participant describes dissatisfaction with the general or specific quality of food</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portion sizes</td>
<td>Participant describes the portions being sold as too big (and often too costly) for their own needs. Ranges from annoyance, to barrier to purchasing food at that location (sometimes goes elsewhere for smaller choice).</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smells</td>
<td>Participant describes smell of place as disincentivising</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time constraints</td>
<td>Participant describes having limited time and/or timing of store openings/closings as challenge</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaffordable</td>
<td>Participant describes food or place as being personally or generally out of budget.</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coping/Strategy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring own food</td>
<td>Participant takes their own food from home when going out.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulk/stock up</td>
<td>Participant purchases food in bulk or large quantities in order to save money/time.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy smaller amounts/more often</td>
<td>Participant purchases food in small quantities in order to obtain quality desired.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening/Hunting</td>
<td>Participant grows or hunts for food at home or in public space.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go further for cheaper/better</td>
<td>Participant describes their willingness to travel to food options that meet their needs/wants.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help from family/friend</td>
<td>Participant describes friends or family as a source of food, occasionally or chronically.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item from specific place/s</td>
<td>Participant goes to a specific location for certain items in order to meet their needs/wants.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple places</td>
<td>Participant travels to multiple locations in order to meet their food needs/wants.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared/premade food</td>
<td>Purchasing premade food is described as a strategy in order to meet needs/wants.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price match/Shop around</td>
<td>Participant describes their food choices being influenced by price comparisons between locations.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switch foods/places</td>
<td>Participant describes changing locations in order to meet food needs/wants.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel outside neighbourhood</td>
<td>Participant travels outside of Scarborough Village for food.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use food bank</td>
<td>Participant uses food bank(s) to supplement or meet their food needs/wants.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Cost

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Participant describes their personal budget, being on a budget, or general price-awareness influencing their food choices</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality vs. price</td>
<td>Participant describes their perceptions and experiences with quality of food relative to the price paid.</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity vs price</td>
<td>Participant describes their perceptions and experiences with quantity of food relative to the price paid.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales/Promotions/Rewards</td>
<td>Participant discusses their perception and use of sales, promotional offers, reward programs, and other price-reducing programs.</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Eating out

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eating out - occasional</td>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating out - often</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating out - special</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating out- seldom</td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency-eating out</td>
<td></td>
<td>79</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gendered work</td>
<td>Participant describes gendered work within the household.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Groceries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food bank</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop- never/seldom</td>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop-occasional</td>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop-often</td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop-speciality</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>21</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diet/eating habits - general</td>
<td>Describes practices/decisions made around eating and/or food choices</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diet/food need</td>
<td>Describes specific diet or food choices being followed for health, medical, or cultural reasons</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic</td>
<td>Participant discusses organic food.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Incentive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affordable</td>
<td>Participant describes food or place as personally affordable.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability</td>
<td>Participant describes availability of food positively.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>Participant describes wanting increased or sustained choice in food decision-making.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean/sanitary</td>
<td>Participant describes cleanliness/sanitary/safety of food as influencing decision-making.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort/privacy/routine</td>
<td>Participant describes being comfortable with food choices, in place, or with routine as influencing food choices.</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience (D,L,T)</td>
<td>Convenience in terms of distance, location, and transportation. Participant describes the physical distance, geographic location, or transportation to and from a place as accessible and/or positive</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience (P,C)</td>
<td>Premade food, easy to cook food, quick food. Participant describes not having to cook, not knowing how to cook, or wanting to cook easily and quickly as a motivator for buying foods.</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience (T)</td>
<td>Time. Participant describes the store hours, time-saving, or being able to spend less time getting/making food as positive.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural preference</td>
<td>Culture or religion described as influencing food/eating choices.</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Participant describes speed or low time-commitment as motivating factor - often &quot;one-stop shop&quot;</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment/experience</td>
<td>Participant describes their experience with food or in place as motivating factor in food choice.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics/morals</td>
<td>Ethical and/or moral considerations described as influencing food choices - including environmental impact, animal welfare, social/humanitarian issues.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine dining</td>
<td>Participant describes high-end food or dining experience.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshness</td>
<td>Describes wanting food to be fresh as motivator</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General need</td>
<td>Describes the need for food generally, ex. to fill fridge/whatever we need/need to eat to live</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good quality</td>
<td>Participant describes specific foods or places as being generally good quality.</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home cooking</td>
<td>Participant discusses home cooking as motivator or influence over food choices.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local food/seasonal</td>
<td>Participant describes local food and/or seasonal factors impact food choices.</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low(er) prices</td>
<td>Participant describes lower costs as positive incentive in food decision-making.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing food/time together</td>
<td>Eating together or sharing knowledge about food described as influencing food choices/important</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store selection</td>
<td>Participant describes a high number of stores as positively influencing food choices.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taste/craving/curiosity</td>
<td>Taste of certain foods or food types, cravings for certain food or food types, and curiosity about certain food or food types described as motivator for food choices - including &quot;authentic&quot; food.</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety/food selection</td>
<td>A wide variety of food or places described as positive</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Neighbourhood**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Participant describes changes occurring to the neighbourhood as they know it.</th>
<th>32</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charities</td>
<td>Participant discusses the charitable sector and/or charity work in the neighbourhood.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Participant describes their conception or view of community.</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>Participant describes their view of crime in the neighbourhood.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>Participant describes the current/changing demographics of the neighbourhood.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers market</td>
<td>Participant discusses farmers' markets in and out of the neighbourhood.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festivals</td>
<td>Participant discusses food-related festivals in and out of the neighbourhood.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Participant discusses the role of government policy and programs in food.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet</td>
<td>Participant describes the neighbourhood as quiet.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Split</td>
<td>Participant describes significant differences within the neighbourhood.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sentiment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appreciate/enjoy/happy</th>
<th>Happiness, appreciation, and enjoyment of the food options.</th>
<th>28</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contradictory</td>
<td>Opposing positions, views, or emotions are displayed.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Participant implies or states dissatisfaction with the current food options.</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrated/dislike</td>
<td>Participant implies or states frustration or a strong dislike of current food options.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay</td>
<td>Neutrality/acceptance of food options the way they currently are</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>Disappointment or sadness at the current food options/neighbourhood.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Participant displays satisfaction with the food options.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solutions/Changes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>More options</td>
<td>Participant expresses a desire for more options in certain locations or in the neighbourhood.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markets/Festivals/Community Days</td>
<td>Participant expresses a desire for more community-oriented activities in the neighbourhood.</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No changes</td>
<td>Participant expresses that they are content and desire no changes.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>Participant expresses a desire for food delivery services in the neighbourhood.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closer</td>
<td>Participant expresses a desire for closer food options to meet their needs/wants.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved safety</td>
<td>Participant expresses a desire for improved food safety in certain locations or the neighbourhood.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food-related services</td>
<td>Participant expresses a desire for other food-related services in the neighbourhood.</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Transport</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus/Public Transport</td>
<td>Participant describes public transport as means of transport/to get to places.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving</td>
<td>Participant describes driving as means of transport/to certain places.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>Participant describes walking as means of transport/to get to places.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16</td>
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## Appendix G: Interview Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview #</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Residency Status</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Annual Income</th>
<th>Ethnicity/Race</th>
<th>Household</th>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
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