Title: Examining the food landscapes of young women of colour and the impact of community food resources on their health and communities survival.

Jennisha Wilson (29088253)

Jinthana Haritaworn

July 31st, 2014

Report of a Major Portfolio submitted to the faculty of Environmental Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Environmental Studies, York University Ontario, Canada.

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Jennisha Wilson	Jinthana Haritaworn

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FOREWORD

It is with great enthusiasm that I submit this portfolio (MRP) in partial completion of my Masters of Environmental studies degree. As a student, activist and community service provider the collection of outputs (i.e. a research project, youth coordinator manual and a publishable academic paper) that are included within this portfolio are symbolic of not only the knowledge that I have acquired during my studies but, also grounded in my philosophy of what it means to do action and anti-extractive research. In the most simplest words, action and anti-extractive research entails the ability to not only do research that has direct impacts and outputs (e.g. the youth manual) that are positive but, also includes undertaking such processes in ways that are respectful and inclusive of the community being studied. Doing twice the work required for my MRP was an inherent part of my research journey, because it was important that I not only meet all the requirements for the completion of my MRP but, also create outputs that promoted community development and acknowledge the impact that my research had on the Jane-Finch community.

For instance, a common theme that will be evident in this MRP is the importance of community voice and knowledge as a means of guiding the take home messages. Notably, each aspect of my portfolio represents my journey in doing research and work based in community that aims to correct many of the negative assumptions held by greater society, including the estranged relationship York University has with the larger racialized community living within Jane-Finch, Toronto.

The portfolio is structured in the above way to cater to different audiences and funding bodies. The research project component of my portfolio includes my pre-research work (i.e. research proposal, ethics, and plan of study) as well as the orientation of my research project. The Youth coordinator manual portion outlines, builds upon and explores the major themes highlighted in

my research project. Furthermore, the youth manual is written for youth of color within a community setting so that they can reproduce my research project in ways that best satisfy their community needs around food, health and community survival. Finally the publishable paper section of this portfolio is intended for an academic audience and draws on the major themes identified in the research findings. The academic paper aims to capture some of the larger literature around food, access and health that I have study during my time in the Masters of Environmental Studies program.

DECLARATION

I, Jennisha Indria Wilson, Student number 209088253, hereby declare that this portfolio (MRP) for the degree Masters of Environmental Studies is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment or completion of any postgraduate qualification to another university.

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Jennisha Indira Wilson

DEDICATION

I dedicate this portfolio to the Black community living within the Jane & Finch, Toronto. Thank you for the countless opportunities, learning experiences and everlasting memories that continue to feed my mind, body and soul. I further dedicate this manual to the many individuals who have positively influenced my life with their stories of struggle, resistance and community.

GENERAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest gratitude goes to my amazingly supportive and wise parents, who always stressed the importance of knowledge as a form of self-empowerment in a world of injustice. I am so grateful that they are still alive and able to share in this massive milestone in my life. It is such an honor to make my parents continuously proud by taking full advantage of the many opportunities that they were not afforded due to uncontrollable circumstances. I say with great pride that I am so proud to be a woman of colour, who was born in Jamaica and raised by Jamaican parents because my home country and cultural/spiritual up-bringing are the cornerstones of my ambition and accomplishments.

Further appreciation and thanks go out to the many faculty members that have supported my studies in some capacity. Big thanks and hugs to Dr. Jin Haritaworn for making my studies at York University one that is meaningful and centered on social justice. Many thanks to Dr. Sarah Flicker for supporting my studies as an amazing advisor!!

To my loved ones thank you for always being supportive of my thought process and ability to excel beyond my own expectations. Thank you Ciann, for the countless answering of questions and breaking down ideas so that they made sense to me. Thank you Justin, for being a supportive cheerleader! For your endless hours on the phone keeping me on track and focused. Love knows no limits and I am constantly at awes by the love you have shown me. Thank you Shenae, for always showing me that what I am doing and saying made sense! Your support as a co-facilitator during the project portion of my masters is appreciated beyond words and I am so happy to have shared it with someone that understood my vision. You will always be my ride or die *****. To Alexis and David (my younger siblings) at the heart of my research is trying to create something that you as people of colour can one day look to as a resource! I love you both dearly and wish I could prepare you both from the many injustices of this world.

FINANCIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the many organizations that funded my Masters Research and Studies.

Funders include:

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Identify'N Impact grant

Part 2: Research Project Orientation

I. Rational for Study & Statement of problem:

The Jane-Finch neighborhood is one of 13 low income communities in the city of Toronto (Richardson, 2008). Many of the racialized youth in this community are Canadian born children of first generation immigrants (Richardson, 2008). During my 6 years of working as a youth community programmer for the City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division, the vast majority of the young women I worked with come from first generation immigrant households and are of visible minority. Many of them displayed symptoms of food insecurity (i.e. the absences of food and/or poor nutritional quality in their meals). Moreover, health issues such as obesity, diabetes and heart and stroke are overly represented within the Jane-finch community (Prescod, 2008). The prevalence of poverty, low socio-economic status and the social inequities of people of color residing in the Jane-Finch community fosters an environment that facilitates poor health outcomes and this is directly connected to food access and consumption. A Social Determinants of Health Perspective (i.e. the idea that one's health status is shaped by social factors) helps us see how a variety of structural and institutional inequalities shape the health status of Jane-Finch residents (Raphael, 2000). The link between poverty, race and access to adequate food is not openly discussed within everyday conversations. Therefore, the documentation of narratives from Jane-Finch youth around their ability to obtain adequate and nutritional foods will help provoke conversation and action on these topics.

II. Research aim:

The aim of the project is to look at how food consumption and/or food landscapes function as determinants of health. The term 'foodscapes' refers to the food environment within urban communities and describes the kinds of foods (whether they are 'healthy' or not) residents have access to (Engler-Stringer, 2010). I will also address how food operates as a marker of socio-economic status amongst residents of low income communities.

III. Research question:

In line with the research aim, the research question is how do young women of color living within Jane-Finch negotiate their health through their food consumption choices?

IV. Positioning myself as a researcher:

I first acknowledge that I am a woman of color that has worked for 7+ years within the Jane-Finch community both within paid and voluntary positions. Moreover, I further highlight that as a women of color with ties to the indo-afro-Jamaican diaspora residing within Jane-Finch I also have a great deal of responsibility and invested interest for this community. Thus as a researcher and Masters student of York University my positionality also places me in a place of power as a researcher. In doing my research project and job involves a pronounced degree of ethics that must consider what it means to do research in communities of color that have past experience with the academic institution that are negative. Therefore, when doing this research project it was essential that I openly inform parents and youth of the intent behind the project and my work as a York University student, in addition to having youth actively involved in the research process.

V. Research design:

This community-based research project consisted of 7 interactive workshops, in a summer camp setting in partnership with the City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division. I engaged 25 young women of color (ages 10-14 yrs.) in a series of participatory art making workshops to explore the aforementioned question. Over the course of the workshops participants worked on producing three collages allow them to reflect on workshop discussions and the research question, what they are learning and eating in the workshops. The workshops and collages also allowed the youth to creatively express what foods they would want to consume in their community and its connection to food security and food justice. The visual and text-based components of the workshop transcripts and collages were used as entry points to individual semi-structured, qualitative interviews at the end of the 7th workshop. A thematic analysis of these art forms was also done. The audio-recorded workshop sessions and interviews allowed me to delve deeper into the aforementioned research topics. The use of interactive workshops allowed participants to foster a collegial environment in which to discuss and reflect upon the relationship between food security and health status within the Jane-Finch community. I used Nvivo 10 software to code data collected from group discussions and interviews. The project was subject to an ethics review organized by York University.

VI. Bibliography

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Prescod, C. (2008). *Diversity and inclusion community of practice-report on the community of practice project development.* Toronto: Circle of care centre LHIN diversity and inclusion advisory group.

(2004). Chapter 1: Introduction to the Social Determinants of Health . In D. Raphael, *Social Determinants of Health: Canadian Perspectives* (pp. 1-18). Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press inc.

Richardson, C. (2008). *Canada's Touchest Neighbourhood: Surveillance, Myth and Orientalism in Jane-Finch.* St. Catherines : Brock University.

VII. Appendix: Documentation

a. Research Questions

b. Demographics form

Appendix

The Jane-Finch Food, Youth and Health Project
Semi-structured Interview Questions
Researcher: Jennisha Wilson

1. What foods do you like to eat and why?
    a. Are any of these foods cultural?
    b. Who do you eat with? And where do you eat?
2. Healthy foods: what foods do you think are healthy?
    a. What have grown-ups or your friends around you taught you about healthy foods?

    (Prompts: parents, grandparents, teachers, youth workers, friends etc…)

    b. What does 'good health' mean to you?
    c. Where did you learn about it?

What you eat at home:

3. Who usually prepares your meals (i.e. breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks)?
    a. Do you ever help make these meals? In what ways?
4. Who does the grocery shopping for your home?
    a. Do you ever help? How?
    b. Do you always shop at the same stores? If yes or no explain why?
    c. How does your family prepare for shopping (i.e. looking at flyers for sales)?
    d. What is normally on your shopping list?
    e. Do you think these food items are significant? Why?

Community Food and food education:

5. Where did you learn what you know about food?

a. Are food literacy or education programs offered in your school, church, and/or community center?

b. How do you participate in these programs?

6. How did this food, youth and health project add to food education? Did it change your perspective? Has it taken away from your food knowledge?

7. Can you tell me a little bit about your final art works (collage and sculptures?) made during the project?

8. How did these art works (collages and clay sculptures) help you think about the relationship between food, health and the environment?

Recommendations:

9. what would be your recommendations:

a. If you were given the opportunity to recommend new food stores and options within your school and local community what would you suggest and why?

b. What health foods would you like to be offered in your community?

c. What would need to happen for you to eat more healthily at home?

d. What are something's that would stop you from eating healthy and/or nutritionally rich foods at school, home etc?

10. What kind of food education would you find beneficial for you and your peers?

11. What would you like to learn about?

12. What are three things that you will most likely remember and share with others from this food and youth project?

Demographic Form

Name:_____

1. What is your address
Street name/#:
City:
Postal Code:

2. What is your email address?

3. What is your date of birth?

Day: _____ Month: _____ Year: _____

4. What is your race (specify ancestry, culture etc...)?

5. Is English your first language?
- o Yes
- o No

If YES, go to 7

IF NO,
6. What is your first language? _____

7. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?
- o I am homosexual (lesbian, gay, queer etc…)
- o I am heterosexual (straight)
- o I am Bisexual
- o Other, specify_____

8. Were you born in Canada?
- o Yes
- o No

If YES skip to question 11

If NO,
9. What country were you born in? _____

10. When did you move to Canada?

- o 1 month to 6 months ago
- o 6 months to 1 year ago
- o 1 year to 3 years ago
- o 3 years to 6 years ago
- o 6 years to 9 year years ago
- o 9 years or more ago

11. Please mark the statement about Education that applies to you.

1. I am in elementary school
2. I am in high school
3. I am in college
4. I am in university
5. I am in trades school
6. I am not currently in school (if you chose this option, please choose the statement that best describes why you are not currently in school)
   - o I have completed high school and have a high school diploma
   - o I did not complete high school and do not have a high school diploma
   - o I graduated from high school and have been admitted to college or university for September
   - o Other, specify_____

13. Please mark the following statements about employment that apply to you.

- ☐ I usually work during the summer
- ☐ I am currently looking for part-time work or full-time work, but can't find a job
- ☐ I am currently working part-time
- ☐ I am currently working full-time
- ☐ I don't work part-time or full-time and I am not looking for a job

14. Which of the following best describes your mother's highest level of education?

- ☐ Did not finish high school
- ☐ Graduated from high school 1
- ☐ Some or completed college or CEGEP
- ☐ Attended university without earning degree
- ☐ Completed Bachelor's Degree (e.g., BA, BSc, etc.)
- ☐ Completed Master's Degree (e.g., M.A., MSc., etc.)
- ☐ Completed a Doctoral Degree (e.g., PhD., M.D., etc.)
- ☐ Completed a Professional Degree (e.g., Law, Medicine)
- ☐ Not sure

15. Which of the following best describes your father's highest level of education?

- ☐ Did not finish high school
- ☐ Graduated from high school 1
- ☐ Some or completed college or CEGEP
- ☐ Attended university without earning degree
- ☐ Completed Bachelor's Degree (e.g., BA, BSc, etc.)
- ☐ Completed Master's Degree (e.g., M.A., MSc., etc.)
- ☐ Completed a Doctoral Degree (e.g., PhD., M.D., etc.)
- ☐ Completed a Professional Degree (e.g., Law, Medicine)
- ☐ Not sure

16. **When was the last time you received any education on Food and/or Health?**

- ☐ Within the last month
- ☐ Within the last 2 – 5 months
- ☐ Within the last 5 – 12months
- ☐ Over a year ago
- ☐ Over 2 years ago
- ☐ Never

17. **Who provided you that information (select all that apply)?**

- ☐ Instructor at school
- ☐ A service worker from a community organization
- ☐ Friends or classmates
- ☐ Parents
- ☐ Media (a TV show etc…)
- ☐ A health professional (doctor, nurse etc…)
- ☐ Other, specify_____

Youth Coordinator Manual

By: Jennisha Wilson

For more information about the Project:

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Part One

Preface

by Dr. Jin Haritaworn

Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University

I feel honoured to write this preface for *Cultivating Herstory*. You are in for a treat: *Cultivating Herstory* takes you through a history of the food system, that begins with colonialism and slavery, takes inspiration from the Free Breakfast for Schoolchildren Program of the Black Panthers Party, and ends right here in young Black women's perspectives on food justice in Jane and Finch. Grounded in popular education praxis, Jennisha Wilson shows that young people of colour possess vital knowledges about food, safety and cultural survival. In fact, their leadership has much to teach food movements that embrace white middle class slogans of 'voting with your fork', 'eating local' and 'eating organic'. These ideals also dominate university classrooms.

It is a testimony to Jennisha Wilson's tireless work and commitment that she was able to find and share the brilliant material presented in this manual. *Cultivating Herstory* not only gives us a flavour of the rich, sharp and crucial knowledges about food security, health and healing by young Black women in Jane-Finch, and honours the work that has gone into creating spaces where antiracist stories of food and community survival could be shared. It includes an accessible blueprint for readers to conduct their own Youth, Food and Health workshops. Besides giving back to the participants of this study, this manual is a community source that we can pass on and share as long as we use it 'in ways that are ethical, just and with direct or indirect benefit to the Jane-Finch' community, to cite its author.

Jennisha Wilson is one of the most remarkable students I have ever taught. Her work models what activist scholarship should be: It is in the service of, and accountable to, communities surviving and resisting race, class and gender oppression. It is grounded in the lived experiences of young Black women in the Jane and Finch community. It is bilingual, in that it speaks the languages of both the community and the university. And it is reciprocal, in that it does not just extract information for personal gain but gives back to the community.

***Cultivating Herstory* does exactly that. Enjoy reading it!**

In solidarity

Jin Haritaworn

Foreword

Memories: *It's 11 am on a hot summer's day. I along with five young women are preparing the first meal for the "Cultivating Herstory: The Jane-Finch Youth, Food and Health Project". We are making curry shrimp tacos and a side of mix vegetables. The five young women are anxious and a little unsure how to start the cooking process. They look to me as the 'expert' for directions but I quickly tell them: "These cooking sessions are your time to 'play' and to show each other what we know!" I quickly add "I am here to assist you and learn with the rest of you." My passive role takes them by surprise….A few seconds later one of the youth start talking in patwa, to lighten the mood. "Cum let mi show yuh ow to mek real curry shrimp". Everyone laughs. Determined not to be outdone, the other youth quickly make claims on what items they want to prep for the meal (Summer 2013).*

About the Project:

The *Cultivating Herstory: Jane-Finch: Youth, Food and Health Project* is about listening and putting first the voices of young women of colour to existing conversations on food security, health and community survival. Often these are silenced by academics and outsiders to the Jane-Finch community.

Phase 1- Community-Based Research:

The research portion of the project ran from July 15-29, 2013 and through the use of interactive workshops (i.e. cooking/gardening) and arts informed sessions (collages, asset mapping etc.). The project worked with 30 young women who lived within the Jane-Finch area and also attended the Oakdale Community Centre Girls Summer Sports Camp. The participants of the project were engaged in a series of discussions that allowed them to draw from their lived experiences. We use art (i.e. drawing, collages and talking) to produce collective knowledges on the topics of gender, health, food, and community survival.

The research aim for the project was to look at how the food we eat and have access to impacts our health. The information from this project was used to inform my Masters research and this curriculum, which is a resource for community members to start thinking about the links between health, food and culture and their importance for their own and their communities' well-being and survival.

Phase 2- Cultivating Herstory: Youth Leadership Program:

The project was funded through the Invest and Impact grant offered through the City of Toronto: Social Development and Finance Department, which made it possible to build on phase 1 of the project. For Phase 2 I partnered with Black Creek Community Health Centre as a key space to host program workshop and offer health related services.

The Cultivating Herstory: Youth Leadership Project was motivated by the challenge of how we can put what we know about young women of colour in Jane-Finch, their eating rituals and health, into a community leadership program. I decided to employ some of the young ladies from the original project as youth leaders to co-facilitate workshops for Phase 2 of the project to other young women in the community. Phase 2 focused on building cultural and community survival through putting emphasis and stressing the importance of cultural knowledge on food, healing practices, by further building youth leadership on community food justice for people of colour. Phase 2 of the project aimed to equip young female leaders within Jane-Finch with leadership skills and practical training in popular education praxis, financial literacy as well as with new knowledge on topics related to food, culture, community, health, race, and food access.

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Letter from Cultivating Herstory Project Founder and Coordinator

Hello and welcome!

First off, I would like to thank you for reading this youth manual, as I with the support and help of many others have put a lot of work into creating this resource booklet.

Who am I? Well, my name is Jennisha Wilson. During the creation of this manual I was a Masters of Environmental Studies student at York University. Since 2007, I have had the pleasure of working as a youth leadership coordinator and summer camp location supervisor within the Jane and Finch community. My work within Jane-Finch has helped me develop a better sense of self, leadership and community.

My work is rooted in my passion for young people of colour, food and the importance of cultural survival and knowledge while growing up in Canada. I say this because for many of us our sense of belonging is rooted in our cultural histories and "roots". However, I also understand that not everyone has the privilege of knowing where they come from but, rather, create alternative or new connections in places they feel welcome. For many of the young women in the Cultivating Herstory Project, the program space was an environment that allowed them to create and affirm a sense of belonging. Such as space was created and supported by many people who I would like to acknowledge

I want to highlight the contribution that the following individuals made. Their constant love and support made every stage (research, grant writing, programing and curriculum) of the Cultivating Herstory Project possible.

I thank my **amazing youth leaders** (Zaida and Donnique)! Without the hard work and natural leadership of these two young women of colour, I would not have been able to accomplish the work that has come out of this project. They have been my point of reference and inspiration through this journey and no words can describe the bond and friendship we have created over the last five years.

To **my mother**, thank you for the endless years of cooking, feeding and nourishing my body and mind. There are no words to describe the level of knowledge I have acquired from simply watching my amazing mother manage a household and career and support strangers in their everyday life. Thank you for never swaying from your cultural foods, rituals and practices, even when as a teenager growing up I was ashamed of them. You will forever be the most beautiful person in the world to me and this manual is dedicated to you.

To **my father**, thank you for being a strong person of vision and leadership. I know that a lot of my activism and social justice characteristics come from your stories of leadership and community within your town in Jamaica. I am every thankful for the ways that these stores have become learning lessons for me as I grow and also work as a leader with communities of colour.

To my **inspirational sister (Ciann Wilson)**, thank you for believing in my abilities to be more than anyone has ever thought of me. Thank you for teaching me not to care what others think about me and pushing me to go above and beyond my own expectations for myself. I am so lucky to have had you to grow up with!!

To my **super cool supervisor (Jinthana Haritaworn),** thank you for making my studies at York University meaningful. I cannot tell you how much I appreciate the knowledge and perspectives you have provided in your classes, specifically for people of colour with disabilities and sexual orientation. The wealth of support you have given me over the short time we have known each other is humbling and has made me rise to many challenges. Your constant feeding of knowledge and words of inspiration to my soul has made me feel so confident in writing this curriculum and seeing the true value of its completion for other people of colour.

Finally, a **special shout outs to Isaac Coplan**, a true friend and peer, for the amazing graphics/logo design used in this manual. We are going to do amazing things in this world and I am so honored to have worked with you in any capacity over the course of our studies!

My Inspiration for this Manual

This booklet is meant for youth leaders, specifically young self-identifying women of colour. ***Why this booklet? You may ask.*** Well the truth is…

- The community-based research and programing that grounds this manual were done with young women of colour within Jane-Finch Toronto.
- As a young woman of colour, I also wanted to create a manual that supports the diverse lived experiences of African, Black and Caribbean women around the topics of leadership, food and community health.
- I wanted to create something that would allow youth to continue to create dialogue and conversations in ways that allowed for community development and more importantly survival.

With all the above in mind, I hope this manual is as useful to you as it was for myself and the Cultivating Herstory Project (a group of young women who cooked together, ate together and conversed together as a means of making sense of our struggles in everyday life).

Notes:

Part Two

How to use this Manual

WHO IS THIS MANUAL FOR?

This manual was made for the use of members within the Jane-Finch community. More specifically, this document was created so that young women of colour could be leaders in the various areas that affect their everyday lived experiences and discussed throughout the manual (i.e. Food Security, Youth and Community Survival, Health and Healing). At the same time this manual is a community resource and anyone beyond the intended audience is welcome to use this manual as long as it is used in ways that are ethical, just and with direct or indirect benefit to the Jane-Finch

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL?

There are several purposes for this manual but at the very backbone of its creation are 3 things.

1) Within the mainstream studies on community food movements, health and food security tend to be disproportionately represented by the voices of "academic experts" or from white middle class communities that in turn marginalize the lived experiences of communities of colour/ marginalized backgrounds**.**

2) My research and respective outputs aimed to make space for the voices of communities of colour, specifically, the larger racialized community residing within Jane-Finch; I thereby want to counteract the treatment of the area as a site of **extractive**** research and programing by outsiders to the community.

3) This manual is grounded in the philosophy that our lived experiences help shape our understanding of the world and the various social, economic and political issues we encounter. Therefore, this manual was put together with the intention of facilitating the creation of knowledge by and for Jane-Finch residents through conversations and workshops on various topics related to

** See Glossary for definition.

food security, community survival and health. It is my hope that this manual will be a catalyst for social change and action lead by community members.

WHY ARE COMMUNITY-LED PROGRAMS NECESSARY?

If we look at the historical trajectory of social movements for and by communities of colour, their success in and progress towards achieving their various goals around human rights, equity and community survival have been a direct result of the leadership of members of their respective communities.

Take for example the *Black Panther Party's* survival programs. The programs (such as the Free Breakfast for Schoolchildren Program) were created by and for Black people within the United States of America in the early 1960s, at a time when Black communities were experiencing extreme violence inflicted by the government. The Black Panther Party coupled their survival programs that served the interests of Black communities and their everyday needs with revolutionary politics and self-sufficiency. Their survival programs followed the philosophy that the survival programs was "*meant to meet the needs of the community until we could all move to change the social conditions that make it impossible for the people to afford the things they need and desire*" (BPP, p. 3). More importantly, the sustainability of the Black Panther Party was underpinned by the "people power" (i.e. love and enthusiasm) of the community it aimed to serve (BPP, p.xi).

Who is the Black Panther Party (BPP)?

Created by Huey Newton & Bobby Seale in the 1960s. The BPP was a black political organization that aimed to achieve black community survival at a time in history when black nationalism and black power movements were seen as problematic by the state because they highlighted the racist, white-supremacist foundation of the government and society.

Following this example, I have created this manual in conjunction with youth leaders from the Jane-Finch community. Such leadership is necessary to address the unique realities and issues of community members. Moreover, these programs are more likely to —>

be sustainable if they are led by members of the community they intend to serve. Furthermore, when programs for and by the community are missing, this leaves room for outsiders to not only create programs “for the community” but further create systems of dependency that prevent rather than support community empowerment.

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL?

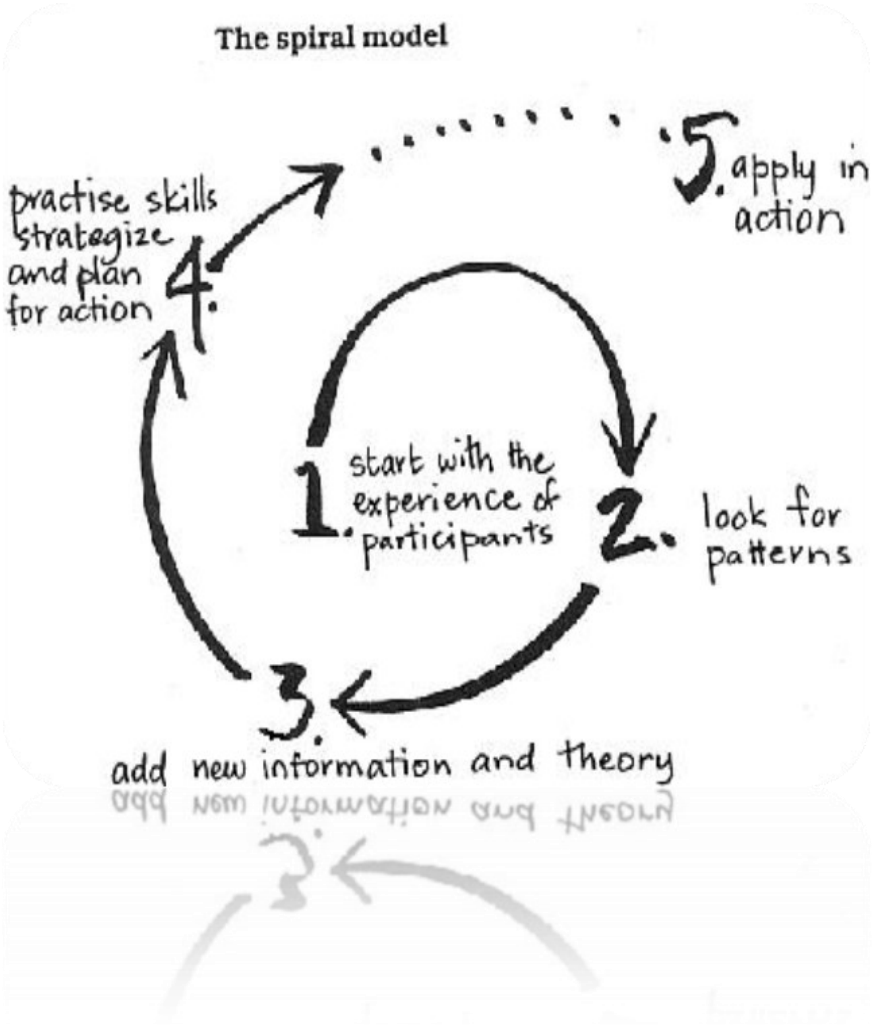
To use this manual is simple. In essence this manual is to be used to create new knowledge, facilitate community voices on topics that are relevant to and support cultural and community survival. It is recommended that you first read the history of the project (as outline in Part One) and then the section on popular educational praxis. As an added section Part Three provides a snapshot of some of the findings from the research project. Once you feel confident enough to move on, you can create your own workshop using Part Four. In order to build on the community knowledge gathered in this manual, you are more than welcome to add your own notes and ideas at the end of each section.

Notes:

Popular Educational Praxis

WHAT IS POPULAR EDUCATIONAL PRAXIS?

Popular Education is an alternative educational approach that aims to promote teaching and learning along lines that are reflective of social justice. More importantly, Popular Education aims to challenge traditional education that is designed to maintain social systems that are often, if not always, unequal, unjust and oppressive to non-Western forms of knowledge. Popular Education is often seen as an educational approach for poor and/or oppressed people to build critical consciousness.



Unlike traditional educational models that see teachers as “experts” and students as “empty banks” waiting to be filled, Popular Education views teaching and learning as a shared process where everyone is a teacher and a learner. Moreover, the creation of knowledge is done in ways that are collective or by the group as a whole. The teaching and learning process begins with the concrete experiences of the participants which lead to reflection on the experiences in order to

Popular Education Praxis is a significant part of the Cultivating Herstory Project as it allows workshop participants to collectively create new knowledge as a group, in ways that are grounded in their own lived experiences and understanding of the world. Grounding knowledge in our lived experiences is important in our everyday abilities to challenge social norms that place blame for social problems (e.g. poverty, poor health) on communities of colour, rather than on larger structures of power and social inequality. Thus, this approach to understanding our world allows us to understand how unjust systems within society contribute to the various social inequalities that we experienced around, for example, health, food insecurity and access.

Where does Popular Education come from?

Originating in Brazil in the 1960s by Paulo Freire, during a time when colonial systems were being challenged worldwide, Popular Education Praxis became a channel through which education systems that came from colonial times could be challenged. It allowed poor people in Brazil to access education that would otherwise not have been accessible to them. Students of Freire learnt to read and write through discussions rooted in their everyday problems and lived experiences. Most importantly, this educational approach allowed people to take more control over their own lives.

(Arnold & Burke, 1983)

What are Characteristics of Popular Education?

⇒ Starting point of learning is the concrete experiences of the learner
⇒ Everyone participates in the teaching and learning process
⇒ Highly participatory- everyone gets involved
⇒ Contributes to some sort of social change/action
⇒ Collective effort rather than individual approach to solutions/learning
⇒ Focuses on the creation of new knowledge vs. only passing on existing knowledge
⇒ An on-going process of learning that can happen anywhere
⇒ Anti-oppressive and FUN!!

(Arnold & Burke, 1983)

Using Art as a Form of Communication

WHY USE ART?

Beyond the fact that it brings out the inner child/ artist within us (and that its fun !) art happened to be one of the best ways that I was able to get the youth in my project to express ideas, feelings and emotions on touchy topics (e.g. body image and hunger) when words were limited. Moreover, while all forms of communication can be disabling, art has the ability to break down some of the communication barriers that writing and language (including speaking) create.

The art forms that we used in the project included drawing and collages (i.e. the process of cutting and sticking images from print magazines onto cardstock). Art has the ability of facilitating understanding in new and interesting ways for both the creator and the viewer (Bytler-Kisber, 2008). Therefore, art can be understood, interpreted and further built upon by the viewer. Art also has the ability of creating collective forms of expression and knowledge. For instance murals, are a relatively easy way of allowing collaboration to occur within a workshop, and are something that can be progressively added to during the knowledge creation stages.

History lesson: What People of Colour need to know about our current food system

When we think of where our food comes from and how it is made we are often taught that our food system (i.e. the growing, selling and eating process) is one that is well-organized, fair and most importantly universal. In other words, people think that all the food produced within our current food system (such as fresh fruits and vegetables) can be easily accessed by everyone anywhere. Individuals that have the privilege of accessing a variety of nutritionally rich foods on an everyday basis have particular incentive to accept this false idea, and the power to make others believe it.

In reality, our current food system is one that has been increasingly characterized as heavily mechanized, focused, uneven, environmentally unsafe and most importantly "broken". For instance, it is a system that has divided our once diverse global agricultural landscape into countries that now focus on harvesting one or two natural resources (e.g. Jamaica makes sugar and bananas for the global food market). Importantly our current food system is one that favours big multinational farming corporations, produces inequality, hides its own impact on people of colour and undermines their ability to control their own food sources around the world.

While everyone is affected in some way, shape or form by our food system, people of colour, more specifically women of colour, tend to be most impacted by our food system. There are several reasons why people of colour and women of colour are more likely to be affected by our food system. This can be illustrated by some of the following facts:

1) We live in an uneven society that is structured to favour white, middle and upper class people. With this in mind, gender, race and class are factors that help us understand why particular groups of individuals such as people of colour experience oppression and disadvantage in comparison to others in society. Also, if we look at the ways that resources (i.e. —>

healthcare services, healthy food stores and green space) are allocated both worldwide and locally within Canadian society, we can see how money and wealth are concentrated in a few areas (see the link to Poverty by Postal Code report in bibliography for more information).

2) Our food system is founded in uneven practices that are obvious connected to colonialism and slavery. For people of colour, looking at how resources (such as sugar and food items) have-historically and currently-been mass produced and exported to western countries, helps to draw a picture of how our food system is controlled by corporations and divided along north/south lines. This also helps to show why hunger might occur within different countries as a result of mono cultures and land dispossession for the purpose of massive resource extraction.

3) Women of colour of low income tend to occupy undesirable, dangerous and degrading jobs within our food system and also experience the most exclusion from the "fruits" of their labour. In other words, they often do not have access to many of the healthy foods they themselves help produce. For instance, "75 percent of graders and sorters of agricultural product… 77 percent of the 6.5 million workers in food preparation and service… 68 percent of food servers and 78 percent of restaurant greeters are women" (Allen & Sachs, 2007. p.7).

How have people been challenging our food system?

Within Canada there have been many movements towards challenging our food system. Some of these movements include: *'voting with your fork'; i.e,* only purchasing foods that are ethically produced. *'eating local'*; i.e. only purchasing locally grown foods that support local agriculture, farmers and economies. *'eating organic'; i.e e*ating foods that are produced using no chemicals and hormones during the harvesting and processing steps (Alkon and Agyeman 2011).

While the above alternative food movements have shown many successes within society, people of colour or of low socio-economic and political status, who lack purchasing power and resources to access healthy foods on an everyday basis, rarely participate in these movements

Also, many people of colour feel removed from these alternative movements and are often blamed for their lack of participation in them. Moreover, many people of colour residing within North America have complicated historical relationships with our current food system and food in general, that are due to colonialism and slavery.

> ***Memories:*** "I *remember being in my 4th year of university and taking a course called Advance Seminar in Foodways and Food Systems. The student makeup of the class was mainly white women with a few males and three people of colour including myself. One of the major discussions in the course happened to be about alternative food movements within society. I recall sitting in the class very silently, unable, perhaps afraid, to voice why I felt uneasy about this topic. It was as if I was invisible to the class during this discussion. As people talked about the really cool ways they purchased organic food items, went to farmers markets, or created their own roof top gardens, I sat there getting increasingly upset with the obvious ignorance of my peers. Upset that they had little to say about people who were always hungry or didn't have houses to roof top garden… It was during this experience that the reality of these so-called universal and alternative food movements dawned on me. I was upset and felt invisible because these food movements did not represent my lived experiences or me. In fact they were determined to shame and blame me and other POC who did not and could not buy into these 'progressive' eating practices…."*

The problem with alternative food movements is that they often lack an anti-racist/classist approach to addressing issues within our food system. They also tend to undermine local community of colour organizing around the world. This gives the resulting appearance that people of colour do not care about our food system, is obviously false. Reflecting on earlier sections, the Black Panther Party was one of many people of colour led and organized movements that targets violence that is inflicted upon communities of colour through Food resources and access. Others include Detroit Farmers, Via Campasina, African Food Basket and Justice for Migrant workers. ——->

We have the ability to challenge the current food movements in ways that are just for your community and culturally appropriate. This can involve to look at ways that you can be an everyday activist against social inequality, specifically around food. A great place to start would be to look into any existing grassroots movements happening in your community and to involve them. (also see link on everyday abolition in further readings/resources).

Notes:

Part Three

Organizing your own Youth, Food and Health Workshop

Hurray! You have decided to engage your community in a Youth, Food and Health workshop. The following sections have been designed to help you accomplish this task. Keep in mind that hosting one of these workshops is meant to continue the amazing conversations that Phase 1 and 2 of the Cultivating Herstory started. In other words, do not be intimidated by this task as you are not expected to have answers or solutions to all the curious questions and existing problems that you will get. Rather, by hosting a workshop, you are considering yourself to be a catalyst (i.e. a spark or positive reaction) of social change and collective knowledge production within your community!

1. Getting Stared: Planning

3 months prior to the event is when you do a lot of the "brain" work for the actual workshop. At this stage you are planning the environment, topic and support you would like for the workshop. The environment entails where and when you will be hosting the workshop. Keep in mind that wherever you decided to host the actual workshop should be accessible to the community and the diverse people you will encounter. Consider a space that has multiple entry points that can accommodate mobile devices. Also consider that accessibility goes beyond people with disabilities and also includes making sure the space is safe for all bodies and community members. For further resources see appendix.

The topic that you choose will be based on the community. If you are unaware of what individuals might be interested in talking about it is recommended that you do a bit of "asking around" before you confirm a topic. This can be done by asking community service providers, community members or gathering views. Partnering with others that are interested in hosting a

workshop is important. Not only does it help distribute the labour that goes into these things, but, it also helps create community networks. An added bonus is that getting funding support may be easier if funders see that you are working with others!

—-

Notes:

Timeline: 3 Months (prior to event)

Have you...	Yes/No?	When?	What happened
Connected with community members			
Partnered with a local organization or group			
Thoughts about budget			
Thoughts about Catering options?			
Picked a date			
Picked a location			
Stared promoting event			

** Chart model: taken from the Taking Action Youth Coordinator manual (2010)

2. Putting in the work: Preparing

One month prior to the event is the time for the "ground work". This is when you make sure everyone is on the right page and you are promoting and doing lots of outreach for the event. At this point you may also want to ensure that your space is safe and accessible, catering is confirmed, funding is secured and volunteers are recruited to help with the set up and take down of the event.

Notes:

Timeline: 1 Months (prior to event)

Have you...	Yes/No?	When?	What happened
Held at least two meetings with planning committee			
Found funding			
Made posters			
Recruited volunteers			
Announced event via promotion			
Finalized planning of catering and location			
Made a list of supplies need for workshop			

3. Hosting the workshop

The day before the event you want to be as prepared as possible. At this point you should have purchased all workshop materials needed; promoted the event one last time via email or social media; contacted your caterer to confirm food and numbers; purchased any additional material needed and if possible set up the space where the workshop will be held.

Notes:

Timeline: Day before the Event

Have you...	Yes/No?	When?	What happened
Confirmed any last minute details with committee			
Purchased supplies			
Promoted one last time			
Briefed volunteers			
Confirmed caterer			
Confirmed location and time			
Made a list of things to do after the event			

4. Wrapping up: Post Event details & Evaluation

Congratulations! You hosted a workshop. Now it is time to ensure that all the positive energy and information presented in the workshop does remain in that space. Your main goal post event is to wrap up loose ends. Meaning you are to ensure that you have paid who ever needs to be paid, debriefed with your planning committee, thanked the community and fellow supports of the event, and most importantly created a way for both individuals who attended and those who were unable to access the information discussed at the workshop!

We recommend that when, you share information, you leave out any names and personal information that might make someone vulnerable or identifiable (see resources for support). We also highly recommend that you promote the continuation of this knowledge production by inform-

Notes:

Timeline: 1-2 Days after the Event

Have you...	Yes/No?	When?	What happened
Gathered feedback from committee			
Paid for caterer/ space booking			
Thanked any community supporters			
Credited community service hours for volunteers			
Created a space for community to give feedback			
Created a fact sheet on the outcome of the workshop and made it accessible (on print or on social media)			
Promoted and informed others to host their own workshop!			

The work is never done!

In looking forward it is important that we as a community of people keep adding to this manual so that the work does not stop, until equity for all people of colour is achieved. Some things that still require more work include but, are not limited to:

1) Gender inclusive approaches to food justice. Food production and community health currently focuses on male/female and white/non-white relations. We as a community of diverse people and bodies need to recognize and address these limitations to our thinking to ensure that we are being considerate to all members of our community. In addition, work around anti-colonialism also needs to be done as colonialism plays a pivotal role in erasing gender diversity.
2) Gender divisions of labour when it comes to food production, preparation and consumption. Opening this discussion to address the issue of placing blame on women/caregivers for "failing" at keeping their families in good health by looking at the roles that we all play in this process.
3) Promotion of culturally relative and acceptable ways of understanding the relationship between food, resistance, people and migration

Part Four

Glossary

Intersection: Often understood as a place were two roads meet, For example Jane St and Finch Ave. However, for the purpose of this manual consider the word intersection to mean the over lapping of two or more social labels (i.e. race, gender, class status) that society uses to differentiate people. Race, like gender and class are social constructions and categories. These categories are created along lines of what people think it means to be 'black, a women, and/or poor'. Importantly, these social categories shapes your world view and life experiences. For example: being a Black (race) woman (gender) of lower class may cause you to experience racism, sexism and poverty because of how unequal our society is.

Gender: Is a social construction. Meaning, individuals often act out what society thinks it means to be, for example, a girl based on a set of characteristics and behaviors. However,

Keep in mind gender is not the same biological sex (the parts we are born with).

Food landscapes: Refers to the food sources (i.e. grocery stores, fast-food restaurants and corners stores) that we have immediate access to within our communities.

People of Colour (POCs): People from non-European backgrounds. In this booklet, the emphasis is on those who self-proclaim Black (black, African, and/or Caribbean) identities. However, POCs also include many other racialized groups (i.e. Latin American, Asian, Indian, indigenous and mixed raced people).

Sustainable: Something that can be maintained for a long period of time if done in a way that is equitable and just.

Colonialism: A process of domination, where one group aims to control another through various unequal policies and negative ideas about the group being dominated. One from of colonialism is slavery, which is often assumed to be over but the effects of it can still be felt.

Extractive research: Research that aims to take information from groups that are marginalized without giving back in ways that provide support in addressing social, economic and political problems. This also includes research that highlight negative assumptions about a community it is studying, without finding ways to address or challenge these negative ideas.

** All definitions were written in my own words, unless or wise specified, and phrased with the intended audience in mind.

What's cited in this manual: Bibliography

Allen, P., & Sachs, C. (2007). Women and Food Chains: The gendered politics of food. *International Journal of Sociology of food and agriculture*, 1-23.

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Bytler-Kisber, L. (2008). Ch 22: Collage as inquiry. In G. J. Knowles, & A. L. Coles, *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research* (pp. 265-276). London: SAGE Publications.

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Rick, A., & Burke, B. (1983). *A Popular education handbook: an educational experience taken from central america and adapted to a canadian context.* Toronto: Btween the lines.

Taking Action Project Team. (2010). *Taking action youth coordinator manual: Art and aboriginal youth leadership for HIV prevention.* Toronto: Taking Action.

Further Readings/Resources

Legend:

① Easy read—②Mild read—③ Hard read

Confidentiality and consent support:

②*Confidentiality and consent | Getting help | ReachOut.com*. (n.d.-b). Retrieved July 3, 2014, from http://ie.reachout.com/getting-help/costs-and-confidentiality/confidentiality/

①Leader's_Guide_to_the_MS_Confidential_Series.pdf. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.freespirit.com/files/OTHER/Leader's_Guide_to_the_MS_Confidential_Series.pdf

Accessibility and event planning support:

①Creating Accessible Events: A Checklist for Programmers, Organizers, Advertizers, Speakers and Event Attendees. (n.d.). *BLACK, BROKEN & BENT*. Retrieved from http://blackbrokenandbent.wordpress.com/2012/11/17/creating-accessible-events-a-checklist-for-programmers-organizers-advertizers-speakers-and-event-attendees/

②*Accessibility, Community, Equity (ACE)*. (n.d.). *Accessibility, Community, Equity (ACE)*. Retrieved July 3, 2014, from http://aceatyorku.wordpress.com/

①Equitas - International Centre for Human Rights Education / Centre international d'éducation aux droits humains |. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.equitas.org/en

Community related and Activist blog support:

Everyday Abolition/Abolition Every Day. (n.d.). *Everyday Abolition/Abolition Every Day*. Retrieved July 3, 2014, from http://everydayabolition.com/

①Jane-Finch.com: http://jane-finch.com/

Jane-Finch action against poverty (JFAAP): http://jfaap.wordpress.com/

②United Way. (2004). Poverty by postal code: the geography of neighbourhood poverty. Retrieved from www.unitedwaytoronto.com/document.doc?id=59

③Food for thought

Alkon, A. H., & Agyeman, J. (2011). *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability.* Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Engler-Stringer, R. (2010). The Domestic Foodscapes of Young Low-Income Women in Montreal: Cooking Practices in the Context of an Increasingly Processed Food Supply. *Health Education & Behavior, 37*(2), 211-226.

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Meisner, A., & Low, H. (2008). *City of Toronto Priority Neighbourhoods: overvew of demograohics and community services Jane-Finch#2.* Toronto: City of Toronto Social Development, Finance and Adminstration Division.

Richardson, C. (2008). *Canada's Touchest Neighbourhood: Surveillance, Myth and Orientalism in Jane-Finch.* St. Catherines : Brock University.

Slocum, R. (2006). Whiteness, space and Alternative food practice. *Geoforum*, 520-533.

Appendix: materials used in project

Appendix 1: Flyer used to promote project (Phase 1 & 2)
Appendix 2: Letter to parents
Appendix 3: Research Project Consent form
Appendix4: Honorarium forms (Phase 1 & 2)
Appendix 5: Project participant application form (phase 2)
Appendix6: Staff contract
Appendix 7: Youth application form
Appendix8:Participant attendance form
Appendix9: Staff attendance form
Appendix10: Project Certificates
Appendix11: Project letter of reference
Appendix 12: Blank loom
Appendix 13: Workshop evaluation sheet
Appendix 14: Sample art work from project

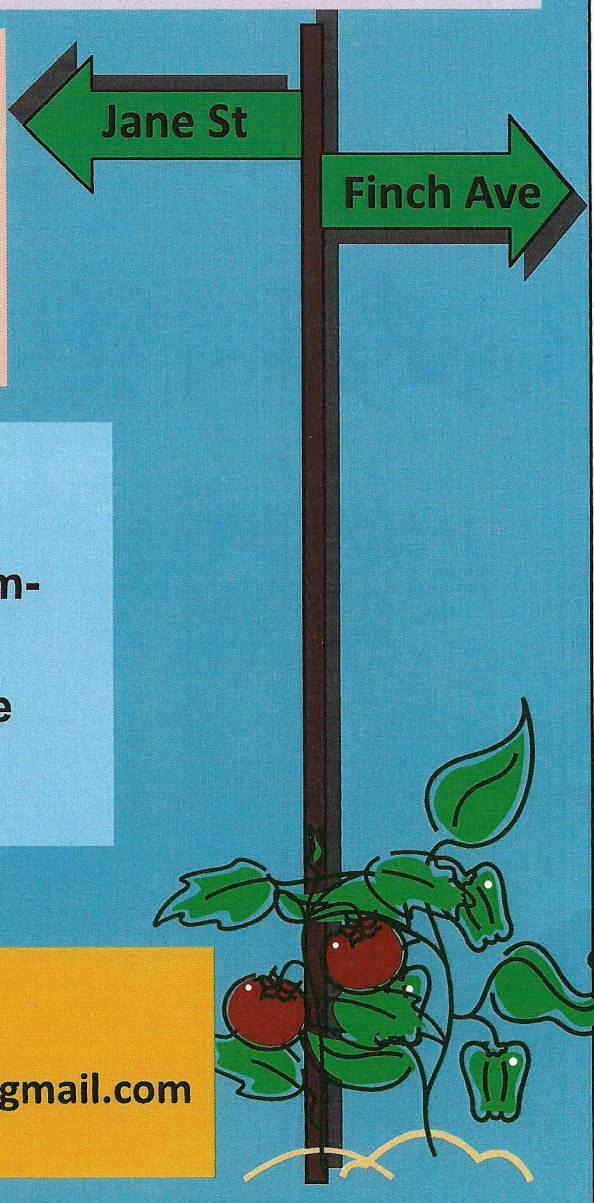
Jane and Finch
Food, Youth and Health
Project
Information Nights

Project Purpose: To create space for young girls to talk about the food they eat, their health and community through art and cooking activities

Want to know more about the project?

Join Us! Drop by during one of the information nights

Participants in this project must be registered for the Girls sports camp @ Oakdale Community Centre

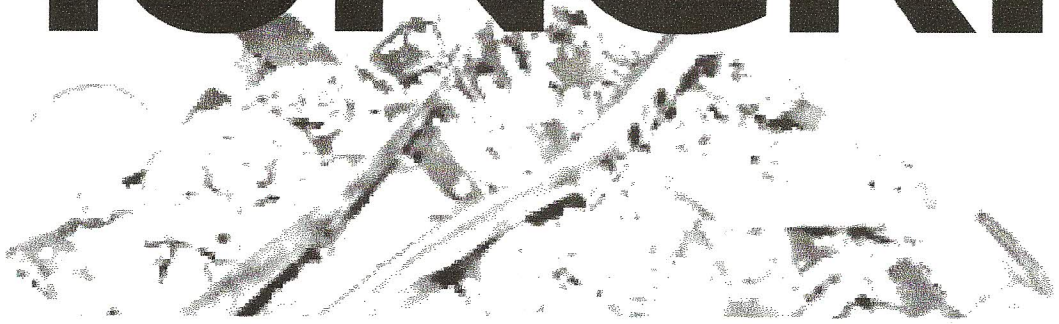


When:
Tuesday June 25th @ 5:30pm-6:30pm
Oakdale Community Centre
350 Grandravine Drive

YORK UNIVERSITÉ UNIVERSITY

Contact:
Jennisha Wilson
416.648.2009 or Jennishawilson@gmail.com

HUNGRY?



NOW THAT WE HAVE YOUR ATTENTION!
YOU ARE INVITED TO:

CULTIVATING HERSTORY

THE JANE & FINCH FOOD, YOUTH AND HEALTH PROJECT.

WHERE YOU CAN MEET WITH OTHER FEMALES AND TALK ABOUT FOOD, COMMUNITY AND HEALTH

WHO?	**WHEN?**	**WHERE?**
WOMEN OF COLOUR AGED 15 & up	FRIDAYS **March 14- April 28**	Black Creek Community Health Centre (Yorkgate Mall Location)

BENEFITS

HONORARIAM $, TOKENS & MEALS, COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS
LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND CERTIFICATION (CPR, Food Handling Etc.)

TO REGISTER **EMAIL** cultivatingherstory@gmail.com

Jane-Finch Food, Youth and Health Project

Dear Parent(s) and Guardian(s),

My name is Jennisha Wilson and I am the returning location coordinator for the Oakdale Community Centre All-Girls Summer Sports Camp offered through the City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division. As a part of my Masters in Environmental Studies at York University, I have partnered with the Oakdale Community Centre and the City of Toronto, to conduct a community based-research project within the context of the summer sports camp during the summer (July and August) of 2013. Importantly, I am writing you this letter seeking your parental consent to have your child participate in my Youth and Food project.

Project description and purpose:

The intended research project is titled the *Jane-Finch food, youth and health project.* The project aims to use interactive arts-informed workshops (i.e. crafts, clay sculptures etc...) and skill building activities (cooking and gardening) to understand the youth's perspectives on the relationship between food, health and the environment. The project will be held from July 15th-29th 2013, during the summer camp hours. Workshop discussions will be voice recorded, however, I will follow research ethics of confidentiality and anonymity at all times. This means that your child's real name will not be used and that recordings will be destroyed after 3 years.

Benefits of participating in the project:

The benefits of having your child participate in this study are the following:

- Your child will have the opportunity to pass on and pick up traditions of making food and staying healthy, and to learn about the relationship between food and health.
- Your child will receive tokens and a nutritionally rich lunch on the days that the workshops take place
- If your child successfully completes the project they will receive an honorarium and a letter of reference and/or certificate of participation in a York University research project.
- Your child will have the opportunity to showcase their artistic work at a community conversation around food and health.

Benefits of the study:

This study will contribute to existing substitute for non-academic term: conversation around food security, health and community. This project will be used to inform programming and curriculum used by service provided within the Jane-Finch area. This project will help people in the Jane/Finch community,

who have rarely had their voices heard by academics and policy makers, to voice their perspectives on food justice and community food issues. The workshop will provide the young people with supportive environments where they can share and recover knowledge about the rich cultures and traditions of making food that survive in their communities, as well as, what is healthy food and how to prepare it. it is my hope that the project will allow youth to start thinking about the links between health, food, and culture and their importance for their own and their communities' well-being and survival.
Please see attached document for informed consent form. This attached form will need to be filled out in order to have your child participate in this community based food and youth research project.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me. My contact information is listed below.

Sincerely,

Jennisha Wilson

Location Coordinator
All-Girls Summer Sports Camp
Oakdale C.C

Masters Candidate
Environmental Studies
York University
416.648.2009
jennishawilson@gmail.com

**This project is supported by the City of Toronto, Parks Forestry and Recreation Division, York University and the Ontario Graduate Scholarship*

Jane-Finch Food, Youth and Health Project
Informed Consent Form
(for participants under 16 years of age)

Date:

Your Name:

Researcher:
Jennisha Wilson
York University
Graduate Program in Environmental Studies
Email address: jennishawilson@gmail.com
Phone #: 416.648.2009

Purpose of the Research:
To explore the perspectives of young racialized immigrant women living in the Jane-Finch area on food and health. This project will be done in partnership with the City of Toronto: Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division. It will take place as part of the all-girls summer sports camp located at Oakdale Community Centre.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research:
Your child will be asked to participate in seven arts workshops and one interview. The workshops will happen once a week for seven consecutive weeks from July 3rd till August 14th, 2013. They are made up of two art projects (a collaging and a clay sculpture) and of group discussions around food and health - these will be voice recorded. The interview will happen during our last session.
Time commitment: The workshops will run for approximately three hours, during camp hours, and include lunch and snacks. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes.

Risks and Discomforts: We do not foresee any risks or discomfort from your child's participation in the research. Your child has the right to say no to answering any questions, and to withdraw from the activities.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to Your child:
The research will be used to inform community programming and curriculum on food and health through the City of Toronto Parks Forestry and Recreation Division. It will also form the basis of my master's research through the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University. I am planning to share my findings with the community in the form of a community event, an art installation and a project fact sheet. The workshops are designed to pass on knowledge about food and gardening skills to the young people and to empower them to contribute to discussions around food and health in their community, Participation will be honored through 1) an honorarium and 2) a reference letter and/or certificate of participation in the project.

Voluntary Participation:
Your child's participation in the study is completely voluntary and you can stop it at any time. Your decision will not influence your or your child's relationship with me, the community centre, or York University now or in the future. I In the event you withdraw from the study, all written or taped recordings will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Confidentiality: Interview and workshop voice recordings will not have any direct identifying information. All information your child shares during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically choose otherwise, your child's name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Data will be collected through the use of audio recording and handwritten notes. Your child's data will be safely stored in a locked facility and only research staff will have access to this information. Data will be stored no longer than three years after being collected. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

Questions About the Research?

If you have questions about the research in general or about your child's role in the study, please feel free to contact the researcher Jennisha Wilson either by telephone at 416.648.2009, or by e-mail (jennishawilson@gmail.com). This research has been reviewed and approved by the FES Research Committee, on behalf of York University, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, Research Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca).

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I,_____give consent for my child_____ to participate in the *Jane-Finch Food and Youth Project* conducted by Jennisha Wilson. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to have my child participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my parental consent.

Signature_____ **Date**_____

Parent and/or guardians name:_____

Relationship to participant:_____

Participant's name:_____

Signature_____ **Date**_____
Principal Investigator: Jennisha Wilson

Use this section if imagery (photographs or video) will be taken of participants and used in teaching or dissemination of research.

I,_____agree to allow video and/or [digital images or photographs] in which my child appears to be used in teaching, scientific presentations and/or publications with the understanding that my child will not be identified by name. I am aware that as a parent, I may withdraw this consent at any time without penalty.

Signature_____ **Date**_____

Parent and/or guardians name:

Honorarium Receipt

Food, Youth and Health Project

Focus Group Session Number_____

This is to confirm that I have received 2 TTC tokens for participating in this research project.

Name:_____

Signature:_____

Date:_____

Honorarium Receipt

Food, Youth and Health Project

Individual Interview

This is to confirm that I have received **$25 Dollars** for participating in this research project.

Name:_____

Signature:_____

Date:_____

Signature of Researcher:_____

BLACK CREEK COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

North York Sheridan Mall
2202 Jane St., Unit 5
Toronto, ON M3M 1A4
tel 416-249-8000
fax 416-249-4594

Yorkgate Mall
1 Yorkgate Blvd., Suite 202
Toronto, ON M3N 3A1
tel 416-246-2388
fax 416-650-0971

Date:_____

Re: Honorarium

To Whom it May Concern,

I _____ have received _____ for my time spent working on the Cultivating Her Story Project.

Recipient signature: _____

_____

Jennisha Wilson, Cultivating Her Story

_____

Sabrina Virdee, BCCHC

Cultivating Herstory Project
Staff Contract

This document/contract serves the purpose of ensuring that all paid members of the Cultivating Herstory Project fulfill their respective responsibilities and tasks over the duration of the project planning, implementation and evaluation stage. With the above in mind, executive members who fail to participate in the Cultivating Herstory Project in a manner that fosters an environment of productivity, prosperity and success will be subject to the ramifications listed in section B of this document/contract.

Section A: Roles and Responsibilities

In light of each staff's respective roles and tasks (as outlined on job posts) the Cultivating Herstory Project also has general responsibilities to be upheld—which are listed below. The following general responsibilities are integral as they are at the underpinning of the functioning and operation of the project.

General Responsibilities

- Uphold an anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory work environment
- Meet deadlines, respond to emails and phone calls regarding project in a timely manner
- Be proactive in seeking opportunities, funding, donations, collaboration and other assets that would be of value to the prosperity of the project
- Promote project via social media and word of mouth
- Communicate effectively with fellow project staff and participants
- Support each other in project tasks

Section B: Failure to meet project requirements

In the case that a project staff is unable to meet the general responsibilities of the project and their job specific duties they will be subject to the following:

- A verbal warning from project coordinator (Jennisha Wilson) and Black Creek Community Health Centre support staff (Sabrina Virdee)
- A group reminder of roles and responsibilities will also be given at the soonest staff meeting
- If staff continue to neglect roles and responsibilities they will be given a written warning followed by an in-person meeting with project coordinator (Jennisha Wilson) and Black Creek Community Health Centre support staff (Sabrina Virdee) to discuss possible solutions
- Finally failure to adjust work ethics will result in individual forfeiting their position and complementary pay (in full).

Section C: Agreement to the terms and conditions

Please read the following and fill in the required areas.

I _____ have read and agree to the terms and conditions of my position as a Cultivating Herstory Project staff. By signing this agreement, I am fully aware of my roles and responsibilities and am accountable for the ramification(s) of not fulfilling my position.

_____ _____

Signature of Staff Date

_____ _____

Trustee Representative Date

Application Form
28-Feb-18

Cultivating Herstory: Jane Finch Youth Food and Health Project
Description:

Note: If uner the age of 16 a legal guardian must sign media release portion of this application. If under the age of 18 a guradian signature is also require to participate in the

Personal Information

First Name Last Name

Age D.O.B. Month/ Day/ Year

Address Street City Province

Postal Code

( ) ( )
Home Phone Other Phone

Email address

Emergancy Contact Informaion

Contact person Relationship

Phone number Other Phone

How did you hear about us?:

Participant Signature and Guradian if under of the age of 18 Date

Project Coordinator Signature Date

Media Release Agreement
By initialling this portion of the application form, I _____, here by agree that my image may be used by Cultivating Herstory: Jane-Finch Youth Food and Health Project, for the purposes of

Initial: _____

For Staff Use Only

Date of Submission: Received By:

THE JANE & FINCH FOOD,YOUTH & HEALTH PROJECT.

Participant Sign In/Out Sheet

Date: _____

	First Name	Last Name	Address	Contact	Sign in	Sign out	Tokens	Staff initial
1								
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CULTIVATING HERSTORY

THE JANE & FINCH FOOD,YOUTH & HEALTH PROJECT.

Employee Name:_____

Position:_____

Date	Time in	Initial	Time out	Initial	Discription	Tokens

Project Coordinator Signature_____

Black Creek Staff Signature_____

Certification of Appreciation

THIS CERTIFICATGE IS AWARDED TO

_____

IN RECOGNITION OF YOUR VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO
CULTIVATING HERSTORY: THE JANE-FINCH: FOOD, YOUTH & HEALTH PROJECT

Summer 2013

This project was funded by:
The Ontario Graduate Scholarship
This project partnered with:
York University &
The City of Toronto: Parks Forestry and Recreation Division

Jennisha Wilson
Founder
&
Project Coordinator

Certification of Completion

THIS CERTIFICATGE IS AWARDED TO

IN RECOGNITION OF YOUR VALUABLE LEADERSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS TO
CULTIVATING HERSTORY: THE JANE-FINCH: FOOD, YOUTH & HEALTH PROJECT

This project was funded by:
The Identify 'N Impact (INI) Grant
This project partnered with:
Black Creek Community Health Centre

Jennisha Wilson

Cultivating Herstory Project
Founder& Coordinator

Sabrina Virdee

Black Creek Community Health
Staff & Project Co-organizer

TORONTO

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UNIVERSITY

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To whom it may concern,

December 2013

My name is Jennisha Wilson; I am a second year Masters Student in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University and the research project coordinator of the Jane-Finch: Food, Youth and Health Project. This letter of recommendation is to recognize _____ participation, dedication and leadership in the Jane-Finch: Food, Youth and Health Project.

The Jane-Finch: Food, Youth and Health Project is oriented around the goal of listening and making present the voices of young racialized women to existing conversations on food security, health and community survival, which are often, if not always dominated by academics and outsiders to the Jane-Finch community. The project ran from July 15th-29th, 2013 and through the use of interactive workshops (i.e. cooking/gardening) and arts informed sessions (collages, asset mapping etc.), the participants of the project were engaged in a series of discussions that allowed them to draw from their lived experiences to produce collective knowledge's on the intersecting topics of gender, health, food, community and survival. The information from this project will be used to inform the following things 1) my Masters Major Research; 2) programming and curriculum used by service providers within the Jane-Finch area and 3) a resource for community members to utilize to allow other youth to start thinking about the links between health, food, and culture and their importance for their own and their communities' well-being and survival.

To date _____ has dedicated approximately 30 hours in the planning and carrying out of the Jane-Finch: Food, Youth and Health Project.

Should you have any questions and/or concerns please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Jennisha Wilson

Research Project Coordinator of the Jane-Finch: Food, Youth and Health Project
Masters Candidate 2014
Environmental Studies
York University
416.648.2009
jennishawilson@gmail.com

*This project is supported by the City of Toronto: Parks Forestry and Recreation Division, York University and the Ontario Graduate Scholarship

TORONTO Ontario

Design loom for	final - 15/05/14	1

Dream list of goals/outcomes:

•	•

Brainstorm list of possible activities:

Principles activities		Warm-ups/Energizers	Evaluation
•	•	•	•

Design loom for	final - 15/05/14	2

TIME		OBJECTIVE	METHOD	DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS	STUFF	WHO
				•		
				•		
				•		
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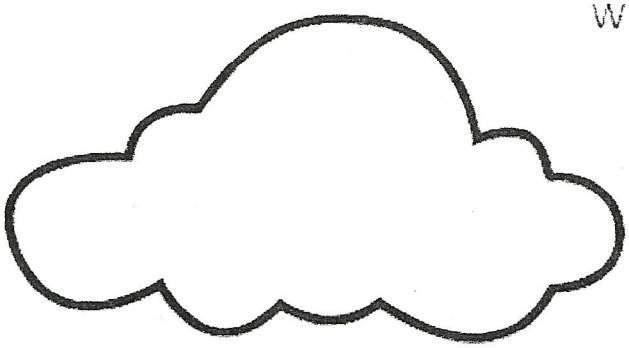
				•		
				•		
				•		

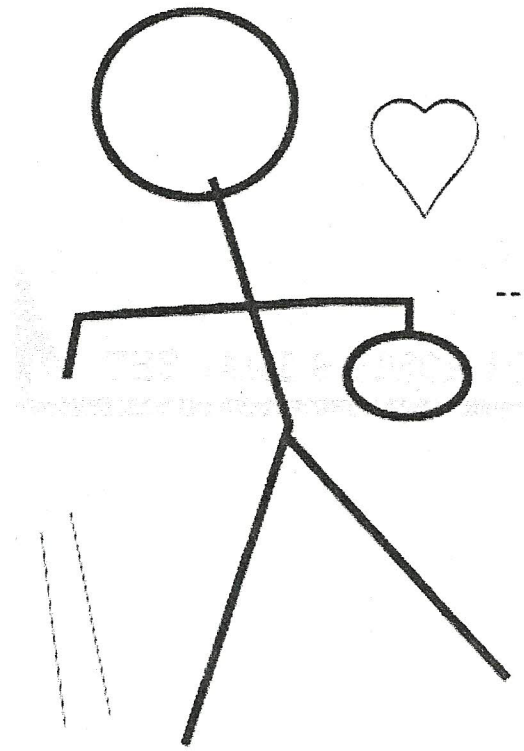
Workshop Evaluation Sheet

by Jennisha Wilson

What thoughts are still in the air?

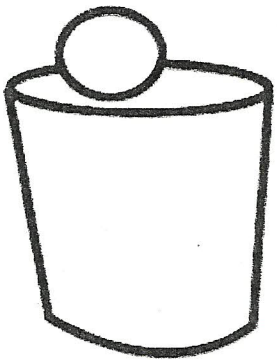


What did you love?



What are you taking with you?

What did you think was useless and why?



CULTIVATING HERSTORY

THE JANE & FINCH FOOD, YOUTH & HEALTH PROJECT.

Zaida #2

LOSE WEIGHT FAST*

18 weeks
Before

used the key ingredients in *Hydroxycut*

GROCERY STORE

BELLY FAT MOM

Key ingredients: lady's mantle, wild olive extract, komijn extract, and w
Based on IRI FDMx unit sales for *Hydroxycut* caplets. Read the entire

take it
TO GO!

Doritos
OOL RANCH

SNICKERS
SATISFIES

a lot in common.
dishes a close
love hanging
out together."
Friends

PRETTY
SHOW OFF
"She looks like she's put on about 65 lbs. so far!"
— a body expert tells Sto
McCafé
Shamrock Shake
FOR THE STEAK LOVER
THE KEG STEAKHOUSE & BAR
$100
STARBUCKS
$50
CINEPLEX
GIFT CARD
CARTE-CADEAU
FUN THE MOVIE FAN

Dominique

3. At home


easy
sweet
BEAUTY OBSESSION
BEAUTY.
WEIGHT LOSS
summer!
fresh

Part 4: Academic Paper

Title:

"Society makes healthy food expensive and junk food cheap. How do you expect us to be healthy if all you give us is fatty food to eat?" The perspectives of young Black women on their food environments and food justice in Jane-Finch, Toronto.

Abstract

This study is based on popular educational praxis using arts-informed methods (collage making), semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 25 young women of colour from the Jane-Finch community in Toronto. The aim of the research was to study individual and community health outcomes by exploring the various barriers and facilitators to participants' food consumption practices. The findings contradict literature that aims to attribute the poor health outcomes of Black people, in particular those of low income, to their supposed cultural inferiority, lack of healthy food education, and adaptation to fast-paced modern lifestyles. The study illustrates that socio-economic and structural inequality and racism are significant factors in shaping the everyday lives of young Black women and their ability to promote culturally relevant eating practices that they feel are beneficial to their communities' health.

Keywords

Food environments, women of colour, food consumption practices, resistance to structural violence, community development, food sovereignty, Black diasporic communities, cultural survival, Black femininities, surveillance.

Introduction

The premise of this research study was to explore the ways in which young women of colour negotiate their health status through the consumption of food and interaction with their food environments. More specifically this research project engaged in a gendered exploration of what socio-economic and structural factors functioned as barriers or facilitators in participants' ability to access and consume nutritionally rich and culturally appropriate foods. The project utilized popular educational approaches in doing research with young Black women in Jane and Finch, Toronto, which is a stigmatized area and a food desert. Some of the major themes (food and social relations, food and accessibility, rites of passage, safety, womanhood and cultural survival) that emerged from the research challenges mainstream food security and alternative food movements' philosophies that often exclude and further blame poor people of colour for poor health outcomes.

A basic aim of this paper is to challenge mainstream literature and assumptions that attribute the poor health status of Black communities to cultural inferiority and individual lifestyle choices (Such as Pollan, 2007). The research paper utilizes an environmental racism approach as a useful anti-oppressive way of understanding the structural relationship between communities of colour, access to food and health outcomes. Furthermore, the research aims to complicate and problematize such false assumptions about food access and poor health outcomes within communities of colour, which I interpret as instances of an environmental racism that is fundamentally gendered (e.g. Bullard, 1996, Gosine and Teelucksingh, 2008). In order to explore this, the project began with the perspectives of young Black women, who produced knowledges of their food environment that highlighted resistance, agency and survival and thus served to challenge these assumptions about their communities.

The paper is structured in the following manner. I start the paper by providing a detailed context of the Jane-Finch community in Toronto, and how the space occupied by people of colour residing within this geographical space has been created, neglected and maintained by the state and larger society. I follow this section by examining the significant body of literature that aims to unpack many of the racist and exclusionary underpinnings inherent to mainstream food movements and the industrial food system. I employ a critical race and environmental racism perspective to shed light on the problems within these food-related sectors that inherently disadvantage low-income communities of colour. The literature review sets the tone for my methods and results section, which describes my attempt to conduct this project in an anti-oppressive and non-extractive manner, and captures and conveys the accounts generated by the participants in this study. I close this research paper with a conclusion and outlook section that synthesizes the main findings of this study and creates room for further knowledge production and scholarship in this area.

Community Context

Located in North York, Toronto, the Jane-Finch corridor spans from Keele Street in the East to Weston Road in the West, and as far North as Steeles and South as Sheppard Ave (Wilson, 2011; Meisner & Low, 2008). Within this geographical space, the Jane-Finch corridor encompasses eight municipal wards, as well as the Black Creek Community Farm, Toronto's largest urban agricultural farm and York University, Canada's third largest university. It is home to one of the largest Black (including African, Caribbean and Black Canadian) communities in Toronto and is said to be Toronto's most ethnically diverse community (Wilson, 2011). The Jane-Finch neighborhood houses over 150,000 people, 75% of whom are visible minorities and 15% of whom are recent immigrants who arrived in Canada in the last five years (Wilson, 2011; Meisner

& Low, 2008). Moreover, the Jane-Finch area is labeled one of thirteen low-income communities within the City of Toronto and has one of the highest poverty rates (49%), in comparison to the national poverty average of 13% (Meisner & Low, 2008).

The formation of the Jane-Finch neighborhood is not a “natural” result of immigrant settlement but rather is due to a combination of state policies and development projects that facilitate the settlement of racialized newcomers of low income into this area. For instance, as early as the 1960s, the city and private sector implemented public housing development projects and constructed dozens of "high density, low-income apartments and government housing complexes to meet the needs of people settling in the area" (Wilson, 2011, p.7). Poverty and low income levels, coupled with unequal resource allocation, discrimination and marginalization, have a crucial impact on the health status of residents within the Jane-Finch area (Prescod, 2008). From a Social Determinants of Health Perspective (i.e. the idea that one's health status is shaped by socio-economic and political factors), the health status of people of colour within this geographical space is shaped by a combination of factors associated with resettlement and stemming from structural and institutional inequalities (Raphael, 2004). This is significant because the Jane-Finch community has some of the highest rates of health-related issues (Prescod, 2008). We thus need to look to state-facilitated development in exploring what predestines the Jane and Finch area for poverty, low socio-economic status and social inequalities. The vulnerability of people of colour residing there to poor health outcomes is ultimately environmental.

It is important to highlight this context to prevent any impression that experiences of poor health, food insecurity and poverty among people of colour living within Jane-Finch are a natural or self-inflicted phenomenon. Rather, these experiences are the results of larger structures of

power that systematically target communities of colour with policies and practices that determine how structural development happens within the community. For instance, Bullard (1996) scholarship on environmental disparities between communities of different race and class compositions depicts the disproportionate burden of environmental pollution and degradation experienced by low-income and communities of colour (p.xvi). Moreover, Bullard (1996) highlights that disparities between white communities and communities of colour are reflective of larger societal inequities as over the years environmental disparities have been created tolerated and institutionalized by the state and larger society (p.xvi). Thus, it is important to bear in mind when discussing food that 'healthy' or 'unhealthy' eating is a result of racism and classism and further health issues within Jane-Finch result from environmental racism, rather than ideas that attribute poor health to 'bad cultures' or 'bad parenting', which false argument that are also further supported by literature on food.

Literature Review

Within dominant cultures there are many assumptions that attribute poor eating habits as well as health disparities within communities of colour to their lack of 'correct' nutritional education rather than socio-economic and political inequalities within society. For example Kingsolver (2007), Pollan (2007) and Schlosser (2001) have targeted racialized and low-income communities for their supposed culturally inferior cooking practices, supposed lack of interest in mainstream alternative food movements and their attraction to convenience (junk) foods, which are often characterized as fast, fatty and fried (D. James, 2004; Winson, 2010). Such misconceptions are unfortunately reinforced by alternative approaches that challenge the industrial food system but tend to be underpinned by white-middle-class values and void of anti-racist and inclusive approaches (Alkon & Agyeman, 2012; Slocum, 2006). In challenging the

work of Kingsolver (2007), Pollan (2007) and Schlosser (2001), local Toronto writers Ramsaroop and Wolk (2009) argue that as food security activists, we face several integral questions: Who is able to buy and sell at farmers markets? What are the systemic barriers keeping people from marginalized communities out of the process of the food security movement? These centrally address how race, gender and class shape many of the underlying exclusionary characteristics of both industrial and alternative food systems (also see Slocum, 2006).

However, little research exists that links the complex impacts of history, socio-economic inequality, food resources and access to them by communities of colour and low income, and perceptions of Black communities, as key factors that influence their overall health and specifically eating habits. For instance, James (2004) notes that history, specifically slavery, is significant in shaping the current dietary habits, food choices and cooking methods employed by Black people, namely Black women (p.351). The author further notes that historical perspectives are often neglected when discussing food-related illnesses within Black communities, and that this often leads to misrepresentation.

Other scholars have examined urban populations in relation to where food is allocated. A popular approach to understanding food insecurity within class-stratified societies is the concept of *food deserts*, which describe urban areas where people do not have access to affordable and healthy food sources, which contributes to poor health (e.g. Cummins & Macintyre, 2002). This concept helps us understand how socio-economic and political factors shape the kinds of food individuals within inner-city areas and racialized suburbs have access to and how this in turn negatively impacts their health status. McClintock (2011) notes that food deserts are often situated within low income neighborhoods and/or communities that disproportionately consist of people of colour (p.89). This point is insightful given that food deserts do not simply signify the spatial

absences of nutritious foods within racialized and low-income communities. Rather, McClintock provides a context from which to understand the pervasive ways pseudo-food corporations come to dominate our food outlets and eating habits. In addition to the absence of nutritious food outlets, it is important to note that food deserts are also disproportionately overabundant foods that are processed, high in fat; calories and sugar (see also Winson, 2012). Winson (2012) further suggests that we examine the 'spatial colonization' of pseudo-foods in our supermarkets as bases for understanding how food corporations monopolize on areas with limited resources (p.192). More specifically, Winson defines spatial colonization as the power of "food processors to place products in the most visible and effective selling spaces in a food environment" (Winson, 2013, p.193). Not only do they make up a significant proportion of all items sold in the store, they are also given primacy in terms of visual displays and sales over fresh, alternative and/or organic food products.

Equally important is that many of these pseudo-foods (such as sugary cereals, soda drinks, pop tarts and chips) emulate the kinds of food that "white" North American popular culture promotes and privileges. In other words, the spatial colonisation of pseudo-foods and food corporations within eating environments is not only rooted in the standards, beliefs and values of capitalism but also in white heteronormative values that aim to assimilate non-white bodies through the consumption of food, This is also evident, In highlighting my original findings and observation, in the various eating environments – including schools, hospitals and malls – that are publicly available to people. These eating environments are often dominated by popular North American food options (for example, pizza, cookies, hamburgers and fries) which facilitates the assimilation of non-white bodies into white society via the consumption of 'white culture'. College (1995) proposes the term 'culinary imperialism' to unpack the socio-emotional and

cultural meaning given to the practice of eating the 'other', or in this case, of consuming western food, by racialized subjects (p.63).

According to College, food consumption is a particularly insightful illustration of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Specifically, it helps us understand the relationship between people, place, and belonging, and the ways in which we become dominated along lines of race, class and culture (College, 1995). Furthermore, Guptill, Copelton and Lucal (2013) argue that "through our relationship with food, individuals creatively define who they are and craft a social identity, both in terms of idiosyncratic and personal characteristics and relative to the various social groups to which they belong, or come to belong to" (p.18). In other words, the authors suggest that individuals craft their sense of belonging according to dominant means of fitting in. Equally important is Guptill et al.'s (2013) point that food is literally consumed through the social act of eating. It is one of the most obvious ways through which people are able to socially construct themselves and interpret each other's social identities (p.18). I would further argue this also implies that through our consumption of food we are able to adhere to or challenge social relations of domination. Importantly, such acts of resistance are not always obvious but provide a starting place to examine and account for why individuals may participate in particular eating habits.

Other scholars have similarly highlighted that food deserts are a leading cause of food insecurity, hunger and poor health outcomes. Challenging authors such as Russell (2006), Poppendick (1999) and Levkoe and Stephens (2009), who situate themselves within the realm of food systems and/or alternative food movements but fail to acknowledge structural and socio-economic inequalities as a root cause of hunger, food insecurity and poor health, Slocum (2006) argues that "food insecurity is present when people cannot obtain foods in sufficient quantity and

quality to sustain health, wellbeing and culture, yet they have easier access to foods that promote obesity and related illnesses" (p.2). Furthermore, issues of food insecurity and hunger stem from broad economic structural changes that have multiple manifestations, many of which illuminate socio-economic and political differences within unequal societies (Riches, 1999, p.204-5). Nonetheless, the above research on food deserts often pays little attention to the historical trajectory of oppression of communities of colour, as well as socio-economic processes that disproportionately locate them in geographical regions that are plagued by food deserts.

Understanding the food system as a racial project helps deepen our ability to conceptualize the various ways in which race, gender and class are intertwined to reify socio-economic and historical inequalities, which in turn impact the everyday lives of people of colour and low-income people (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011). The term 'racial project' was coined and defined by Omi and Winant (1994) to refer to the "simultaneous, interpretation, and representation, or explanation of racial dynamics and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines" (p. 125). In other words, this term connects the dominant meanings given to race with the organization and allocation of resources and everyday interactions in society. Razack's (2008) notion of "race thinking" also helps to illustrate how arbitrary categories such as colour become a dangerous mechanism in the social organization of difference (p.8). She notes that race thinking is a "structure of thought that divides...the world between the deserving and the undeserving according to descent" (Razack, 2008, p.8). More importantly, the ideas of racial classification that form the underpinnings of social relations come to be regarded as natural aspects of society and as properties of people of colour, which are then used to justify the existence of poverty and health disparities within these communities.

Furthermore, conceptualizing how race, gender and class are organizing values within the food systems depicts how women of color and low-income play a pivotal role in the food production processes of this sector. According to Allen and Sachs (2007), women make up

> 75 percent of graders and sorters of agricultural product… 77 percent of the 6.5 million workers in food preparation and service… [They also make up] sixty-eight percent of food servers and 78 percent of restaurant greeters are women (p.7).

Notably, these statistics do not reflect nor represent women who work in grocery stores, as farmers within developing countries, nannies for middle-upper class families, and migrant farmers. Slocum (2006) highlights that not only is food production highly gendered but it is also heavily racialized: Black and Hispanic women make up a significant proportion of the food system (p.1).

More importantly, while women can be found abundantly in every sector of food production they tend to be scarce in positions of power, such as ownership, management and chefs in high-scale restaurants. Such discrepancies in the participation and representation of women can be attributed to socio-historical, cultural and political institutions that reinforce gender and race inequality. As a result, these systems of power place women in precarious positions of work that is dirty, dangerous and degrading and are reinforced through low wages and limited opportunities for upward mobility (Allen & Sachs, 2007). Thus, although women constitute the fundamental underpinnings of food production, preparation and provision, they remain marginalized within these environments. Moreover, being of low income and of colour often implies that individuals live within spaces that have been systemically neglected by the state. This is exemplified through the representation of poor socio-economic infrastructure, scarce resources and minimal access to nutritionally rich foods.

Furthermore, at the local level, gender divisions of labour in regards to food are also reinforced within domestic spaces, namely those that uphold "heteronormative" gender roles. As Zafar (1999) highlights, for women of colour, specifically Black women, identities are tied to cultural food preparation, which has been a long and hard battle that dates back over 400 years to conquest and enslavement (Zafar, 1999). Similarly, Engler-Stringer (2010) notes that for women the ability to cook tasty food comes with great stigma and is often seen as a 'deficiency' (p.217). For Black women in particular, such gender specific expectations are established from a young age and seen as a form of cultural survival and resistance to mainstream assumptions of the Black women.

Furthermore, popular cultural discourses such as the stereotypical image of the 'fat Black woman cook' pose a barrier to women's ability to maintain and establish positive and evolving ideas of Black womanhood and cultural survival within contemporary western and unequal society (Zafar, 1999). Black women are also confronted with historical discourses that construct them as hypersexual and morally problematic to urban spaces. Carby (1992) argues that in urban contexts post-slavery Black women's bodies have often been labelled sexually degenerate and therefore in need of constant control and surveillance (p.739). Such notions and social norms impact the ability of young women to freely navigate their food environments and grasp a strong understanding of Black womanhood.

Another useful discussion is James et al.'s (2010) book *Race & Well-Being: The lives, Hopes, and Activism of African Canadians*, which discusses racism and its impact on health. The authors argue that everyday experiences, as well as institutional forms of discrimination and racism, are more profound and detrimental to people of colour than decisions that they make out of necessity, with specific reference to coping mechanisms that people of colour may employ to

deal with processes of alienation imposed by wider society (p.64). For instance, un-welcoming attitudes from non-Black professionals towards Black people who try to access healthcare have the potential to prevent them from utilizing mainstream resources and services on both an immediate and intergenerational level, thus showing the long-term effects that racism can have on a community of people and their health outcomes. James et al. (2010) also note that racism describes the power to exclude certain people from exercising their right as equal members of society (p.65). Notably, such everyday encounters of racism are evident in the food system when communities of colour lack the ability to grow, sell and purchase nutritionally rich foods. To understand the food system as a racial project further means acknowledging that it is not a coincidence that people of colour and low income are predominantly situated within geographical areas that are also food deserts. As scholars of environmental racism (Bullard, 1996; Pulido, 2000) similarly argue, such processes can be intentional or unintentional – the outcome is the same, and is reflective of racial hierarchies.

The literature on environmental racism is especially useful in challenging mainstream assumptions regarding the supposedly poor eating habits and bad health of people of colour. Pulido (2000) defines environmental racism as the disproportionate rate of exposure to environmental pollution experienced by non-whites (p.12). Besides exposure to toxins, the concept highlights differentials in access to resources (e.g. food that is not nutritionally rich). It thus interprets the production of poor health as underpinned by structural and hegemonic discourses of inequality shaped by socio-historical racial ideologies. Thus, environmental racism helps us to understand racism as more than individual acts of racist intent. On the contrary, the degradation and neglect of the physical spaces that house communities of colour is an effect of systematic institutional practices. Approaching food injustice in terms of environmental racism is

thus pivotal in explaining how food is politically charged. It also helps us understand why food justice (i.e. the right to grow, sell and eat healthy food that is nutritious, affordable and culturally-appropriate for communities of colour) is significant to the cultural survival of communities of colour and marginal status.

Methods

Setting:

The purpose of the study was to document the perspectives of young women of colour within Jane-Finch on what they perceived to be factors (both facilitators and barriers) that influenced their food consumption choices and community health. For the study I worked in collaboration with a young women's summer camp organized by the *City of Toronto: Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division* located in the Jane-Finch neighbourhood. The study ran from July 15-30, 2013 and was situated within the regular camp day (9am-4pm) as a food, youth and health program.

Participants:

The study engaged 25 young women of colour aged 10-16 who were recruited from the summer camp. Recruitment of participants was done according to who was registered for the summer camp. I also worked with two youth leaders from the community who promoted the project and encouraged other young women within the community to register for the camp with a view to participating in the project. Notably, participation in the project and/or summer camp was free of charge as it was subsidized by the City of Toronto, including further funding that I managed to raise specifically for the project.

Parents of youth registered in the camp were informed of the Food, Youth and Health Project and had the option to give or withhold consent for their child's participation in the project.

The catchment area of the young women's camp was primarily people of colour with migratory origins in countries within the African and Caribbean regions. The main requirements of participants was that they lived within the Jane-Finch corridor, self-identified as women with Black, African and/or Caribbean ancestry and met the age requirement of the City of Toronto Camp (i.e., 10-18 years). The young women's camp was an ideal space to conduct the research project as it allowed for a positive environment that enabled me to capture the opinions of young women of colour.

Sample

25 young women were engaged in this research project. These young women all self-identified as either being Black, African Caribbean and/or mixed race (Black and another racial background). Six were born outside of Canada and 19 were born in Canada of parents who have migrated to the country within the last 15 years. Of the 25 young women five came from dual parent households while 20 came from single-parent homes, with mothers as their primary caregivers. Equally importantly, all project participants attend school within the Jane-Finch corridor and utilize services and food retailers available to the community on an everyday basis.

Methods:

Critical to the project's ability to capture diverse understandings of food was a methodological approach that allowed the young women to not only contribute their perspectives by drawing on their lived experiences but also to create new knowledges. For the research project I utilized popular education praxis. Popular education values local knowledge and encourages self-empowerment by making connections between a community's immediate concerns and the larger structures of inequality that surround it (Arnold & Burke, 1983). This approach was integral in challenging conventional research methods that reinforce distinctions between the expert and

the subject. As the aim of my research was to make present the voices of young women of colour, popular education allowed me to foster an anti-oppressive environment that decentred the power of "experts" and allowed the participants to honour and bring to life alternative knowledges that had been passed on to them via their families and communities and thus discover themselves as knowledge producers in their own right.

A fundamental aspect of popular education is to conduct research in a way that centres the experience of participants and gives them a great deal of room to determine patterns, theories, strategies and action (Arnold & Burke, 1983). Moreover, the use of a popular educational praxis counters what Tuck (2009), discussing research with Indigenous communities, refers to as extractive research processes that often result from conventional methodologies. In other words, the research methods that I chose aimed to empower participants to create and gain new knowledge that they found beneficial to their communities. Equally important to this study were approaches that integrated participatory creativity, exploration, engagement, and most importantly accessibility.

The project combined the use of arts with group discussions and semi-structured interviews. Arts-informed research is a form of qualitative research that is influenced, but not purely grounded in, the arts (Knowles & Coles, 2008. p.58). It is often used to enhance the understanding of human experiences through non-conventional processes and representational forms of inquiry (Knowles & Coles, 2008.p.59). While conventional research methods can be exclusionary, arts-informed research has the potential to reach audiences beyond the academy, and is often employed within social justice and advocacy contexts. One of the key features of arts-informed research is its goal to acknowledge individuals in societies as knowledge makers (Knowles & Coles, 2008).

The artistic method employed in this study was collage making. Collage is defined as the process of cutting and sticking images and image fragments found in popular print/magazines onto cardstock (Bytler-Kisber, 2008: 265). According to Bytler-Kisber (2008) collages, as a form of qualitative inquiry, are nonlinear and representational and thus have the potential of mediating understanding in new and interesting ways for both the creator and the viewer (p.265). Given the young age and diverse ways of knowing in this sample, collages provided participants with creative and inventive ways of going beyond their current boundaries of understanding health and food environments and of coming to new and heightened conclusions. They also provided them with more concrete ways of generating meanings and discussions on these topics throughout the project.

Group sessions provided a useful setting to allow participants to critically reflect upon their art work. These sessions also followed popular education principles. The use of collages as launching points allowed participants to express verbally the ways in which structural inequalities impact their access to food, their food choices and their health outcomes. Participants also had the opportunity to engage in both individual and collective collage making. The collage making sessions were introduced by guiding research questions, which were stated at the beginning of each workshop. Questions included the following: How do my eating environments such as my home, school and community influence my food consumption choices? What determines our definition of health, healthy eating and poor health?

The use of collages provided useful launching points to allow participants to express the ways in which structural inequalities impact their access to food, food choices and health outcomes. In addition to collages and group discussions, I randomly selected 10 participants to conduct semi-structured interviews with at the end of the project. The interviews allowed me to

further explore questions that emerged from the collage workshops and group discussions (Babbie &Benaquisto, 2002). The interviews also provided a space for the young women to individually contribute their narratives without feeling judged by their peers. Some of the interview questions asked included: Where did you learn what you know about food? How did your collages help you think about the relationship between food, health and the environment? What healthy food options would you like to see offered in your community?

During designated workshop time, participants were given time to work on their own collages, for example as a symbolic representation of their personal experiences, narratives and understandings of food, community food insecurity and health. As a means of adding a food educational aspect to the project, interactive educational sessions (i.e. cooking and/or gardening classes) facilitated by community members and staff were also integrated into the workshops sessions.

Findings

The following themes emerged from the research:

1) Food and social relations: This theme explores the ways in which everyday understandings of social relationships can be enacted through food consumption practices. Participants challenged assumptions that attribute poor food consumption practices to culture and lack of education, by highlighting how social status influences the choices individuals make around food.

2) Accessibility and youth friendly spaces: This theme describes what particular built environments and social attitudes shape when young racialized women eat within their communities. Participants explored the relationship between food consumption, affordability and the appeal of fast-food to youth.

3) Age, rites of passage and safety: This theme illustrates the importance of food purchasing practices to growing up and its relationship to understanding larger social issues such as safety for young women. Participants challenged assumptions that the terrain in which we consume food is void of discrimination and violence.

4) Womanhood and cultural survival: This theme illuminates what it means to be a Black woman in relationship to gender expectations and to the promotion of survival through the preparation of food in general, and cultural foods in particular.

Food and Social Relations

The young women expressed that there are several factors that influence their food consumption choices depending on where and with whom they consume food. Highlighting the connection between food and social relationships, the young women noted that when they were at school and/or in the presence of their peers, their food consumption choices were based on how they wanted to be perceived by their friends. Within the context of group discussions youth were asked why they did or did not bring their lunch to school. Echoing the feelings of others, one of the young women explained her perspective by claiming that food choices specifically during lunch time and after school were all about making and reinforcing your image.

> It's all about how you look at school. If you bought lunch and if you have money…if you don't [buy lunch] then the other kids will start asking what's wrong with you? Why you taking a brown paper bag to school? Bringing your lunch is seen as uncool.

As exemplified in the above quote, for the young women purchasing food, particularly during lunch hours, played a pivotal role in their ability to maintain positive social relations with their peers and avoid social stigma of being perceived as poor.

Adding further context to this discussion, a different participant explained that lack of ability to purchase food at lunchtime often resulted in other youth stigmatizing you as the poor kid, which is socially unacceptable.

> Well, ahhhmm, in my school, if you stay in for lunch, they [other students] gonna start calling you poor and you don't have no money and they really make fun of you for like staying back and like eating your [home-made] lunch.

Notably, for the young women social perceptions regarding their self-image were more important than eating a nutritious meal. As noted above, the young women touched on the ways in which discrimination and stigma also factored into their ability to promote good health, as experiences of discrimination were also seen as threating to their livelihood. Specifically, they were worried about discrimination by other students if they did not purchase their lunch.

The youth also noted that once you start purchasing food during lunch time you are socially praised and quickly accepted into the 'cool' social circle. As noted by one participant during the discussion group,

> And then like, if I were to go to a plaza, [for my] first time. Everybody gonna be like 'Oh! Like their first time at the plaza, do you feel nice? Do you feel nice?' (laughter) So it's really does matter, it does matter if you buy lunch outside school or not. Because ain't nobody want to be seen as the poor kid!

A second participant illustrates the exclusivity that underpins the process of purchasing food at lunch time by sharing her experiences of buying candy after school.

> Everybody just buys a whole bunch of candy and then we all just put the candy in one big bag and then we'll all just sit at the side and start eating it and talking. But if you didn't buy any candy, you don't get no candy! And sometimes you have to hide your money from the kids that don't have any cuz you don't want to share with them.

The research findings contradict common assumptions that youth simply purchase food as a means of participating in the fast-paced convenience lifestyle of contemporary society (e.g.Winson, 2012). My research shows that for young women of low socio-economic status, the ability to purchase food is a crucial factor in their capacity to create positive social relationships

within their community and further navigate the limited food environments in which they reside (see Zafar, 1999; and Engler-Stringer, 2010). For the young women in this study, purchasing food happens to be a pivotal site for young people to develop connections, self-sufficiency, and ideas of belonging. Moreover, it is also the first area in which parents trust them to exercise their autonomy and take steps into womanhood. Thus, through the limited channel of purchasing foods, young women of colour are able to negotiate ideas of self, community and, importantly also, mask impressions of poverty from their peers.

Accessible and youth friendly food spaces

The young women expressed that where they are able to purchase food was also a significant factor in determining the kinds of foods they ate. For the young women choosing food had to align with several criteria. Besides being economically affordable ($3-5 dollars a day), in close proximity to their schools, youth friendly and safe, the place was evaluated according to whether it had added bonuses such as seating areas, washrooms or free Wi-Fi. Many of the young women voiced their preference for eating at fast-food restaurants because the experience was 'less of a hassle'. Contrary to assumptions that suggest surveillance only happens to male-assigned people, the research highlights that the bodies of women, specifically Black women, are also controlled and policed. Participants shared that the ways they are treated within public spaces signal to them that they are unwanted, and that this deters them from consuming healthy food options within their communities. One young woman discusses some of the more formal food spaces available in the community:

> Some places you go people look at you like you don't belong there because you look a certain way, so you're like let's just buy fries from the plaza or Macdonald. Or the space doesn't have any seating so you can sit down and enjoy your food.

As illustrated by this quote, the young women's experiences of being policed and discriminated against also hindered their ability to explore healthier food options within their communities. Such

experiences are rarely documented and included in mainstream food security scholarship. However, the young women were very vocal about how significant they were in deterring them from eating healthier.

This also emerged from the following discussion in response to my question why the young women went to places like Macdonald's. Their responses suggested that they considered it a safe space to eat, and that it had more options and provided more 'bang for your buck'. This is illustrated in the conversation below:

> Facilitator: So why do all of your friends usually go there [McDonald's] to buy lunch?
>
> Participant 1: It's affordable food. Burgers and fries and stuff.
>
> Participant 2: Well, I'd like, I'd like to make a wrap, but I really don't know how to make one, so I like eating it, and they get their Junior Chicken and then we just sit down and relax cause over there there's like air condition and usually funny stuff happens around there.
>
> Participant 3: There's free Wi-Fi.
>
> Facilitator: So it's a social scene?
>
> Participant 4: Yeah and we're not really allowed to go like, too far in the area.

As exemplified above, the young women highlight that finding food within their community is not a neutral process. Rather, it is underpinned by everyday processes that make finding food dangerous for the bodies of Black women. When participant 4 states that as young women they were not allowed to go far into the area, she was referring to the Jane-Finch community and openly highlighting designated spaces (e.g. Mac Donalds, the Jane-Finch mall and pizza pizza) where they were allowed to hangout. Furthermore, contrary to literature discussed above, that aims to attribute the poor eating habits of people of colour to lack of education and inferior culture, these accounts demonstrate that experiences of racism and discrimination deter people of colour from eating healthy food and that considerations of safe spaces, even if they are created by corporations like MacDonald's, often take precedence in their choice where to eat.

Age, ***rites of passage*** and ***safety***

Another young woman notes that when their parents give them money for lunch it is seen as a form of trust that you will not only feed yourself but also do so in ways that are as safe as possible. The young women noted that they often went to the food stores closest to them, which happen to be disproportionately represented by fast food retailers. These are again considered the safest spaces for these young women. As a youth describes the space, during the group discussion, she identifies the many safety issues that they could encounter.

> Yeah, I'll go. Ahmm, well, like, in places like Jane and Finch, there's people smoking, ahmm, drinking alcohol, like gang banging, ahm, shooting fire crackers at each other. We want like to, like build a place where people can go out at night and know that they're not gonna get shot. Knowing like you can wake up in the morning and, like you can wear like whatever colour you want [referring to gang colours]…Like, most crossing lights don't work around here sometimes…And more street lights too.

In the quote above the youth is highlighting how social problems in her community often made it unsafe for young women to move through space. They constituted factors that the young women often had to negotiate and directly compromised their ability to find adequate food options.

In addition to the discussion around access and food, the young women were given an activity to map out their food environments. Many of the youth indicated the more popular stores that they utilized with peers or family members. However what was most interesting about this activity was how the youth unintentionally erased places and left out existing sites from their maps, including the community farm and more formal restaurants in and around that area. The community farm, which is often seen as a key part of the alternative food movement within Toronto, happens to be situated within the border of the Jane-Finch community. Nevertheless, it has not been a space that actively involves the community in its development. During my own activist work within the community, I have noticed that the positions of decision makers and the main farmers there are

often occupied by outsiders to the community. Meanwhile, individuals that are hired to work on the farm were required to come with a high-level of agricultural background. This has had exclusionary effects on community members who lack formal training in this area. In turn, the young people found the farm inaccessible, because the conditions under which they were able to engage with it were limited to basic tours of the farm, and did not allow them to grow their own foods. Thus, the mapping activity suggested that the youth's food landscape is imagined, visualized and understood according to where they had access, felt most comfortable and welcomed, and went on an everyday bases rather, than the official food education places that they knew existed within their community.

This contradicts a literature on health and race that, as many have noted (e.g. Collings-Eves, 2005; Shaw, 2005; Zafar, 1999), often suggests that people of colour have inherently poor eating habits. In contrast, the findings of this research project illustrate that racism and surveillance function as significant barriers that prevent young women of colour from eating nutritionally rich foods. It is noteworthy that women of colour, just like their male counterparts, experience policing and surveillance, even if such experiences are articulated in different ways. For the young women in this study, where they were able to eat or not constituted important sites where their bodies were policed.

Womanhood and cultural survival

For the young women in this study, the ability to maintain cultural traditions through food preparation was highlighted as a significant aspect of womanhood and community survival. In other words, the ability to cook food that is culturally acceptable and tasty is seen as a crucial aspect of being a woman and also self-sufficient. Discussions around this particular topic sparked many dynamic and controversial conversations. Many of the young women adhered to the belief and fear that if you could not cook as a woman you were socially ostracized. One participant claims openly during the group discussion that knowing how to cook is important because:

> When people ask you to do things [as in participate in the preparation process] and you don't know how to cook, they gonna be making fun of you saying you don't know how to cook.

In the same vain, during a discussion on gender roles and expectations another participant claims:

> A man doesn't want a woman that can't cook. How are you going to provide for your kids if you don't learn how to cook yourself? Are you going to rely and buy fast food all the time?

During the conversation one of the participants openly stated that she could not cook. She explained that she does not have the time to learn it because of other expectations and aspirations that trump these skills, such as doing well at school and working. Many of the other young women in the group openly teased her for lacking cooking skills, which provided the study with a vivid example of the social ramifications young women of colour experience when they are perceived to be lacking skills that are attributed to Black womanhood.

However, the young women also noted that their identities of being a woman, which entails gender-specific expectations and domestic roles regarding food preparation, was complicated by uncontrollable circumstances. Specifically, many shared that they had little opportunities and/or channels to learn culturally appropriate cooking skills. For instance, during our lunch preparation sessions for the project, the young women were very open and honest about their ability to participate in the meal preparation process when at home. Many of the young women echoed similar feelings of having little time to experiment when making food because their mother worked long hours and had limited time to make food for their family. It was noteworthy that while the youth were not wordily blaming their mothers, they did put a lot of emphasis on their mothers as the main providers of this kind of knowledge. Nonetheless, when asked who they would first blame for poor health outcomes many of the young women were quick to point the finger at their mothers and then at themselves. When asked during the interviews who they would blame if they got sick the following answers were provided by participants:

> Participant 1: I would blame my mother because she did not teach me how to cook and/or better….

Another participant notes in the individual interview that her mother is always busy and often forgets to do shopping:

> Participant 2: She'll come home and she'll go "Oh crap! I forgot to go to the grocery store and get groceries!" Then she will be like "Here is money, it's your lunch, go buy whatever the hell you want."

When asked to make the connections between poor health and blame on both and individual and structural level, participants were more inclined to place blame for poor health over structural inequality individually.

> Participant 3: I would blame my mother and myself for my lack of self-control over my food choices.

Equally importantly, the young women noted that socio-economic and structural forces hindered their ability to promote and participate in healthy eating through the consumption of cultural foods. This often resulted in them questioning their ability to uphold ideas of womanhood, such as their ability to cook cultural foods and promote cultural survival. For instance, the following participant noted that the price of food in their community is problematic.

> The society makes healthy food expensive and junk food cheap. Like, if they want people to be healthy, why are they raising the price up for health foods and, you know what I mean? And not for junk food? They give us all this fatty food and then you walk around and then sometimes you're like I wanna be healthy and you see those other people with bikini bodies and everything, you're like, oh, I wanna be like that and then you pass that McDonalds and you're like, stop. Let me reverse.

The young women thus questioned why society promotes healthy food consumption but prices healthy food in ways that are inaccessible to everyone. The above quote further challenges assumptions that blame people of colour and their culture for poor health. In contrast, they openly state that they want to be healthy but that healthy foods are often inaccessible to them.

During a larger group discussion that examined the Canadian food guide, which has been designated as a standard of healthy eating within Canada, the participants had the opportunity to evaluate the usefulness of this guide to their abilities to promote healthy lives. The youth noted that health education channels like the Canadian food guide hindered their access to healthy food because it was culturally void of foods that represented them. This is illustrated in the conversation below.

> Facilitator: Does the Canadian food guide represent cultural foods? Or people of colour?
>
> Participant: In my opinion, when they were creating this they probably should have got at least, all different racial backgrounds together, because this is like, pertaining to ahh, Caucasian racial background, because, to be honest with you, I'm being straight up, Black people don't even eat what's on here and where is the rice and peas? Also Black people have different bodies and the food on here [i.e Canadian food guide] and the amount doesn't reflect our body types.

As exemplified in the quote the young women do not feel as though the national food guide is universal and inclusive of their racial backgrounds and bodily needs. Confirming Collings-Eves's (2005) argument that food consumption is a form cultural domination, the young women highlight that food education is a means of assimilation into white society given its failure to represent healthy versions of culturally appropriate foods.

For young women of colour, dominant forms of food education were internalized and further understood as a form of hegemonic discourse and assimilation into white Canadian society. In the focus group, they all openly noted their disinterest in utilizing the Canadian food guide because it threatened their cultural identity and foods they found culturally significant. The findings presented in this section thus confirm that there is a lack of literature that explores the relationship between food access, consumption practices and women of colour. They also indicate that the relationships between these categories are complicated by the various ways in which young women of colour come to interact with their food environments.

Discussion

The study underlines that the decision making practices by young Black women in Jane-Finch around food are complicated and shaped by various facilitators and barriers within their food environments. On an individual level, the young women often utilized the kinds of food they chose to consume as a means of crafting their social identity in relation to their peers. More specifically, food operated as a channel through which they were able to challenge ideas of poverty and social class. This particular finding confirms Guptill et al's (2013) argument that people socially construct themselves through the consumption of food.

The context of social exclusion and stigma that the larger community of colour living within Jane-Finch experiences further informed the young women's performances of their social, specifically class, identities, which were reflected in their food choices. For many of the young women purchasing MacDonald's food, irrespective of its nutritional benefits, represented monetary wealth. For the young women, living within the socially stigmatized space of Jane-Finch shapes their ability to establish positive ideas of self. Importantly, such practices of agency through food purchasing had more immediate importance to insider/outsider understandings of who they were than their ability to promote good health. This partly contradicts earlier-cited arguments by McClintock (2011) and Winson (2012), who suggest that people within food deserts are passive targets of manipulation at the hands of corporate concentrations of fast foods. For the young women in this study, purchasing foods that were considered popular, in this case MacDonald's, allowed them to challenge negative assumptions linking Blackness and poverty. It is thus important to highlight that the young women in this study did not simply eat fast food due to their lack of health and food education, let alone their cultural inferiority. Rather, fast food was a strategic means to challenge social stigma within the limited channels that were open to them.

This is an important insight that anti-racist food justice activists can learn from. What would it mean for food education to begin by affirming young Black people's agency and desire to resist negative assumptions, rather than by treating them as ignorant and passive consumers? Moreover, and contrary to literature (Schlosser 2001; Winson, 2012) that suggests the consumption of fast-food precludes agency, many of the young women also understood purchasing of popular food as a an active strategy through which they could resist not only poverty but also discrimination and social exclusion.

Furthermore, when examining the reasons why young people choose to consume nutritionally poor foods, there is a gap in research that looks at how racism pervades and shapes not only what low-income communities of colour living in food deserts have access to but also what deters certain groups from utilizing certain food venders within their communities. For the young women in this study, the policing and surveillance of their bodies did not stop at their food consumption. As noted above, many of the young women felt reluctant to eat at the healthy food options because of past experiences of racism and discrimination that they encountered from store venders. This theme resonates with Carby's (1992) argument that Black women's bodies have historically been deemed sexually degenerate and in need of surveillance. While my research does not focus on ideas of sexual deviance, this argument nevertheless helps us contextualize some of the deep-rooted negative assumptions that the young women in this study confronted on an everyday level.

Moreover, for the young women processes that regulated where they could eat were structured by mechanisms of power and exclusion. This particular finding supports James et al's (2010) point that racism and everyday experiences of discrimination negatively affect individuals'

health. More specifically, it highlights how racism limits the food options of Black youth, specifically women.

The young women's accounts further stressed that their access to nutritionally rich food sources, in combination with community infrastructures, often contradicted and undermined their ability to uphold gender expectations of Black womanhood and cultural survival. This finding confirms Zafar's (1999) point about the struggle of Black women to maintain and challenge mainstream ideas of the Black woman. This finding again contradicts mainstream assumptions, as articulated by scholars such as Russell (2006), Pollan (2007) and Schlosser (2001), who attribute the poor health of people of colour to individual lifestyle, cultural inferiority, and lack of interest in alternative food movements. My findings, in contrast, highlight the complex ways that structural inequality foster conditions, such as food deserts are conducive to poor eating habits. Moreover, in challenging such racially charged assumptions, my findings around lack of youth friendly and healthy culturally sensitive eating spaces, support Razack's (2008) and Omi's and Winant's (1994) theories on race and space and racial projects, which highlight the relationship between ideas of race and disparities within communities of colour. More specifically, they confirms the above scholarship's challenges to racist ideas regarding the causes of poor health within communities of colour by looking at the ways that racism and ideas of race are created, maintained and further institutionalized.

For instance, the young women's rejection of the Canadian food guide as an appropriate reflection of Black experiences presents an important critique of the Canadian nation building project in the realm of food. My findings demonstrate that the young women were also able to articulate the failures of such official food education documentation to achieve good health in racialized communities. The also highlight the importance of examining where good food is

located, and what the cost of these foods is. This further confirms interventions by Omi and Winant (1994), Bullard (1996) and Pulido (2000), who maintain that food disparities between white and communities of colour located in wealthy and low-income areas do not occur naturally but are the results of racial projects and environmental racism that form the very basis of our current food system.

The accounts by the young women of colour of the various barriers they encounter in their ability to perform positive Black womanhood and the backlash that they endure as a result support earlier work by Zafar (1999), who highlights that women are expected to feed themselves as well as their families (see also Engler-Stringer 2010). This has significant implications for Black women who, as a result of colonialism and slavery, which constructed cooking, specifically the ability to maintain culture through the preparation of cultural foods, as one of the markers of Black womanhood, have had to struggle to find positive understandings of self through food.

In conclusion, my findings highlight that young women of colour are confronted with several facilitators and barriers in their ability to maintain good health and develop positive identities as Black women. Many of these barriers were rooted in structural or everyday experiences of racism and discrimination. These often outweighed participants' ability to promote positive cultural identities through the consumption of culturally relative foods.

Conclusion and Outlook

The study aimed to explore the various barriers and facilitators that influenced the food choices of young women of colour within the Jane-Finch community. Participants spoke to a diverse selection of reasons that determined where, when and why they purchased foods. Many of the young women understood the importance of cultural foods and survival but felt that there was

a lack of nutritionally rich, youth friendly and culturally sensitive food options and education. This often left them with limited choices when searching for food. Furthermore, the young women in this study illustrated that food and food choices functioned as a means of everyday survival in their social circles. This further extended to ideas of Black womanhood and safety within their community as their everyday food consumption practices impinged on their abilities to produce positive Black female identities and further good health.

The narratives of the young women in this study suggest that the factors that influence their eating habits are complex and shaped by structural, historical, social and economic processes. The findings also suggest that more anti-racist research needs to be conducted that centres the lived experiences and agency of people of colour in challenging everyday structures of power. For the young women in this study, food consumption practices were not simply a means of feeding themselves; they also allowed them to negotiate negative ideas of their identity and community and resist culturally insensitive food education practices such as the Canadian food guide. Finally, the findings confirmed earlier arguments by writers on race, space and environmental racism that explain poor health outcomes in conjunction with larger systems of power and inequality. Much work remains to be done to extend these insights to a food studies literature that continues to attribute the poor health outcomes of communities of colour to their lifestyle and culture.

There are three main limitations to the study. Firstly, the sample size used in the study was relatively small, thus making it difficult to highlight broader trends and patterns among low-income women of colour. Secondly, the participants for this study were recruited by snow balling through my and the youth leaders' personal networks, which could have possibly limited the diversity of participant's perspectives. As a service provider within the community and anti-racist

food justice activist, I also acknowledge that my work with some of the young women may have influenced their contributions to the study. Finally, the sampling strategy and research design were biased towards participants who were non-transgender – female assigned and female identifying – which in turn limited the shared perspectives to non-heteronormative gender conforming bodies. Future research should aim to incorporate gender diversity. A good place to start may be how colonialism erased gender diversity in racialized and colonized communities in the first place, as well as, fragmented the fabric of nutritionally rich cultural foods within these communities.

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