SOCIAL REPRODUCTION, GOVERNMENTALITY AND RESILIENCE:

UNPAID FOOD WORK OF FIRST-GENERATION IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

Community work involving first-generation immigrant (FGI) women, though indispensable for many non-profit organizations, needs nuanced discussion in academic and policy conversations. My research centers on FGI women's volunteer work in food-based non-profits, including food banks and community food organizations. I use the interdisciplinary concepts of social reproduction, governmentality and resilience to understand the intersectional nuances that arise in the lived experiences and situated knowledges of FGI women community volunteers. I center Black, Indigenous, migrant and other marginalized feminist scholarship to contextualize first-generation immigrant food work. I juxtapose this scholarship and my field learnings against my own positionality and geographies of space and place. This includes both my caste privilege, model minority immigrant status and settler privileges and my marginalization as a racialized woman, mother and first-generation immigrant with limited social capital. I present three key learnings from my research:1. Migration stories are intersectional, and reasons to volunteer can be varied and informed by both personal choices and socio-economic structures like family, religion, ethnicity, institutions, local and federal governments; 2. Governmentality plays a key role in influencing FGI women's community social reproduction and the feminization of non-profit food advocacy organizations; 3. FGI women and other workers in the non-profit food sectors show resilience and resistance in re-organizing and negotiating systemic barriers posed by the precarious environment, including funding issues, spatial constraints, and the transitional nature of care work. In certain aspects of social reproduction, I observed the existence of temporary activities that often get subsumed under broadly defined activities of cooking, cleaning, childcare, eldercare, volunteering, advocacy, etc. I call it transience in social reproduction. This transience was seen in sudden, unexpected requirements of care carried out within social reproduction activities, like picking up a neighbour's child from school, along with one's own; the children wanting to play in the school park while you mind them. These requirements of care are fluid, temporary and episodic, but part of social reproduction labour.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

It was a wintry afternoon in March 2025, and I was sitting in my PhD supervisor's lecture. She was guiding senior-year students in the "Women and Work" course through Cindy Blackstock's work on Canada's treatment of First Nations children and their disproportionately high representation in Canada's foster care system. Dr. Angele Alook was the guest lecturer for the day, and her insights made me think about spaces of care from a fresh perspective. Alook referenced Nehiyaw (Cree) concepts that placed care at the center of economies and valued labour, both paid and unpaid, in care work. She called capitalism a Wiindigo economy. (LaDuke and Cowen in Alook et al. 121) comparing it to cannibalism and greed that valued profits over caring for people. Caring for children and elders is at the heart of Indigenous culture, knowledge, economies, and ways of non-exploitative, reciprocal living with the land (L. B. Simpson; Alook; Maynard and Simpson; Tuck and Yang). First Nations, Métis, and Inuit scholars have posited how colonialism and capitalism have struck directly at this center by dispossessing Indigenous communities of their land (Roth; Alberio and Soubirou) controlling Indigenous economies and excluding them from colonial trade (Sangster) and separating the children from their caring community of parents and elders (Blackstock et al.). Feminist researchers like Meg Luxton, Tithi Bhattacharya, Nancy Fraser, Naila Kabeer, and Nancy Folbre theorized caring for families and communities under social reproduction, furthering the Marxist understanding of unpaid, undervalued and underpaid work. Social reproduction is seen as a collection of activities traditionally unpaid and underpaid, involving domestic work, biological reproduction, childcare, and eldercare in families and communities.

In this thesis, I am proposing the existence of transience in social reproduction. I am trying to highlight that social reproduction activities are often intangible and invisible, and I observed a sense of transience and fluidity in this already imperceptible term when participants shared their stories of work, as well as in my personal reflection on unpaid care: sudden, unexpected requirements of unpaid care activities carried out along with regular social reproduction activities like picking up a neighbour's child from school, along with one's own, and the children wanting to play in the school park while you mind them. These are temporary and episodic, but part of social reproduction labour. Certain spaces and times create additional requirements of labour that are not necessarily visible in academic theorizing. I discuss this concept in chapters four and seven. Building on transience in

social reproduction (TSR) in my autoethnography, I narrate TSR observations that were uncovered in my conversations with FGI women participants and structural factors that led to this transience. This learning arises from an understanding of disruption in social reproduction that Black, Indigenous and other marginalized communities have faced in Canada and India, places I have occupied. My observation of this disruption as a hindu caste-privileged, Indian immigrant is an amalgamation of both privilege and marginalization. I have both lived and carried my privileges and faced newer forms of marginalization as a racialized, marginalized settler. I write more about the genesis of this observation of disruption below.

In my last ten years of living on this land as a settler, one thing that stayed with me was the resistance of Indigenous communities, taking up space and persisting in their labour to fight back against colonial erasure and dispossession of knowledge, language, and culture. Historically and today, First Nations, Metis, and Inuit populations have fought against historical and systemic neglect of care crises amongst children, elders, women, and the environment (Maynard and Simpson; Lawrence and Dua; Blackstock and Palmater). The native communities have shown up for care and advocacy as an integral part of their social reproduction. Community resilience through care has been persistent across colonial whiplashes in the form of residential schools (L. B. Simpson, *Noopiming*), the Sixties Scoop (*Sixties Scoop Survivor…*; Hanson; Tuck and Yang), missing and murdered Indigenous Women (Robert; Windspeaker), and now the child welfare and foster care systems that have a high number of Indigenous children taken away from families and communities (Blackstock et al.). Settler communities in the margins have faced the pernicious continuities of these colonial policies that are both capitalistic and patriarchal (Mama in Upadhyay 264). They have particularly negotiated historical and contemporary marginalizations through structures that regulate and control labour in households and markets through migration and colonial complicity. Academic scholarship, news pieces, stories and anecdotes on exclusionary experiences of early Black settlers in Nova Scotia, the Chinese Head Tax and Japanese Internment Camps that kept many families apart, the Komagata Maru incident that kept early Sikh settler men from entering Canada (denying their hope of settling families), and discriminatory migration policies against Caribbean nurses and domestic workers are some examples that point to these pernicious continuities. Centering unpaid care work in the community provided by first-generation immigrant (FGI) women volunteers, I want to understand how these women make meaning of their volunteering experiences in the non-profit food sector. What are historical and/or contemporary structures that have impacted their care work? In this

introductory chapter, I provide a background that sets the course for my doctoral dissertation and present my research questions, an introduction to theoretical frameworks and chapter summaries.

Research snapshot

My research centers on community food work performed by first-generation immigrant (hereafter referred to as FGI) women, many with children and dependents. I investigate this food work as an extension of household work and social reproduction (childcare, domestic work, elder care). Centering community food work as mother-work (coined by Patricia Hill Collins), I adopt the theoretical concepts of social reproduction, governmentality, and resilience to empirically investigate FGI women's unpaid food work in the community. This research interest arises from my experience as a community food worker. I draw on my existing volunteer membership as a "Community Engagement Working Group Member" with a food advocacy organization in my neighbourhood to understand the experiences of other FGI women like me. I interviewed 21 research participants, of whom 9 were volunteers, and 12 were paid workers. All 9 of the volunteers were FGI women, and 3 of the paid workers were FGI women and 2 others were migrant workers who arrived with an international student permit visa. 6 of the rest were paid workers who were Canadian-born of European descent, and 1 identified as Caribbean Canadian (also Canadian-born). My FGI women volunteers and paid women workers who identified as FGI women/on international student permit visa hailed from countries like Argentina, Brazil, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jamaica, the UK, and Sri Lanka. Besides some who entered on a points-based immigration system, some had arrived as refugees to Canada, fleeing war and genocide and later applied for a work permit. In addition to interviewing FGI women volunteers, I decided to interview paid workers to understand systemic barriers, historical policies, and limitations in non-profit organizations that impact and/or sustain unpaid volunteer work. Paid workers who were Canadian-born had either started volunteering and joined the sector later as employees or were running their own non-profit community initiatives and later joined the organizations as employees.

As a volunteer, I have assisted the organization as a fresh food markets facilitator, breakfast programs assistant and community cooking workshop volunteer. Since the pandemic, I have seen an increased need for volunteer work in the organization and its partners working in the York Region Municipality. I detail the effects of the pandemic on food security and situate the increased need for

volunteering and food work in the next few sections. These concepts form the crux of this research, from which theoretical hooks and research questions are detailed further in the chapter.

Pandemic and food insecurity

Canada's food system exports close to ninety billion dollars of food products while contributing about one hundred forty billion to the gross domestic product of Canada's economy (Prof. Michael von Massow in *It's Good Canada*). Despite high food production and exports, Statistics Canada reported one in ten Canadians being food insecure during the pandemic (Polsky and Garriguet). Many households were turning to community food programs by food banks, schools, and religious organizations for food access (Food Banks Canada, *High Inflation…*). Food insecurity has been persistently increasing since the pandemic (Daly et al.). A recent report released by Food Banks Canada in mid-October 2023 specifically highlighted some staggering numbers: one in three food bank users were children, and a quarter of clients were first-generation immigrant settlers who arrived in Canada less than ten years ago (Schmunk). The report further states that nearly forty percent of racialized clients and more than fifty percent of Indigenous Peoples who participated in the study mentioned going hungry in the last year. Community workers and allied community food access partners like churches and schools were facing the challenges of grocery-inflated prices that made access to healthy food a challenge (Nikkel). While established food security researchers are advocating for intersections between income (Men and Tarasuk; Tarasuk, Mitchell, et al.), rent and housing ("Food Affordability in York Region"), federal agricultural strategies (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada) and food security, the pandemic has exacerbated the need and put the onus on community food work and advocacy.

Post-pandemic need for volunteering and community advocacy

There has been particular advocacy for community food work initiatives like public markets, community or home gardening, farm markets, and street vendor support(*Food Frontline Voices*; York Region Municipality; Zangouei; Mullins et al.; Lickers). These initiatives rely heavily on volunteers, particularly women, posing unique challenges for women community advocates during the pandemic and beyond. Research and media have emphasized the extra household labour the pandemic has brought on women with children and dependents (Bolis; Dugarova; Bay et al.; Power). There are academic and community voices individually focusing on pandemic community work (Kabeer et al.; Vohra and Taneja; *No Small Matter*) and pandemic food advocacy (Mullins et al.;

Zangouei; Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; Men and Tarasuk). However, academic and community focus on women's community work as mother-work during the pandemic and otherwise, particularly first-generation immigrant women, is sparse. My research tries to add to community and academic conversations in this lacuna.

While the neoliberal economy of Canada has put an onus on community advocates, with forty percent of food banks being run by volunteers (Food Banks Canada, "Celebrating Volunteers…") the pandemic gave rise to particular neoliberal downloading of responsibilities. The nature of community advocacy during the pandemic changed as food bank donors and volunteers became clients. (Schmunk) and there was a volunteer shortage during and after the lockdown (Hahmann). As a community food advocate, I have also seen how food bank users have doubled as volunteers during the pandemic. Thus, community food work in my neighbourhood and social networks has been geared towards addressing food insecurity and underlying issues that cause barriers to food access and utilization. Existing food services have been increasing in the community by ramping up partnerships with existing networks, including volunteers, clients, donors, farmers' networks, and local restaurants. New partnerships and initiatives are being formed, like community colleges connecting with local food banks (Zangouei). Food-based non-profits are reaching out to the community for not just grocery or food donations but also inviting more volunteer labour and time. Also visible are requests for donations other than food; for example, food containers, households for soup kitchens, diapers, feminine hygiene items, and winter accessories, to name a few.

Nuancing community food work experiences

Since the pandemic and ensuing times have put the issue of food security right at the top of our list of basic needs, information on communities struggling with food insecurity, and government reports are available (Hahmann; Food Banks Canada, *High Inflation…;* Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; Banner; Tarasuk, Li, et al.). However, community and academic knowledge could be more nuanced about food workers who are working in the community to ensure food access. In my experience as a community food volunteer and neighbourhood food advocate, I have noticed how food work and advocacy are often dominated by race- and class-privileged individuals when it comes to media visibility and policy decisions. In less visible community spaces of a neighbourhood, or informal spaces of ethnic communities, food work and advocacy are often carried out by actors marginalized in terms of race, class, gender, ethnicity, ability, and other markers of marginalization.

The food access circle often has volunteers, clients, and donors changing their status interchangeably. By highlighting the experiences of food workers, my research could add to the recentering of government funding and policy by bringing various marginalized spaces to the center.

Centering food work by FGI women

Visible spaces of food work and advocacy in my neighbourhood show the involvement of individuals, government, civil society organizations, food banks, community fridges, and non-profit organizations. (Food Banks Canada; *The Intersection Between…*; Zangouei). In these spaces, I see the presence of race- and class-privileged heterosexual women (and men) in print, social media, online news magazines, and other publicity materials. They gain community awards and recognition for the work they do. Working alongside them are first-generation immigrant women in my community/neighbourhood who are involved in food work, mostly in connection with local food banks and community food networks, religious organizations, and spiritual and ethnic networks. The effort and labour of women in these spaces often go unnoticed. Thus, I argue that community work could be an enabler. (Cortes; Banks) as well as an underminer (Cons and Paprocki; Illner; Rankin, "Governing Development") in providing, accessing, and utilizing food for self and family. It involves complex experiences not only on the path to becoming food secure but also complex labour for food workers who are ensuring this security with their work, exacerbated by the pandemic (Moffat et al.; Polsky and Garriguet). The labour of FGI women in ensuring this access is an extension of mother work in the community. Within this space, my objective is to focus on the lived experiences of FGI women and their particularities in community food work. I aim to center the space of communities in food work performed by marginalized FGI women. In doing so, I want to bridge academic understandings and community practices of unpaid food work by first-generation immigrant women.

Building on this background, the next few sections will present a glossary of terms, research questions, and chapter summaries.

Defining key terms to set the context for this study

First-generation immigrants (FGI): Statistics Canada defines first-generation immigrants as persons "who were born outside Canada, persons who are now, or once were, immigrants to Canada" (S. Canada). This definition is all-encompassing and is not adequate to understand heterogeneity within FGI communities. As per the latest population census, Statistics Canada has reported that almost one in four persons tends to be an immigrant in Canada. In the last five years, more than a

million individuals landed in Canada as first-generation immigrants. Yet food work by the immigrant population, and specifically first-generation immigrant advocacy, remains invisible in conversations around food advocacy and security (Moffat et al.). Besides identifying themselves as FGI community members, some of my participants and/or their families landed in Canada as refugees and international students. Government of Canada defines refugees as persons who flee their country on account of fear of persecution or abuse by their government (Immigration). The webpage further explains how forcible movement to other countries can occur in fear of persecution or violence due to religion, race, political opinions, social identities, to name a few. Entry into Canada deeply affected choices to volunteer, as I detail in Chapter Four. Two of my research participants landed in Canada as international students and were paid workers (defined below) in a student-based union that spearheaded food security initiatives. International students do not have permanent residency status, but have obtained authorization from the Government of Canada to pursue education and apply for permanent residency (Tuey and Bastien 4). I interviewed them about their immigration experiences, as well as their opinions as paid workers, as they were born outside of Canada, even if not seen legally as immigrants.

Paid workers: For this study, paid workers are defined as workers in food-based non-profits and food service partners. They may be FGIs or Canadian-born, but what further differentiates their perspectives and experiences is their paid positions and/or many years of experience working in non-profit food advocacy and services. Paid workers were invited by sending mass email invitations to partner organizations of my main research organization. They reached out to me for further discussions before we set the interviews.

Community: Critiques of neoliberalism have presented community as a contested concept, where state accountability for social welfare is downloaded onto individuals and society (Rankin, "Governing Development"; Fyfe; Miraftab). I discuss community as an enabler as well as a disempowering entity in the literature and methods chapters. Ilcan and Basok propose that researchers look at the community as a governing body where non-profit organizations that rely on government or charity funding mobilize citizens as volunteers to solve issues of social welfare like food, health, housing, and education that arise in a neighbourhood (Ilcan * and Basok * 128–29). State structures, originally responsible for social welfare supports, have dispersed these duties to non-profit organizations, which in turn have taken the responsibility to train community volunteers to assume responsibility for the welfare of one another (130). Ilcan and Basok call this "responsible

citizenship" and the non-profit sector's work as "responsibilization of citizens" (130-131). Fyfe, from the case study of the government's active role in the development of the third sector comprising community organizations and non-profits, speaks to this phenomenon as "neo-communitarianism". Fyfe argues how government actively examines the potential for volunteers and voluntary organizations in the "regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods". Volunteers' conception of community work can highlight their definition of community and belongingness in pursuing community projects. This study situates volunteers, workers and service seekers within the spatial site of community organizations to understand their experiences. of community work (unpaid/underpaid labour). My focus is on sites and labour of social reproduction that address food access that specifically situating FGI women's experiences at the centre. Rankin, in her article, "Governing development: neoliberalism, microcredit, and rational economic woman", narrates the microcredit community projects with the Nepalese merchant community. The article shows the invisibility of academic conversations on women individuals' understanding of themselves as community actors, their conception of community and the resultant choice of labour for community microfinance projects (Rankin 23–24).

For bell hooks, "communities of care" were spaces of (social reproduction) ritual that helped one belong to a community, which she called rituals of regard (hooks, *Belonging…* 228–29). Reading hooks, I gathered "community" can be defined and understood by various actors in unique ways despite belonging to one particular place, within a household, a neighbourhood, or a larger community where care and volunteerism occur. In "Enacting a Latinx decolonial politic of belonging", Cahuas and Arraiz Matute highlight voices of volunteers and underpaid workers in the Latinx community serving organization and their conceptions of belonging to a "community" through their volunteer work (Cahuas and Arraiz Matute). The authors try to understand how these workers define their citizenship in the space of settler colonialism from both the perspectives of Canada and Latin America. I take this learning to see how FGI women conceptualize their work and understanding of community. These varied conceptions of "responsible citizenship" narratives make me want to understand the subjectivities of FGI women's labour and their conceptions of volunteering in the community.

Food security and food work: Focusing on FGI women, I particularize community food work as social reproduction, mostly unpaid, and food advocacy as done by these women. In feminist food studies, food work is "physical, mental, and emotional labour associated with acquiring and

preparing food and planning and coordinating meals" (Parker et al. 272). Food security, by definition, underlines access to healthy, nutritious, culturally suitable food (Food Secure Canada; Wilson et al.). One in six households and one in five children are food insecure in Canada, and the pandemic has only heightened the issue (Tarasuk, Li et al.; Polsky and Garriguet).

Though food insecurity has been considered a financial issue (Martin; Tarasuk; Fraser and Parizeau; Frank; L Mah and Baker), the recent pandemic and continuing years have highlighted food insecurity causes that go beyond class and income issues (Food Banks Canada, *High Inflation…*; Beardsley et al.). Consequently, culturally suitable food and access to food for racialized, marginalized populations have received more attention (*Fed Up*; Lickers; *Food Frontline Voices*; *The Intersection Between*). However, food work for food security for first-generation immigrants has received scant attention, as they are seen as mostly secure in comparison to marginalized "Canadian-born" communities (Moffat et al. 15–16; Tarasuk 27–28; Polsky and Garriguet 23). Through my focus on FGI women, I propose two arguments: First, immigrant identities are intersectional (Nash; Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing…") with particular marginalization that could be invisible due to the heightened immigrant identities that potentially mask age, gender, sexuality, (dis) ability, poverty, family status, citizenship status, race, caste, migration status, to name a few. For example, the food work knowledges of a recently immigrated woman versus a long-term immigrant would differ due to privilege, access, and information. To elaborate, long-settled immigrant women could have developed a more diverse and multicultural network that would enrich their food work experiences. Second, it is important to note that immigrant food work, access, and utilization benefit from collaboration with existing community leaders, most importantly Black, Indigenous, and other racialized, marginalized food advocates (*The Intersection Between…*). These benefits can occur in the form of knowledge sharing about the availability of traditional fruits and vegetables, mutual recipe exchanges, recognizing different ways to achieve better food adoption, food access and security.

Centering marginalized knowledges and contextualizing FGI accountability and privilege

Feminists working on community and social reproduction have argued how neoliberal states have an increased dependency on local community and civil society actors for community labour (Rankin; Illner; Rice et al.). I explain more about this dependency through Michel Foucault's governmentality in Chapter 2. Food work and community advocacy have received great attention

over the last few decades. Indigenous and Black communities in Canada have been at the center of food insecurity. Even if these communities may not have been at the center of policy and research, experiences of food insecurity issues have put these communities on the frontline of food advocacy for decades, making their knowledges valuable and accessible to first-generation immigrants. This has helped FGIs benefit from the policies that historically other marginalized communities fought for. For example, researching food work during the pandemic provides evidence of increased precarity in immigrant lives on one end (KC; Government of Canada; Statistics Canada). At the same time, besides food precarity, Black communities were disproportionately criminalized and executed (Maynard and Simpson; Diverlus et al.; Turner). Across decades, Indigenous communities continue to face ongoing state-led dispossession, violence, and brutality, including inaccessibility to nutritious food and clean water (Coulthard; Blackstock and Palmater; A. Simpson). This exclusion is felt in "pernicious continuities" (Upadhyay) by other marginalized and equity-seeking groups, in particular ways. These include FGI women and their families, and international students, including women, refugee families, persons with disabilities, and multigenerational families facing food crises, and all these experiences are lived in particular ways that need to be understood. There is an intersectional understanding (Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing…"; Nash) of FGI women's unpaid community work (Banks; Gross; Turner; Kabeer et al.) in academic conversations. The Coronavirus pandemic has disproportionately created extra work for FGI women to advocate for their family's economic, social, safety, and survival needs beyond the household and into the community (Ferguson; Cortes; Bromwich et al.). Research and media have emphasized the extra household labour the pandemic has brought on women with children and dependents (KC; Bolis). Community work during the pandemic and ensuing years needs a nuanced academic understanding to improve the visibility of food work and, consequently, food access. However, there is little attention paid to food work and advocacy outside the household (Parker et al.) as women's food work is often seen as a household activity only. Federal, provincial, and community organizations working on food security stress the importance of collaboration between different actors, including volunteers, users of services, workers and the state ("The SDGs"; Banner; *The Intersection…*) to ensure the right to nutritious and culturally suitable food for all (Lickers). This includes highlighting the lived experiences of communities and individuals who do not often get to be at the center of decision-making in food policies and debates (A. M. Collins; Martin).

As a response to this call, my research highlights food work and knowledges around the margins of gender, age, race, ability, sexuality, ethnicity, immigration status, class, and religion, to name a few. Though women are often seen to perform food work, feminists and community leaders have observed connections around gender, ability, race, class, religion, immigration status, and ethnicity (Swan et al.; Fraser and Parizeau; Lloro; Parker et al.) that can involve more actors in collaboration with women. This mirrors the focus of the United Nations' sustainable development goals and the Canadian federal and local policies that aim at looking to address food insecurity through the lens of poverty alleviation, environmental racism, and other racial and gender justice initiatives ("The Sustainable Development Goals"; Food Secure Canada).

The funding from state and charity recognizes social welfare but places the onus of labour on women and other marginalized genders in the community to carry out community food work, often as volunteers. I aim to understand the meaning-making of this volunteerism, underpaid community work, from the perspective of FGI women. I rely on the following theoretical hooks of social reproduction, governmentality , and community resilience to orient my focus. I explain these briefly below and engage with them in detail in the next chapter:

Social reproduction

Social reproduction is a key concept in feminist thought that is used to theorize biological reproduction, care (traditionally, unpaid or underpaid) provided by women performing mother work, including food work, on an everyday basis and generationally. Women's social reproductive activities ensure the everyday running of the economy and society (Bakker; Bezanson and Luxton). My examples stem from my residence in Canada as a settler, my caste-privileged life back home in India, and my life as an immigrant mother and worker in Canada.

A key observation by social reproduction researchers points to how the work of Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities is often invisible, as this work does not necessarily fit in the traditionally defined spheres of private and public spaces (Banks 10; Bhattacharya 9–10). Black and Indigenous feminists question white liberal feminists' preoccupation with social reproduction within private households (hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*; Collins; Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing…"; Maynard and Simpson; Oyěwùmí; Lawrence and Dua). They highlight concepts such as community mothering, other mothers, and women-centred networks (Collins 178), thereby extending the notion of mother-work outside the household. Robyn Maynard and Leanne

Betasamosake Simpson discuss the devastating effects of COVID-19 stay-at-home orders on alternative economies of the world that disproportionately affected the work of mothers as primary providers in countries like Angola, Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa (Maynard and Simpson). These mothers are the main procurers and providers of food for their families in these countries and their work of providing nutritious food to the family extends their social reproduction work from private to public spheres (Maynard and Simpson 41–43)Community activism, specifically, "tent city" organization (Diverlus et al.) in the Black Lives Matter movement, Toronto, is another example within Canada where mothering and activism led to the building of an alternative city that included the building of tents for camping in front of the police headquarters, catered community meals, health center, programming for children (Hudson and Diverlus in Diverlus et al. 12). Simpson notes the presence of Mohawk Warrior and Haudensonee Confederacy Flag in the *"*#BLMTOTentCity created by queer/trans-Black activists in front of Toronto Police Service Headquarters for two weeks in the spring of 2016, in response to the announcement that no charges would be laid against the Toronto police officers involved in the homicide of Andrew Loku" (Maynard and Simpson 77). What is interesting and shows evidence of shared yet unique struggles is the BLMTO's mention of collaboration with Indigenous and Tamil allies that inspired and supported this movement (Janaya Khan in Diverlus et al. 121). Researchers in the field of decolonial, racialized mothering and activism critique "Western" feminists' theorizing of the binaries in public and private space of social reproduction (Anderson in O'Reilly, *Matricentric Feminism* 125).

Social reproduction and immigrant mother-work have been seen to transcend public and/or private spheres amongst immigrant women workers in Canada. A specific example is immigrant Filipino women's transnational mother-work, highlighted by Tungohan's concept of Hyper-Maternalism (Tungohan 43–45). Hyper-maternalism is "constant surveillance and contact with their children, allowing them to meet societal expectations concerning maternal care" (Tungohan 47). Through digital and social media, Filipina women transcended boundaries of public and/or private spheres of social reproduction and fulfilled their transnational mother-work through technology (Tungohan 46–47). By assuming the role of mothers as well as breadwinners, they managed to resist their stereotyping as absentee mothers(48). By highlighting transnational mother-work, hyper-maternalism as a concept questions the definition of care-work confined within the household. It also adds complexity to the concept that marginalized mother-work is a collective effort and not an individual one, by providing evidence that the onus still remains with the mother to take

accountability for raising children. This is an example of research where the author shows how the accountability of mothers towards care work is not only highlighted and questioned as a social norm but also carried internationally by migrant workers. This transnational mother-work occurs in spaces that transcend global borders, which are not visible to dominant policies around care and social welfare supports for such mothers. Tungohan's hyper-maternalism as a concept questions the assumption of caregiver and care-receiver being in the same household. It also adds complexity to the concept that marginalized mother-work is a collective effort (mothers working outside, and caregivers present in the household) and not merely an individual responsibility. The lack of physical presence enables hyper-maternalism as a negotiation. Mothers in Tungohan's study explained how they spent additional time on video calls and check-ins through WhatsApp to stay connected to their children's education, health and success. The study also uncovers social reproduction layers in the form of hyper-maternalism, deep reliance on transnational care networks of migrant care workers that make their labour possible in Canada and benefit the Canadian population.

Dalit feminists in India and the diaspora have problematized traditional spheres of social reproduction. Dalit-Bahujan (caste-oppressed) standpoints argue that, in many roles as women and other marginalized genders (Gidla; Rege; Tamalpakula; Leonard), including the act of mothering (Roy in Sangha and Gonsalves), Dalit women are triply burdened through class, caste, and gender (Paik; Tamalpakula; Kamble) and vulnerable to policing, control, and violence in all the "spheres" of their lives. It is difficult for them to demarcate spheres of spatial oppression as public/private when these spaces often collide. An example of this is seen in the maternal activism by Radhika Vemula, Fatima Nafees, and Abeda and Salim Tadvi from Dalit communities who fought against inhuman caste structures that led their children to either die by suicide or go missing from their universities and places of work(Teja; "Fatima Nafees…"; Shantha). These Dalit mothers' subsequent collaboration with each other is a formidable example of how dominant epistemologies on mothering and care work being confined to the privacy of the household cannot be universally applied (Mondal; Pradeep; Teja; Naseer). Another example is that of farmers' protests in India that included many grandmothers in 2019 and early 2020. Many caste-disadvantaged Indian women farmers set up camp outside the capital city of Delhi, India, for months together to fight against the newly passed agrarian laws that would place them at the heart of economic insecurity (Bhowmick; Shergill; Walia). Right in the middle of the COVID-19 outbreak, women farmers and their families set up community

Kitchens, laundry facilities, healthcare, and education and provided clothing and shelter for all, following the Sikh principles of *Seva* (service)(Walia).

Governmentality

Foucault explains Biopower and Biopolitics as mechanisms of information, power, and knowledge that come together to optimize, control, and modify life processes and living beings (Foucault and Rabinow 263; Stoler 127) These techniques of power are utilized by dominant institutions like schools, police, hospitals and healthcare institutions, and governing bodies of municipalities, provinces and the state to develop and sustain economic and political control (Foucault and Rabinow 263). Mothering and mother-work have been an intense site of biopolitics (Duschinsky and Rocha 11) as argued by Foucauldian theorists using examples of the medicalization of women's bodies for reproduction (Stoler). Mbembe argues that Foucault's concept of Biopower is not adequate to explain the power held by the state and institutions over populations that are colonized, racialized, and spatially oppressed (Mbembe and Corcoran). Mbembe coined the term Necropolitics or Necropower, "as contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death" (Mbembe and Meintjes 39) where states have the sovereign power to decide who lives and who is disposable (Mbembe and Corcoran 80; Mbembe and Meintjes 27). Mbembe uses the terms Necropower and Necropolitics interchangeably to explain how colonizing states and institutions employ multiple ways of extending power to the population through territorialization and spatialization (Mbembe and Corcoran 82). Food is a necessity for life, and hence food work by marginalized mothering bodies is at the center of disciplinary, biopolitical, and necropolitical powers. As settlers in settler colonialism and subjects of neoliberalism within the space of Canada, I want to particularize FGI women's food work in these spaces of power.

Foucault defined governmentality as a state's apparatus of governing people while simultaneously maintaining the existence of the state (Foucault 108–09). This included decisions on aspects of social welfare and other actions that would fall under or outside of the state's purview, where the state's power would remain unchanged while tactics and decisions of governance could be modified (109). The concept of governmentality associated with Foucault's Biopolitics and Mbembe's necropolitics/necropower may further help in providing a critical understanding of food advocacy by various actors in food-based non-profits. Foucault's concept of governmentality points to the development of "responsible citizenship", a process where NGOs funded by local and federal

governments train volunteers for serving the community (Fyfe; Rankin; Ilcan and Basok). This local community governance model is very subtly controlled by the different levels of federal government and other funding agencies that end up having the ultimate decision-making in perpetuating volunteering and community initiatives, a feature of Foucault's governmentality: a state-led disciplinary power that governs and co-opts individual actions, desires and choices (Taylor and Foucault 132). In many situations, community voluntary projects are steered away from goals of social justice or advocacy to suit federal or local government goals (Ilcan and Basok 129,140). With governmentality, as one moves away from personal goals of choosing to be a part of community work, one ends up losing the agency and empowering nature of community food work (Rankin, "Social Capital…" 8–9; Rankin, "Governing Development" 32–33). A few scholars have argued that volunteering and unpaid community work is a neoliberal downloading of social responsibilities by the state to first the NGOs, civil society organizations, and finally the local community (Illner; Rankin, "Governing Development"; Tarasuk, Mitchell, et al.; Doonan; Miraftab), which will be interesting to particularize like FGI women's food work. As highlighted at the beginning of the proposal, food volunteers and donors have turned clients, and clients have taken up the accountability of food workers during the pandemic, giving particularity to neoliberal downloading of responsibility as well as neoliberal austerity. I also want to investigate instances of self-empowerment, resistance, and capacity building in community initiatives as argued by community advocates (*The Intersection …*; Vedhanayagi) and researchers (Lickers; Knezevic et al.).

Community Resilience

Community resilience (discussed in detail in Chapter Two) highlights instances of collective efforts and collaborations in food advocacy. I explore how resilience is read and critiqued, and its impact on social reproduction. In Chapter Two, I build on instances of resilience as a response to governmentality (Wright), community resilience as a form of reciprocity and reclamation (Kimmerer), Kyle Powys Whyte's, Citizen Potawatomi, definition of resilience as collective continuance (Whyte), and Simpson's narration of bush economies informed by historical Anishinabe knowledges of using resources in a non-exploitative way. I engage with these concepts by centring volunteering as a form of reciprocity and, ultimately, care as a form of resilience or collective continuance against colonial and capitalist structures, further conceptualized in Chapter Two of this dissertation (Alook; Maynard and Simpson)

I also present feminist geographers Julie Macleavy, Maria Fannin and Wendy Larner's arguments on the resistance, resilience and reworking triad adopted from Cindi Katz's concept of counter-topographies (Katz in MacLeavy et al. 1565). I connect these concepts back to an understanding of resilience as a gift, and resistance through social reproduction by highlighting arguments and cases by Angele Alook, Francesca Lulli and Kaila Aida Story.

Research questions

1. Amidst demanding household labour, what makes FGI women volunteer in the area of food work in the York Region?
2. Within the frame of the pandemic, what were the FGI women's volunteer experiences of food work?
3. How can community food work be conceptualized as social reproduction?
4. How does community food work by FGI women position them as active agents ?
5. How is community food work by FGI women implicated within the settler colonial, neoliberal context?

I address these questions through a series of chapters that follow.

Chapter summaries

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

In this chapter, I introduced my topic, why and how it originates in my own experience, the organization of my dissertation, and provided a syntax of terms, namely food work, food advocacy, community, to name a few, defined for the purpose of this study. I have provided a background of community food work and advocacy in Canada and how the increased need for volunteering has been found since the Covid-19 pandemic, which has been a catalyst for food insecurity in my neighbourhood and municipality. I locate FGI women's volunteer work in this space and introduce social reproduction, Governmentality and community resilience as key theoretical concepts. I also present my research questions.

Chapter 2: Social Reproduction, Governmentality and Resilience

I explore the understandings of food work, food security, and food advocacy through the lens of social reproduction, governmentality and resilience. I take a deep dive into each of the theoretical hooks, tracing historical and contemporary issues and connect it to the unpaid community work of

FGI women. A question I ask is how these concepts come together to provide unique perspectives about the experiences of first-generation immigrant women in the field of food work.

Adopting feminist epistemology of situated knowledges, I center Black, Indigenous and other marginalized feminist scholarship on the above theoretical concepts. I contextualize first-generation immigrant (FGI) food work based on my understanding of marginalized feminist scholarship that stems from my positionality and geographies of space and place. This includes both my privilege as a caste-privileged, model minority immigrant and settler and my marginalization as a racialized woman, mother and FGI woman first-generation immigrant with limited social capital.

Chapter 3- Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology of Feminist Community Praxis

The methodology chapter traces ontology, epistemology, and implications of the critical theory paradigm and feminist epistemology in qualitative research methods. I present these research tenets along with my understanding of feminist accountability, reflexivity, positionality and being an anti-oppressive researcher, which inform my methodology for the entire research process.

I begin each chapter with short ethnographic accounts of my own social reproduction activities, like domestic work, childcare, elder care and self-care through martial arts and navigation of systems like caste, patriarchy, and family hierarchy, to name a few. I connect it to the theoretical concepts of governmentality, resilience and their impact on the FGI women's community work.

Chapter 4 – FGI Women Volunteering as Social Reproduction - Why volunteer?

In this chapter, I introduce particularities of social reproduction activities through volunteering in the stories of my research participants. I first present the migration stories of FGI women participants and how these stories have impacted their decisions to volunteer in the community. I also present their understandings of benefits or negotiations in volunteering experiences and community advocacy.An important learning from a key point of this chapter is proposing FGI women's volunteering as a feature of TSR. In the next chapter, centering volunteering, I present instances of TSR performed by FGI women and other actors in non-profit food advocacy organizations.

Chapter 5- Social Reproduction Labour in Non-Profit Food Work and Governmentality

An important learning highlighted in the chapter is how governmentality can increase instances of transience and precarity in social reproduction activities of volunteering and community

food work. Voices and quotes of FGI women are presented to highlight these nuances. There is also a section that delineates how TSR activities could be a feature of non-profit work carried out by other actors as well. TSR impacts on community food programs and services bring up the rear of the analyses.

Chapter 6 - Collective continuance and Strategies of Resistance, Resilience and Reworking

In this chapter, I continue to use quotes from fieldwork and academic concepts to present various narratives on community resilience. I argue that community advocates and volunteers are not passive victims on whom social reproduction labour is imposed by neoliberal structures, but that there is persistence in their labour and their response against neoliberal retrenchment by governments. I present community resilience as a critical tool that juxtaposes itself against neoliberalism and other structural limitations posed by institutions and governments.

An important consideration in the chapter was to take the concept of Katz's 3R triad forward (discussed in the literature review) and uncover instances of resilience, resistance and reworking (3R) of existing issues faced by community advocates in non-profit food work.

Chapter 7- Conclusion- FGI Women's Community Food Work and its Relation to Governmentality and Resistance

The chapter summarizes the main analysis themes and furthers the discussion on social reproduction, including the notion of transience within it. I present a visual maze of social reproduction and explain the concept further using my personal example and a roster of my reproductive activities. I connect my observations to instances of transience within social reproduction (TSR) activities of FGI women and paid workers in non-profit food work.

Policy implications of considering (or not) TSR and how it could further impact understanding of immigrant women's social reproduction are discussed. Research limitations of this study are discussed. Future questions and possibilities of research are also presented.

Chapter 2: Social Reproduction, Governmentality, and Resilience

Introduction

In this chapter, I set the context for addressing two of my research questions: 1. How can community food work be conceptualized as social reproduction? And 2. How does community food work by FGI women position them as active agents? The chapter begins with an autoethnographic account of my social reproduction at home, and I connect it to community social reproduction, the systems of governmentality that enable or impede this labour. I also understand existing concepts of social reproduction, governmentality and resilience that would give direction to the above questions in later chapters.

As I was working on the second draft of this chapter, I remember being physically, emotionally and mentally exhausted from the six-month sraaddha rituals (hindu death rituals), following the death of my mother-in-law. As a Tamil brahmin of the hindu community, my husband and I have been performing these rituals since the time we lost his father and, more recently, his mother. For my husband, this exhaustion stems from the irreplaceable loss of his parents within five years since the pandemic. For me, it is a reminder of a difficult relationship I had with my in-laws and many unresolved emotional exchanges that left me alienated from my husband's family.

The physical exhaustion also arises from the fact that our social reproduction activities have increased exponentially during this time. Generally, I am responsible for cooking and maintaining our kitchen, getting my daughter to and from school, and taking care of her academic and recreational activities like French and Math lessons, swimming, and martial arts. My husband ensures that he cleans the rest of the house, does laundry, maintains the car, and we share and take my daughter to her cultural dance, music and tennis lessons.

During these rituals, our social reproduction work of cooking and cleaning increases significantly, as I cook for three hindu priests and must cook a certain number of dishes in relation to the rituals. Similarly, my husband has to do more cleaning and takes care of laundry in a specific way to suit our rituals, by separately washing our traditional ritual clothes and other items. Our family priest, a fellow first-generation immigrant and a trusted connection we built over a period of ten years, has been a guiding, consoling factor for my husband and me over these mentally taxing

sraddha rituals. He has explained to us the reasons for these rituals, which include a “hope” for the safe passing and rebirth of my husband’s parents, resulting in a better future for my family.

As we navigate these rituals, which intensify my social reproduction work as a wife and mother, the feminist in me often thinks about the caste privilege I have to practice my religion, especially these death rituals. This is not the case for many other Tamil communities back home. Revolutionary Tamil literature by Bama in her book Karukku (signifying palmyra leaves) has revealed how Dalit and other caste-disadvantaged communities are not accorded this privilege of dignified death rituals (or life), including burial/ cremation (Bama). Palmyra (from palm tree) leaves for Bama are both a sign of art and craft of those Indigenous to the Dalit Tamil community that created hand fans, toys, purses, etc., but also the thorny, serrated, double-edged roughness of the leaves that would scratch one’s skin, an analogy she uses to describe the gender and caste discrimination experienced as a Dalit Catholic woman in Tamil Nadu, India (Bama 5). I was introduced to Bama’s work as a Master of Philosophy – Women’s Studies student during my days at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), a social justice studies-focused university in India.

Faustina Bama, a Dalit feminist writer, centered her work around personal lived experiences of caste marginalization within her religion of Christianity and speaks of exclusionary burial sites for Dalit Christian community members (Bama and Seshadri; Bama 35–37). Bama and other writers (Mangalam; Kumar and Armstrong) highlight systemic barriers created by the school, police, and privileged caste communities to further disrupt the social reproduction work of mothering and community advocacy of Dalit women and ensure caste marginalization through various forms of exclusion in life and death. Some sparsely located academic writings also center privileged hindu texts on death rituals and hell and refer to caste privilege in the same (Jacobsen) where caste homogeneity is maintained to ensure these rituals benefit upper caste members. In this case, I noticed how priests that come to my house belong to brahmin castes like my husband and me. As a privileged first -generation, caste-privileged immigrant to Canada who arrived here with permanent resident status, I carry the privilege of social and community connections to continue my social reproduction work while maintaining my caste privilege. I would not know about this privilege if I had not been educated about it at TISS.

At the same time, I have faced and continue to experience my share of racism, sexism, devaluation of my skills in paid work, and stereotyping as an internationally educated student that

affect my social reproduction work and academic politics by increasing my unpaid labour and impeding the effectiveness of the same. I take these embodied experiences and knowledges to my work in the community as a volunteer food advocate. In my work as a community advocate, I have bagged groceries in a food advocacy organization, facilitated cooking workshops for seniors on zoom, advised a community engagement working group, participated in brainstorming sessions to coin visions for a non-profit organization, planned and executed events for a community organization that works for racialized community members and held vigils to support community members during events of violence and harm against fellow racialized community members living in the town. Other FGI women could also have unique experiences like me as a community food advocate, but the distinction in the labour may be contextualized based on their experiences with the dominant structures and institutions in society, and their idea of resisting them could be unique as well.

I want to take this learning in contextualizing FGI women's unpaid food work and volunteering in the community. To understand the diverse experiences and nuances of FGI women's food work, I want to take a three-pronged approach in my literature review: 1. Different ways that women's social reproduction has been understood in community work by centering Black, Indigenous, and other racialized women's unpaid labour; 2. Foucault's governmentality and its relations to unpaid food work; and 3. Narratives and critiques surrounding resilience as a concept in unpaid work and community advocacy. I will look at existing literature on social reproduction and unpaid labour by privileging literature on the social margins. Paid work in social reproduction (catering, nursing, paid domestic work, elder care, childcare) is not the focus.

Understanding social reproduction

Social reproduction is a key concept in feminist thought used to theorize biological reproduction and other unpaid care activities such as cooking, cleaning, domestic work, childcare, and elder care, to name a few, often provided by women daily and through generations. Women's unpaid social reproductive activities ensure the everyday running of the economy and society (Bakker; Bezanson and Luxton). Meg Luxton, Kate Bezanson, Sedef Arat-Koc, and other feminists in the book, *Social Reproduction: Feminist Political Economy Challenges Neo-liberalism*, engage with some universal activities and structures of social reproduction:

> Social reproduction [is explored] at different levels of analysis – states, labour markets, families, households, and communities – and in reference to different

> labours – constitutional negotiations, union organizing, child rearing, adult caregiving – and to different sectors of the population – immigrants, ruling elites, and working and middle classes.
>
> - (Bezanson and Luxton 7)

As the above definition suggests, social reproduction has universal features that are prominent in patriarchal societies. Tithi Bhattacharya reflects on a universal question posed by social reproduction theory (SRT): If Marxism understands the labour that produces commodities, then SRT understands the care network that produces the labourer (Bhattacharya 2–4). Feminists engaging with social reproduction have highlighted the importance of un(-der)paid work in both households and communities, urging academia to consistently reflect on why and how this crucial form of care has been undervalued over the centuries. Building on Engels' (1845) work, *Family, Private Property and the State*, feminists working in SRT speculate that where the production site was the household and immediate communities, they would be inherently matriarchal, matrilineal, and led for the sake of interpersonal relationships, voluntarily, often as a gift of time and labour for the people benefiting from it (Engels in Tong and Botts 67). This matriarchal, matrilineal site of production changed in patriarchal societies, including under capitalism, where production moves outside the household. I detail the changes in the section below.

Social reproduction under capitalism

Luxton and Corman, in their book, *Getting by in Hard Times*, theorize social reproduction across the last few decades. They write that social reproduction is organized in a way where the mother is traditionally positioned to be the nurturer and the father is supposed to be the provider, thus giving rise to the breadwinner ideology (Luxton and Corman in Luxton 39–40). This ideology privileges men as providers in paid work outside of the home, which leads to women being paid less for the same work. Also, paid care sectors considered traditionally feminized, like childcare, nursing, cleaning, and catering, for example, tend to be underpaid even when carried outside of one's household in exchange for pay. Luxton and Corman note how this organization is largely universal but obscures certain other marginalizations, like race, immigrant status, ethnicity, to name a few. Luxton and Corman, highlighting various intersections in unpaid care, mention how the focus on heterosexual nuclear family policies, their economies, and societies, over the years, has been questioned. Some other examples include the visibility of plurality in social reproduction in

communities. For example, common-law partners have become more widespread since the mid-1990s. One can see an increase in single parents, mostly mothers but some fathers as well (40). They also note how First Nations, Metis, and Inuit communities have embodied the importance of community childcare. Another example they highlight is of immigrant communities and same-sex partners who have questioned the definition of family for the purpose of family reunifications and child custody, respectively (41).

Folbre, in the book *Who Pays for the Kids ?,* argues for social reproduction to be organized in such a way that the state's responsibility towards care is also recognized (Folbre 90–91). The labour market and social welfare provisions should value social reproduction work and not seek to constrain it (254). She explains that poverty of mothers and children is not just a social problem but an economic one, as families cannot naturally produce workers. The costs of social reproduction must be shared by parents, community members, the labour market through better employment practices and the state through social spending. Folbre particularly directs measuring economic and social welfare through commitments to caring for children, the sick and the elderly and a commitment towards the environment and the use of natural resources (253). Like Folbre, Bhattacharya further includes advocacy for public services and social welfare provisions such as healthcare, parks, housing, food security, and clean water as acts of social reproduction in the community (Bhattacharya 35). Their work highlights how the labour and advocacy in social reproduction transcend home, communities, hospitals, prisons, workplaces, and schools, connecting the paid, the unpaid, and the spaces in between. Fraser in Bhattacharya's volume of *social reproduction theory* stresses the vitalness of care work in the sustenance of institutions and structures of the economy:

> Unwaged social reproductive activity is necessary to the existence of waged work, the accumulation of surplus value, and the functioning of capitalism as such. None of those things could exist in the absence of housework, child-raising, schooling, affective care, and a host of other activities that serve to produce new generations of workers and replenish existing ones, as well as to maintain social bonds and shared understandings. Social reproduction is an indispensable background condition for the possibility of economic production in a capitalist society.
>
> \- (Fraser in Bhattacharya 36)

It is clear from the above analysis how important care work is to sustain production and reproduction labour by various social structures and institutions. However, it is also true that these very structures isolate and alienate social reproduction through segregation, exclusion, and separation

in capitalist societies (Rege; Jaggar). Marxist and socialist feminists have highlighted the concept of women's alienation in a capitalist society, both outside the household as a wage worker and within the household in social reproduction. This includes alienation due to social reproduction activities of mothering, domestic work, and unpaid care, as these tend to occur in the private sphere of the household. Tong and Botts highlight connections between women's alienation as reproductive workers due to isolation from other workers and from the natural environment (Tong and Botts). Drawing on Alison Jaggar and Ann Foreman's thoughts, they argue that this alienation is an impact of capitalism that isolates women's sense of self (Tong and Botts 73–74). Thus, alienation and segregation are important features of the social reproduction of labour. To understand alienation and segregation from the point of view of FGI women, I need to understand social reproduction in the margins. I explore key arguments below, including the concept of motherwork by Patricia Hill Collins, threads of advocacy and finally the problematization of public and private spheres of social reproduction.

Social reproduction in the margins

From the above conversations, it is clear that care work is valuable, indispensable, and regenerative; its core features constitute social reproduction, and these aspects sustain the existence and perpetuation of colonial, capitalist and neoliberal structures of states and markets. However, these very structures alienate, isolate, and segregate care workers as mentioned earlier, leaving these jobs unpaid and underpaid, with little to no social or welfare safety nets. This invisibility and intangibility get heightened with other marginalizations such as gender, sexual orientation, sexualities, ability, race, class, caste, ethnicity, and religion.

I present a few academic conversations in the following subsections that provide different ways of looking at social reproduction based on the notion of intersectionality. Crenshaw's coining of the term intersectionality explains how power does not act on a single axis like gender or race but often permeates the two together and any other social structures of privilege or marginalization such as ethnicity, citizenship status, class, sexuality (Crenshaw, *"Demarginalizing…"*) or caste, as in my personal experience at the opening of this chapter. In the following sections, I discuss racialized mother-work as discussed by Patricia Hill Collins, centring racialized social reproduction. Public and private spheres of social reproduction; resilience labour of advocacy; and finally, social reproduction of food work, activism and advocacy.

Social reproduction as motherwork

Marginalized social reproduction often occurs in the community, and racialized feminists have questioned how dominant academic narratives of social reproduction are unable to evaluate and uncover it fully (Banks; Cortes). I have defined community in chapter one, pages nine to eleven, under glossary of terms. Black, Indigenous and other racialized women's community work has been a site of social reproduction and protection for the collective against systemic discrimination and violence against children. Afrocentric ideology of motherhood, as highlighted by Collins, was a result of oppression and Black women's resistance. It is also a framework for maintaining and passing on culture, whether they identify as biological mothers or not.

Collins first observes that this ideology of motherhood is tied to a community of mothers beyond biological or blood mothers, other mothers and women-centred networks. Historically, these networks were a result of constraints from political structures and economic barriers, children orphaned by rejection of blood mothers, sale or death of parents due to slavery, or reasons for providing additional support to mothers by other mothers (Collins in O'Reilly, *Maternal Theory* 278). Secondly, Collins argues that Black mothers were economic providers for their children. She reasons that providing as mothers was historically led by a conflicted position within slavery, where women were exposed to patriarchal gender ideologies within a slaveowner's family of being a nurturer, but their life in slavery made it impossible to remain or identify as just nurturers, but rather necessitated economic activity outside their homes to provide for their family (279). Highlighting the work of authors like Sara Brooks, Collins further provides evidence of mother-work or caring for family and children, along with paid work-for example, childcare or caring for siblings and simultaneous work in agricultural fields.

Collins points out the necessity for racialized mothers to work outside the home for pay and the reliance on unpaid community care by emphasizing, "whether they wanted to or not, the majority of African American women had to perform paid work and could not afford the luxury of unpaid motherhood as a female occupation." (280). This is where community mothers, othermothers, step in: a great support system when paid work or activities outside the home keep Black women away from their mothering (280). There is a collective responsibility among Black women to care for all the children in their community. Black women carry this ideology of community mothering today through their volunteering for equity issues in housing, education, and access to summer programs

for Black children (Gilkes and Naples in Collins 191). In the community, social reproductive labour shifts in care responsibilities from biological mothering to community mothering. These responsibilities may be episodic, temporary or long-term and take different forms, like offering childcare, volunteering, signing petitions for access to social programs and similar activities (Naples), yet this transient labour is indispensable and valuable for the safety and development of racialized children.

Collins enumerates key differences in theorizing mother-work from a white, middle-class (heterosexual) mothering perspective as against that of Native, Hispanic, African American and Asian American women. She notes a complete shift in mother-work experiences and issues when the lens shifts towards mother-work at the margins (Collins in O'Reilly, *Maternal Theory* 323–24)Historical examples are provided to argue how Black women' s motherwork of preserving culture, Blackness against white dominance and efforts against erasing African-derived cultural frameworks was an act of revolution (P. H. Collins 206). Situated in the community, a group of women often came together to support each other in mothering activities as a collective (Collins 209–10). This collective nature of motherwork not only questions the individual nature of mothering as seen in dominant feminist conversations around social reproduction and mothering (Ruddick) but also redefines politics around private or public spheres in the gender division of labour.

Illner Peer (2021), in his book *Disaster and Social Reproduction,* highlights the work of Marxist feminists who formed a collective called Wages for Housework (WfH) in 1972, including Silvia Federici, Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Selma James and Brigitte Galtier (Illner 24). This WfH collective argued and criticized Marx's gender blindness and the subsequent space of domestic sphere of home that was made invisible as it was a site of unpaid care work (Illner 25). For the WfH collective, the movement to inspire wages for household labour was inspired by Black women's historical claim of demanding wages for raising children and caring for members of their family, rather than demanding paid work outside of the home (25–26). Collins explains that the claim of demanding wages for household labour stemmed from Black women's community work and their identities, their attempt to position themselves with an alternate sense of worth that went beyond the material lack of success they possessed as un(der)paid workers (Collins 206–08). Using the example of Judith Rollins's work on Black women domestic workers, Collins explains how an alternative sense of worth developed among these women when they saw themselves beyond their undervalued occupation as domestic workers (207). Rather, they defined their personal worth using the African-

American value system -"by the quality of one's interpersonal relationships and by one's standing in the community" (Rollins in Collins 207).

Just like the above example of developing an alternate sense of worth through community care work, I want to explore what meanings women participants in my research give when asked about their experiences of volunteering. I explore how and why FGI food volunteers take on additional unpaid work outside their homes.

Through historical statistics, Collins explains that the physical and emotional well-being of racialized children is threatened due to maternal poverty, ultimately affecting the survival of infants (Collins in O'Reilly, *Maternal Theory* 175). In addition, harsh urban environments surrounded by crime, drugs, food/water contamination and industrial pollutants often threaten children's survival (Collins in O'Reilly, *Maternal Theory* 174–76). For African American women, ensuring this physical survival of not just their biological children but community children as well is an essential form of mother work (171).

Highlighting written accounts and stories by children of colour, Collins argues for the importance of racialized mother work for individual and community survival. An account by African American feminist June Jordan spoke about and recognized the invisibility of this labour. At the same time, through their written word, Jordan highlights how her mother's paid work ensured a reliable "homebase", privileges of learning music, reading books, and nurturing ambitions for future generations of Black women (177). These activities mentioned may be banal and a "given" routine for many privileged dual-income, heterosexual households, but for marginalized families, they call for additional work away from time with children. This time away will often be spent in fulfilling contractual, part-time, temporary work, a necessary economic need that could be addressed temporarily. In their absence, extended family and/or community members, often other marginalized women and genders, step in to watch over their children and help with elder care and domestic work. The episodic negotiations of care in different periods of their lives mask the tangibility, measurability, and permanence of this labour. By highlighting lived experiences and uncovering the aspects of transient labour in these racialized spaces and times, the invisibility and intangibility of care could be uncovered and made more visible.

Social reproduction as advocacy

Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities have faced unique disruptions in their social reproduction due to systemic barriers created by colonialism and resultant nation-building activities. In my course of research, I have read examples of researchers and academics talking about criminalization (Razack; Story), exclusion (Blackstock and Palmater) and marginalization (Arat-Koc in Bezanson and Luxton; Tungohan; Aggarwal and Das Gupta) of women, resulting in care interruptions offered to families and communities. As mentioned before, Collins establishes a shared connection between slavery, genocide, and subsequent exclusionary immigrant policies faced by Black and other racialized communities, respectively. She argues how racial domination and economic situations place advocacy at the center of Black, Indigenous, and other women of colour's social reproduction work when compared with race- and class-privileged women (Collins in O'Reilly, *Maternal Theory* 173–74). In local Black communities, community mothers are recognized as powerful advocacy figures and moral leaders for Black children and youth (289).

Sharing mother-work scholarship of Black Feminist Angela Davis, Asian-American sociologist Evelyn Nakano Glenn, a Native American poet and feminist poet Marilou Awiakta, and Hispanic essayist Gloria Anzaldúa, Collins gives examples of different definitions of motherwork that highlight advocacy (Collins in O'Reilly, *Maternal Theory* 173–81). These theories of mother work, Collins argues, cut across public and private spheres of women's reproductive labour, which is why there cannot be an overarching definition of motherhood (181). Pluralism in definitions of mother-work and unpaid care uncovers newer transient features in social reproduction, making it more visible and hopefully more tangible to garner better political and social support.

Public and private spheres of social reproduction

Centering marginalized care labour and advocacy helped me understand that rigid spaces of public and private spheres don't reflect social reproduction work at the margins. My inquiry into understanding public/private spheres of social reproduction is influenced by spaces I occupied in North America and India, within which I came across marginalized politics of Black, Indigenous and Dalit (lower caste) communities. As we see throughout the chapter, care work by these communities is political as it is offered in the household and by community members outside the household when needed, and in many instances outside social welfare programs by the government. To illustrate this,

I draw on academic and grey literature from Black, Indigenous and Dalit feminisms explained below.

Black, Indigenous politics of public/private spheres in unpaid care

Black (hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*; Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing…"; Banks; Maynard) and Indigenous (Oyěwùmí, "Colonizing Bodies and Minds: Gender and Colonialism"; Maynard and Simpson; Lawrence and Dua) feminists argue that mothering in the community, including community work and advocacy, questions white feminist dominance in social reproduction theories. Racialized mothering and activism in the community question Western feminists' theorizing of public and private spheres being separated when it comes to the labour of women and other marginalized genders (Anderson in O'Reilly, *Matricentric Feminism* 125; Elder Betty Mckenna in Bourassa et al.).

For Collins, this division of spheres is not only problematic, as it leaves the labour of mother work not only limited to a household, but also compartmentalized to a non-political, non-economic domain. Additionally, as discussed earlier and in the later parts of the chapter, extraordinary or activist social reproduction and labour in Black, Indigenous and racialized families require additional labour to protect and advocate for the community against capitalist agendas of dehumanizing exploitation.

Luxton and Corman, Tithi Bhattacharya, Nancy Fraser and other feminists have recognized that this rigid demarcation of private and public spheres is problematic and argued the importance of social reproduction to sustain paid labour (Luxton; Arruzza et al.). These fluid transitions of unpaid caring in the house, community or the in-between spaces in the care ecosystem are important to contextualize community volunteering and addressing community issues under the ambit of social reproduction. The section below on governmentality addresses how social reproduction in the community interacts with government and other structures that particularize unpaid labour in these spaces.

Governmentality in community social reproduction

In this section, I engage with the concepts of governmentality, biopolitics, (Duschinsky and Rocha) and necropolitics (Mbembe and Corcoran) and their implications in theorizing social reproduction, particularly volunteering, unpaid care and motherwork in the community.

Foucault, Mbembe and governmentality

The power of structural systems and institutions to impact social reproduction in various spaces can be explained through Foucault's concepts of Biopolitics and governmentality. Foucault explains Biopower and Biopolitics as mechanisms of information, power, and knowledge that come together to optimize, control, and modify life processes and living beings (Stoler 127). Mothering and mother-work have been an intense site of biopolitics (Duschinsky and Rocha 11). Mbembe argues that Foucault's concept of biopower is not adequate to explain the power held by the state and institutions over populations that are colonized, racialized, and spatially oppressed (Mbembe and Corcoran). Mbembe coined the term Necropolitics or Necropower, "as contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death" (Mbembe and Meintjes 39)where states have the sovereign power to decide who lives and who is disposable (Mbembe and Corcoran 80; Mbembe and Meintjes 27). Mbembe uses the terms necropower and necropolitics interchangeably to explain how colonizing states and institutions employ multiple ways of enforcing power on the population through territorialization and spatialization (Mbembe and Corcoran 82). For community food work, the spatial downloading of responsibilities and funding retrenchments from federal to provincial to municipal government bodies not only reduces federal accountability on social welfare but also keeps the territory of discipline and control in the hands of federal or provincial governments as the fund deployers. Social reproduction work by marginalized bodies in the community is at the center of these disciplinary, biopolitical, and necropolitical powers. The disposability and transitional nature of racialized, Black and Indigenous women's reproductive labour is further enabled by systemic state control.

Governmentality and unpaid care in the community

The concept of governmentality associated with Foucault's Biopolitics and Mbembe's Necropolitics/Necropower may further help in providing a critical understanding of community social reproduction in the form of volunteering. Foucault's concept of governmentality points to the development of "responsible citizenship" by the state, a process where NGOs funded by local and federal governments train their workers and volunteers to serve the community (Fyfe; Rankin, "Governing Development"; Ilcan * and Basok *). This local governance model is very subtly controlled by the federal government and other funding agencies that end up having the ultimate decision-making power in perpetuating volunteering and community initiatives, a feature of

Foucault's governmentality: a state-led disciplinary power that governs and co-opts individual actions, desires and choices (Taylor and Foucault 132). In many situations, community voluntary projects are steered away from goals of social justice or advocacy to suit federal or local government goals (Ilcan * and Basok * 129, 140). With governmentality, as one moves away from personal goals of choosing to be a part of community work, one ends up losing the agency and the empowering nature of community food work (Rankin, "Governing Development" 32–33; Rankin, "Social Capital…" 8–9). A few scholars have argued that volunteering and unpaid community work is a neoliberal downloading of social responsibilities by the state to first the NGOs, civil society organizations, and individual community members (Illner; Tarasuk; Doonan; Miraftab), which will be relevant to particularize unpaid care in food non-profit organizations.

Some researchers (Rankin, "Governing Development"; Miraftab) argue neoliberal downloading of responsibilities increases social reproduction labour in families and communities. As engaged with before, community work and activism can be both empowering as a political tool (Naples; hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*; Collins in O'Reilly, *Maternal Theory*) and disempowering as additional unpaid/paid labour that takes time and agency away from women's choice of labour (Banks). Naples explains how participants in her study shared both benefits and disadvantages of community social reproduction. There was a tension between two choices: how community work took away participants from spending time with their family on one hand, and on the other, the importance of other caregiving networks that supported their children at home while they were away in the community (Naples 455). Black feminist economist Nina Banks explains how community work and advocacy took time away from looking for better-paid opportunities (Banks, "Black Women in the United States and Unpaid Collective Work" 15). Black feminist Kaila Adia Story highlights real-life incidents of Black mothers who lost their lives or their children and raises a key argument: how resistance to state racism is a brave act of questioning the neoliberal stereotype of "complacent Black mothers" (Story 878). We have established how their care is disrupted due to structural factors, merging their paid and unpaid care, recognizing the need for community mothering. However, the individualization of mother-work by the state and other dominant structures could have led to this stereotype of Black mothers, not recognizing the importance of community social reproduction. Social reproduction as resistance and resilience against neoliberal barriers towards FGI women's labour could be interesting to observe empirically in the field. I will explore

how my research participants' stories will impact my understanding of disruptions in social reproduction caused by systemic policies and control.

Collective continuance, commune, as resilience

I next explore the concept of community resilience and uncover incidents of collective efforts and collaborations shown by community food advocates and food advocacy as a sector. I particularly refer to understanding resilience as a response to governmentality (Wright), community resilience as a form of reciprocity and reclamation (Kimmerer), Kyle Powys Whyte, Citizen Potawatomi's defining of resilience as collective continuance (Whyte) and Simpson's narration of bush economies informed by historical Anishinabe knowledges of utilizing resources in a non-exploitative way (Maynard and Simpson181–82). I engage with these concepts by centering volunteering as a form of reciprocity, and ultimately, care as a form of resilience or collective continuance against colonial and capitalist structures (Alook; Maynard and Simpson).

Most of the definitions of resilience focus on individualistic actions. A common definition of resilience inspired by positive psychology and material sciences is an object's nature or one's ability to come back to an original state after exposure to physical, emotional and psychological stress, disturbance or trauma (Wright 13). Individual accountability is a feature of neoliberal governance strategy, as I have engaged with this feature in other chapters. The concept of community resilience, however, centers around a collective response and resistance to systemic exclusions and structural discrimination in a capitalist, neoliberal system. Wright, in their proposal of community resilience, specifically highlights the importance of mutual aid work like volunteering in the community, unpaid care performed by households, largely women, as a form of community resilience (Wright 24). This collective act of resilience is often invisible and swept under dominant definitions of resilience. Arguing that resilience cannot be defined and imposed on community work by government agencies and municipalities through programs designed for community involvement, Wright further argues that the understanding of resilience must come from collective actions observed at a grassroots level.

Indigenous scholars have spoken about resilience through historical knowledges that promote collective capacities, actions and continuance. Kyle Powys Whyte, in their article on Food Sovereignty, Justice and Indigenous Peoples, presents "collective continuance" as a phrase in place of "resilience," and defines the phrase as collective capacities of a community, which can give rise to better adaptations in times and spaces of adversity, colonial atrocities and disturbances in the

environment without compromising on cultural practices (Whyte 8). Using the example of a case study involving Nuu-cha-nulth and Kwakwaka'wakw communities in the geographical areas of what is now known as British Columbia, the Potawatomi Nation citizen and climate justice activist narrates incidents from potlatch ceremonies (Whyte 6–8). Potlatch ceremonies for the communities signified the giving away of wealth between different titleholders of houses (not individuals) as proprietors of wealth (Whyte 7). Salmon, salmon oil and other wealth-generating items were given away and exchanged between houses as a sense of moral responsibility to human and other non-human ecosystems (Whyte 6).

These economies of exchange and sharing to ensure collective continuity of Indigenous communities are also highlighted by Anishinabe scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. Simpson, in a conversation with Maynard in their co-authored collection of letters written during the Covid-19 pandemic called *Rehearsals for Living,* speaks about a similar sense of collective continuance. She refers to the historic existence of bush economies as against racial capitalism and says, "I understand this as an anti-capitalist society in a particularly Nishnaabeg formation. The practices of taking only what you need, using everything you take, sharing everything you have and giving up what you can to promote more life created a bush economy that gave way to a very different relationship to land and water than the one dictated to us by racial capitalism (Maynard and Simpson 95). Racial capitalism, she explains, is an intertwined nature of capitalism and racial hierarchy, where Black and other racialized labour are used to benefit colonialism and nation building (Quan).

Simpson further speaks of accountability not just between individuals and communities but towards a large diversity of non-human living beings; she paints a picture of an economy outside of extractivism where labour, material goods, and the gifts of plants and animals can be shared (Maynard and Simpson 96). She reflects on a possibility of a different future, where Black and Indigenous communities, using their collective capacities and built on communing, build alternative economies instead of relying on state support for funds, rejecting the exclusionary ideas of racial capitalism. She questions whether Black and Indigenous communities would be able to undo the harms of slavery and dispossession by communing for better community supports, including childcare, housing, food security, and care where all living beings are considered precious (Maynard and Simpson 101).

Reading about collective continuance (Whyte) and commune (Maynard and Simpson) led me back to Angele Alook's work in their co-authored book *The End Of This World*, the concept of centering care- Miyo-wichitowin – meaning good relations and unity, one of the laws of First Nations Leadership (Alook et al. 126). Alook and other authors in the book highlight centering elders and children, thereby care, as central against the Windiigo economy (capitalism as cannibalism or death economy). Alook, Whyte, Maynard and Simpson had a common forceful argument of how there is a need for First Nations and Indigenous leadership against death and cannibalism caused by colonialism, extractivism and racial capitalism in settler economies. A complete rehaul of economies based on non-exploitation, reciprocity and mutual aid is an emphatic proposal. This also connects to Mbembe's understanding of Necropolitics, as I have explained in the sections below.

The triad of resistance-resilience-reworking

Feminist geographers Julie Macleavy, Maria Fannin and Wendy Larner adopt Cindi Katz's concept of counter-topographies and explain it as new ways of revisioning the future and different ways of being in the world. They introduce Katz's definition of feminist political engagements in the form of a triad consisting of resistance-resilience-reworking. They explain further,

> For Katz, resistance denotes a form of oppositional consciousness; resilience refers to strategies of endurance that people adopt to facilitate their day-to-day living, but which do not really change the circumstances which make their lives difficult; and reworking is related to the broader restructuring of the conditions in which people live and the political possibilities that emerge from the restructuring process.
>
> - (MacLeavy et al. 1565–66)

The authors then go on to show how feminist geographers have shown affirmative, creative ways of being in the world through their research, which offers space to exist for different feminist futures (MacLeavy et al. 1568). They offer arguments for the simultaneous existence of resilience, where there is community endurance, against neoliberal capitalism but could also relate to concepts of "resourcefulness" and "creation of everyday utopias".

> Resilient subjects are 'situated, mutable and dynamic', called into being by different imaginaries of the present and future and the tactics and strategies deployed to intervene and govern them (Hill and Larner, 2017). Resilient subjects are also imagined as self-sustaining, collectivized, creators of 'everyday utopias' (Cooper, 2013) who in doing so create alternative environmental, economic and social futures.

- (MacLeavy et al. 1565–66)

The phrases dynamic, collectivized, creators of everyday utopias, stayed with me and help ground the lived realities of FGI women's work, the collaborations with other actors in the non-profit sector and the nuances of their labour in response to various barriers to food access and inclusion. The mutable, dynamic nature of resilience can spill into its connections to resistance and reworking of unpaid care. The labour of FGI women volunteers could reframe how resistance and reworking are defined. As Macleavy et al. explain, resistance can mean fighting back, opposition per se, but can also be present in 'modest', 'quiet' modifications people make in their everyday lives in response to barriers created by institutions of capitalism, patriarchy, racism, and the like (MacLeavy et al. 1567). Reworking, similarly, can be efforts to create new ways of being, outside of power structures that create barriers, but can also re-imagine new ways of being within the co-opted structures not of one's making (MacLeavy et al. 1570).

Some observations related to unpaid collective work, collective continuance or the resilience-resistance-reworking triad are visible in the literature surrounding community social reproduction. I present the existence of the resistance-resilience-reworking triad through the concept of looking at social reproduction as: gift, resistance, and as resilience against dehumanization.

Resistance-resilience as gift

A gift economy is posited by Kimmerer in their book, *Braiding Sweet Grass*, where they explain how wild strawberries are gifts from the land. In the Potawatomi nation, this gift was not usurped through industrial farming of strawberries, but shared freely, and in reciprocity, as seeds are returned to the earth for another season of giving after taking what is needed. In Kimmerer's words,

> "From the viewpoint of a private property economy, the "gift" is deemed to be "free" because we obtain it free of charge, at no cost. But in the gift economy, gifts are not free. The essence of the gift is that it creates a set of relationships. The currency of a gift economy is, at its root, reciprocity. In Western thinking, private land is understood to be a "bundle of rights," whereas in a gift economy, property has a "bundle of responsibilities" attached."
>
> - (Kimmerer 28)

This takes me to the concept of gift economy in the everyday lives of racialized motherwork. Unpaid care in the community is also seen as an epistemology of gift, a paradigm introduced by Vaughan (Vaughan). Arguing that the salience of the market economy has devalued and made

invisible gift exchanges of motherwork to infants and young children, Vaughan promotes the paradigm of mothering as a gift. According to Vaughan, "…[in] infancy, interpersonal neurobiology and mirror neurons, giving/receiving are shown to be a basic epistemological and ethical key which has been overwritten by the exchange paradigm" (33). Vaughan's argument includes how the maternal economic model has not been connected even with social justice initiatives in the community, "…Even among those egalitarian groups working for social change, creating social experiments, eco villages, gifting circles, time banks, the connection of the gift economy with mothering has not been made (35)". Researchers like Francesca Lulli have used this paradigm to present the epistemology behind the Grandmothers Project- GMP (an initiative by an American-Senegalese NGO) in Velingara, Senegal, in which the volunteer work of grandmothers in the Velingara community is narrated. Grandmothers, as part of their community work, volunteer at school and work with adolescent girls to protect and promote adolescent girls' health and mental well-being against child marriages and early/teen pregnancies (79-82). Lulli argues that the involvement of the community in school can regenerate intergenerational dialogues and help exchange of knowledges and build meaningful relationships across generations (Lulli 83).

Similar to Lulli, Alook highlights how care for children and the elderly are at the center of Indigenous economies and communities. In the chapter, "Uniting to Build a Caring Economy for All," she argues, along with co-authors, for privileging Indigenous learnings through the laws of: miyo-ohpikinâwasowin, that is, raising children in a good way; miyo-wîcihtowin, meaning good relations and unity; sihtoskâtowin, that is, uniting to survive; and manâcihtâwin, showing respect and reciprocity to the land (Alook et al.). Can "responsible citizenship" then have different interpretations, such as being "stewards of the land"? I revisit this section in my analysis chapters by juxtaposing governmentality and Alook's presentation of Indigenous economies.

Social reproduction as resistance

Resistance in social reproduction centers on marginalized standpoints challenging the colonial, individualized representation of motherhood. As seen in previous sections, it is about highlighting historically marginalized forms of mother-work. This is where Black, Indigenous and other racialized populations raised children and offered community care amidst hostile state policies, poverty, racism, and other socioeconomic exclusions.

Kaila Adia Story's analysis of Black mothers' battle against policing and resultant violence in their community pertains to the concept of reproductive justice (Story) as a form of resistance against the dispensability of marginalized bodies engaged in social reproduction. Reproductive justice is described to be a tool developed by women of colour feminists to challenge dominant reproductive rights discourse perpetuated by many white feminists (Roberts and Jesudason 315–16). Reproductive justice was women of colour feminists' assertion of reproductive freedom stemming from sex, race, and class inequalities (Roberts and Jesudason 316). Authors investigate how historical state policies enabled white women (often upper or middle-class) to have children of preferred genetic traits while using the services of "hyper-fertile" Black and Latina women (often class-oppressed) to provide reproductive labour through advanced technologies for white women (316-317). Women of colour who ended up as fertility providers often used private fertility clinics, with no state support, but rather increased scrutiny by law. Drawing upon the work of Black feminists like Audre Lorde, bell hooks on the lives of Black mothers, and Story's contention of who gets to have a family, who gets to live as mothers and children, is thought-provoking as far as reproductive justice is concerned (Story 877–78). Mbembe's concept of Necropolitics is relatable here, as he explains the existence of subjugation (Mbembe and Corocan 38) of life over death, where states and dominant institutions have the power to decide who lives as a fully functioning subject of a nation and who is disposable. The disposable population who are subjected to "death-like states" live a social existence of various forms of insecurity, including war, confinement and state scrutiny. Story's arguments speak to Necropolitics and the idea of instrumentalization of racialized reproductive bodies and labour as disposable and open to scrutiny.

This is corroborated by Collins as she links the power and powerlessness of racial and class-disadvantaged social reproduction. Power to choose to become a mother (or not) by African American, Asian American, Hispanic and Native women is often compromised by institutional barriers on one hand and continuing incidences of violence and rape against women of colour and Black women since slavery and segregation. Second, she talks of the power to keep the children the women of colour have birthed by sharing fictional writings of Native American authors telling stories of children being taken away (Brant in Collins 175). Third, she highlights Moraga and Anzaldua's work on language retention in Hispanic communities and Shanley's work on the importance of community in childcare (174).

Resilience and working in the face of dehumanization and exploitation

Care labour, especially, is an act of resilience in addressing social reproduction needs during war, political conflicts, epidemics, pandemic situations, and climate disasters. Yet the labour involved seems to be recurring, with perpetual issues that seem to put marginalized communities on the frontlines. I made a brief mention in the introduction about social reproduction work in crises situations like COVID–19, movements triggered by violence like the Black Lives Matter movement and the farmers' protest in India, where women were leaders. In the introduction, I shared the example of Robyn Maynard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, where they present the damaging effects of COVID-19 stay-at-home orders on alternative Indigenous economies of the world. They specifically mention how state orders affected the work of mothers as primary providers in countries like Angola, Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa (Maynard and Simpson). As mentioned before, Indigenous mothers in these countries are the main procurers and providers of food for their families, and their work of providing nutritious food to the family seems to be continuously disrupted due to environmental decisions and policies that disadvantage them, which were increased during the pandemic. (Maynard and Simpson 41–43).

Community activism, specifically, "tent city" organization (Hudson and Diverlus in Diverlus et al.) in the Black Lives Matter movement, Toronto, is another example I mentioned where social reproduction labour became the basis of an alternative city that included: the building of tents for camping in front of the police headquarters, cooking community meals, establishing a health center, and programming for children (12).

Reworking and resilience were seen through the collaborative presence of the Mohawk Warrior and Haudenosaunee Confederacy Flag in the *"*#BLMTOTentCity created by queer/trans-Black activists in front of Toronto Police Service Headquarters for two weeks in the spring of 2016. Reworking through lending of support was seen as required in response to the announcement that no charges would be laid against the Toronto police officers involved in the homicide of Andrew Loku (Maynard and Simpson 77). This activism was supported by Tamil allies, which shows a reworking attempt at allyship through shared yet unique struggles. (Janaya Khan in Diverlus et al. 121).

Understanding FGI women's social reproduction within the historical context of disruption

Historical harms of colonialism, slavery, exclusion and dispossession by Black and Indigenous scholars in the nation-building of Canada and the resultant disruptions in social

reproduction in the above sections have intimate connections with how FGI women's social reproduction has been affected. Racialized settler communities in the margins have faced the pernicious continuities of these colonial immigration policies that are capitalistic, racist and patriarchal (Mama in Upadhyay 264). Immigration policy structures regulate and control labour in households and markets in colonial complicity. Agnes Calliste explores how, once in 1900 and then again in 1932, Caribbean domestic workers travelled to Canada and faced severe stereotyping and discrimination in their travel to Nova Scotia, Quebec and their work there.

> *Montreal Herald* reported that the 58 "dark-skinned" domestics were the advanced guard for others to follow. Forty-eight Guadeloupean women were expected on the next trip. Evidently, some Canadians were opposed to what they perceived as an influx of undesirable women and future "unfit" mothers." As an Albertan wrote to C.A. Magrath, Member of Parliament, Are there many negro women who are desirable immigrants, they will certainly, all be mothers some day? We may not be able to forbid negroes from entering Canada, though we do stop Chinese, Japs and E. Indians, but importing them wholesale, paying their passages, finding places for them are another matter. Such a stereotypical statement implies the devaluation of black women as mothers, a view that had its origin in slavery. The dominant ideology of motherhood ("purity" and making and caring for children within the context of the "ideal" nuclear and patriarchal family) constructed some locations within social relations of race, class, and citizenship that were more appropriate for motherhood than others. The portrayal of black women as undesirable constructed some locations within social relations of race, class, and citizenship that were more appropriate for motherhood than others. The portrayal of black women as undesirable immigrants and as less deserving of motherhood reinforced their subordination.
>
> - (Calliste 140)

Disruption in social reproduction for FGI women could occur in exclusionary migration policies that keep them away from extended family members like grandparents, leading to an additional burden of caregiving and household labour on one individual in the family. These are often women and other marginalized individuals, keeping them away from longer hours of paid work (Tanaka and Cranford; Man).

In my research, I present why women chose to do additional unpaid work in the community, despite the unpaid care work performed at home. Collins argues that placing these narratives in the center against dominant discourses could create new themes and angles of vision (170). She linked

exclusionary immigration policies that created obstacles for Asian American women from China and Japan to have extended family in the U.S. As a first-generation immigrant woman and settler, it was important for me to reflect on how these women were left to negotiate different arrangements, lacking networks of intergenerational community members that would otherwise help with childcare (173). I could not help recognizing my privilege of being reunited with my extended family. I was able to get permanent residence status for my parents as well as my (late) mother-in-law, who has been my daughter's care network right from the day she was born. I was able to request the help of both my parents and my in-laws, right from the time my daughter was in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, through the pandemic. This is especially important to recognize in the land that has seen historical separation, genocide of First Nations, Metis, Inuit and other Indigenous families and communities through the Residential schools (Sanchez), Sixties Scoop (*Sixties Scoop Survivor Finds Sister, Only to Lose Her Again*; Hanson) and the continuing representation of Indigenous children in the foster care system (Blackstock et al.). Research on care work by many racialized settlers and migrant workers shows the result of brutal immigration policies. Even though there is not a great deal of research on the social reproduction of various Asian immigrants in Canada, I wonder what would have constituted care during the time of the Chinese Head Tax that prevented unification of immigrant workers from China with their families, Japanese Internment that separated and confined the families of Japanese settlers during World War II, and the Komagata Maru incident that turned away economic immigrants of Sikh, Muslim and Hindu origins from South Asia, two of them with families and children. While the levying of the Chinese Head Tax and the Komagata Maru incident were largely the result of migration policies aimed at keeping "ethnically undesirable" Chinese and South Asian immigrants from settling in Canada, enforcement of Japanese internment camps also had an element of threat attached to Japanese immigrants during World War two for Canada as U.S. allies. Canadian government offered compensation and apologized for these gruesome incidents and policies, but these kinds of immigrant exclusions were a regular feature of Canadian nation-building projects. These incidents had long-term debilitating effects on these communities who were trying to make it in a land foreign to them. I have engaged with similar immigrant exclusionary incidents of historical and contemporary nature in other areas of my dissertation, including historical policies around Caribbean women workers as well as the more contemporary example of international students.

As mentioned before, the pernicious continuity of structural harm is seen in contemporary narratives like immigrant mother-work by migrant Filipina caregivers in Canada. Immigrant Filipino women's transnational mother-work is highlighted in Tungohan's concept of hyper-maternalism (Tungohan 43–45). Hyper-maternalism is "constant surveillance and contact with their children living away from them, allowing them to meet societal expectations concerning maternal care" (Tungohan 47). Filipina domestic workers fulfilled their transnational mother-work through technology, even as they navigated their lives as live-in caregivers in Canada, leaving their children back home (Tungohan 46). This is because migration policies in Canada do not allow family members to accompany migrant caregivers.

There are instances where state structures enable social reproduction labour for its own benefit but downloading the responsibility of social welfare onto the community. The policy document on social isolation of FGI newcomer and refugee seniors lists health, economic and psychological risks (*Social Isolation of New Immigrant and Refugee Seniors in Canada | Policy Commons*) caused by lack of access to social connections in the community. The document highlights how non-English/French speakers, especially women seniors, are at a high risk of being socially isolated (8). Volunteering was listed as one of the activities that would help improve socializing opportunities. The government policy document suggested how volunteerism can be a solution to reduce social isolation of seniors and how they may benefit from volunteering and participating in their communities (14). The document also emphasizes community benefits from the services provided by the seniors and their social capital (14). This can be seen as a feature of governmentality, where Foucault suggests power also flows through discourse and language and manifests in complicated ways and techniques (Taylor and Foucault 18–19). Through documents, policies, research reports, governments and their agencies come together to communicate and reinforce their agenda in multiple ways. At the same time, academic experts on Foucault have observed the influences of the environment, like friends and trends, in shaping adherence to the power of the state (Taylor and Foucault 19). FGI women were often introduced to volunteering through friends, neighbours and other community spaces like the churches, mosques and libraries. I detail their reasons to volunteer in the next chapter.

Integration of immigrants, a nation-building tool, is another feature through which voluntary labour of immigrant women is sought. University of Pennsylvania researchers Stefanie-Ruiz, Wang and Handy used data from one of the Canadian National Surveys and found that only specific forms

of volunteering, those relating to direct impact in career connections and community connections, help volunteers benefit and ultimately integrate into society (Ruiz, Wang, et al. 94–95). Their study calls for accountability in inviting volunteers where benefit can occur for all actors involved, including volunteers. I provide detailed experiences of volunteering that my research participants shared in chapters four and five of this dissertation to provide a holistic outlook towards volunteering.

These seemingly disjointed experiences of first-generation immigrants (FGIs) of racialized populations and their continuing lack of control over care labour in Black and Indigenous communities are a result of structures like colonialism, neoliberalism, racism and capitalism that uphold patriarchal ideologies of alienating and controlling care labour. Within FGI populations, racial exclusion and racial violence can be understood by tracing their pernicious continuities to colonial violence, and the resulting disruption of social reproduction (Upadhyay 267). I have discussed necropolitical powers in the earlier sections, where sovereign powers get to decide who gets to live and get included in social welfare policies. In the case of FGI populations, I have detailed in the analysis chapters how different immigrant statuses (for example, being an international student) affect access to social welfare services, including food security. Structural barriers created by health crises like the pandemic is another example detailed below.

Covid-19 crisis and immigrant social reproduction

Resilience in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic will be another temporal feature of immigrant social reproduction, discussed in my empirical findings. Feminist economists like Barker and Kabeer, in their recent publications on the pandemic and unpaid care work, explain how Covid-19 has brought about devastating effects on women's unpaid labour and paid care work (Kabeer et al. 3–6; Barker et al. 2–4). The virus did not discriminate but devastatingly affected oppressed populations with respect to race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, caste, class and religion. Highlighting complexities in social reproduction, feminist economists urged policymakers to look at care and labour crises together that proved to be particularly devastating for women, girls and other marginalized genders in terms of labour, violence and loss of economic security. For example, globally, while most families lost income and employment, and statistically men seem to have been affected more by the virus, the caring for family and nurturing patients back to health fell disproportionately on women doing both paid care work and unpaid care. From the perspective of

mothering alone, through their book *Mothers, Mothering and Covid-19*, O'Reilly and Green put together a dispatch of over seventy contributors who shared, through visual, graphic and written formats, the complex experiences of paid employment while mothering, birthing, and providing elder care, with daycare closures and schools going virtual (O'Reilly and Green). Personally, as a community advocate and as an immigrant mother who was overloaded with domestic work and childcare, I remember only "being busy". I have a hard time remembering the exact activities that kept me busy, but I remember doing some community advocacy online, being overworked at home, and being in constant worry about how my toddler would lose out on community support and friendship. I will explore this time in the lives of my research participants.

FGI women's social reproduction at the intersection of community food work

Debates on social reproduction, immigrant women's social reproduction, governmentality, and resilience narratives will particularize FGI women's volunteering, food work and care in the community. The above context underscores how immigrant social reproduction of food work requires centering marginalized standpoints. This will help include those invisible aspects of mother-work around community food work that is left unattended by dominant epistemologies within feminism. Marginalized standpoints, thus, connect broader political and social justice movements belonging to Black, Indigenous, racialized, and immigrant communities (Wynter; Tuck and Yang)What does advocacy look like for FGI women volunteers working in the community? I reflect on the collective nature of food work, which has been a reality in my immigrant household, and my own experiences of community activism for the safety and well-being of my neighbourhood. To me, for food work to be a collective activity within social reproduction, it is important to develop collaborative relationships with other food workers, with whom I can exchange and receive food knowledge and experiences that would otherwise not be available to me. I try to find what other FGI women achieve and make meaning of, when they chose to volunteer.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I engaged with social reproduction by centering marginalized care work and advocacy in the context of governmentality and resilience. I presented critiques to existing understandings of unpaid care. I conclude this literature review with the following thoughts: How could first-generation immigrant women negotiate social reproduction in their community work? I aim to look at plurality in the experiences of community work based on my participants' socio-

economic realities. Since community social reproduction is volunteer-based and often unpaid or underpaid, what makes the workers volunteer their time, even after spending a large portion of their time caring for their families?

It is important to note that the nature of social reproduction labour is fluid and permeates different aspects of labour, different spaces, and economic, political, and environmental issues. While these steadily add to women's work, the collapsible activities that spill into the various aspects often get masked by the enormity of the workload that must be negotiated and completed. The unpaid or underpaid nature of this work adds another layer of invisibility and expendability to FGI women's work.

Chapter 3: Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology of Feminist Community Praxis

Introduction

In this chapter, I detail the methodology for empirical fieldwork. I bring in my understanding of situated knowledges using feminist principles and break down all my research questions for interviews and observation in the community. Information in this chapter sets the base for analysis, discussion themes and conclusion.

I lost my newborn in February of 2013. I lived in India then. He was born at thirty-two weeks, weighed all of 650 grams and lived for eighteen days. In those eighteen days of caring for my baby, I remember being completely disembodied from many truths of my body: I had an emergency C-section, and my pregnancy was affected due to a medical condition called pre-eclampsia. This involves a sudden onset of high blood pressure in pregnant mothers. According to my gynaecologist, this condition had risks of organ dysfunction in the mother, including the eyes, kidneys, liver and brain, and growth issues for infants in the womb, which is why my son had to be delivered prematurely. I also vaguely recall daily hospital visits as my child battled in the neonatal intensive care, breast milk pumping, my mother battling the loss of her own mother, and still trying her best to take care of my aging grandparents and me. I remember occupying space in my husband's relatives' home, as they lived close to the hospital, an unexpected inconvenience that the hosts endured. This was because I lived in another city with my husband and in-laws. I was in my maternal home getting ready for childbirth when the pregnancy emergency happened, and my mother happened to be attending (her mother) my grandmother's funeral in a different city. The hosts agreed to house my in-laws and husband yet pointed out that I needed to be responsible for my parents instead of being cared for by my in-laws and husband. I recall my (now deceased) in-laws "gently" observing how large in number and united my extended maternal family was, and yet I seem to be relying on my in-laws. Instead of focusing on my child, I felt alienated from my own body and myself as I dazedly navigated such patriarchal expectations of who should care for the newborn mother and the newborn. I lost my child and went back to living with my parents, my semi-mobile paternal grandparents, all of us collectively grieving for my child. If I asked my mother or mother-in-law, maybe they would recall this experience differently from the location of "carers", who went through difficult experiences of their own, as against my space of "being cared for". My mother would speak of her

own mother's death, and my mother-in-law would speak about how she had to be admitted to the ICU following a heart health scare after the loss of her grandchild. The lady whose place I occupied would have her own experiences of increased labour to share. All four of us belong to the same gender, privileged caste and class location, differing in ages, but patriarchy accords us different social locations with varying degrees of privileges and disadvantages (Chakravarti). In conceptualizing brahmanical patriarchy in early India, Chakravarti speaks about the intersections of gender, caste, class, and state that have complicity in the privilege or subordination of brahmanical women in unique ways. These privileges or disadvantages shape our experiences as mothers, daughters, mothers-in-law, and daughters-in-law.

A year later, as a Master of Philosophy student in Women's Studies with Tata Institute of Social Sciences, I was introduced to how feminists could make meaning of these experiences and coined terminologies for such experiences, such as embodied and situated knowledges (Haraway 583–84), or embodied situatedness (Sultana; Haraway). Haraway connects the idea of situated knowledges to feminist objectivity. Here, objectivity comes from an understanding of particular embodiment and limited social locations, where generalizations are avoided (582-583). Instead, particularities within individual identities, communities, space and time are emphasized. Sultana's argument corroborates Haraway's feminist subjectivities proposed above.

> Knowledge is always partial and representations of knowledges produced through field research embody power relations that the researcher must be aware of in undertaking ethical research. Intersubjective learning is important in such processes, which are often iterative and difficult to pre-define in institutional ethics forms and research proposals. The knowledge produced in research occurs within the context of the research process, embedded within broader social relations and development processes that place me and my respondents in different locations. As such, my findings will always be interpretive and partial yet telling of stories that may otherwise not be told (about water, arsenic, sufferings, gender relations, development, etc.) and revealing broader patterns that may or may not be stable over time and space.
>
> -(Sultana 382)

Sultana's observation of knowledges being partial, dynamic and iterative which make learning difficult to define and hypothesize in the proposal and ethics stage was particularly relatable. My doctoral research experience, from the beginning of my doctoral studies through the design of my research, development, fieldwork, analysis, and writing, follows the principles of situated knowledges/feminist objectivity. Going in with an understanding that my research will be partial,

particular to the time and space of my field experience, I narrowed down my research design to specific aspects: 1. Particular focus involving volunteer labour of FGI women; 2. Focus on food advocacy and non-profit organizations; 3. Pandemic timeframe as an entry point of inquiry, but going in with an understanding that research specificities can change through space and time. To explain what influenced my research processes, I present my basic understanding of ontology, epistemology and finally, methodology.

The context of ontology, epistemology, and methodology in community research

I have presented a tabulated snapshot of the research focus for my doctoral dissertation and how I have arrived at my methods for fieldwork, analysis and dissertation writing. I explain the research tenets in detail below the table.

Table 1: Research paradigms and FGI women's research context

Research Paradigm	FGI women's research context
Ontology – What is reality?	Critical Theory Paradigm
Epistemology – Whose reality are we talking about? Who is the knower?	Feminist epistemology partially drawn from Postmodernism, Poststructuralism and Structural Intersectionality
Methodology – The theory of the research process	Qualitative inquiry privileging the existence of different realities
Methods – Doing Research	Autoethnography, Interviews

Harding contextualizes epistemology and methodology below and their culmination into research methods.

> Feminists engage both the theory and practice of research—beginning with the formulation of the research question and ending with the reporting of research findings. Feminist research encompasses the full range of knowledge building that includes epistemology, methodology, and method. An epistemology is "a theory of knowledge" (Sandra Harding, 1987b, p. 3) that delineates a set of assumptions about the social world—who can be a knower and what can be known. These assumptions influence the decisions a researcher makes, including what to study (based on what can be studied) and how to conduct a study. A methodology is "a theory of how research is done or should proceed" (p. 3). A method is "a technique for (or way of proceeding in) gathering evidence" (p. 2).

- (Harding in Hesse-Biber, 7)

How do marginalized scholars delineate epistemic standpoints that center experiences from a holistic perspective? For Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, gendered experiences must include broader contextualization with colonization and other state tools of oppression. For pioneering Black feminist bell hooks, one needs to be courageous to base their work on transformative politics and for Audre Lorde, such politics can emerge from centering subjugated, marginalized knowledges (Hesse-Biber 5–6). A common theme across these conversations is the importance of subjectivity.

Following feminist research principles of favouring subjectivity (Hesse-Biber; Harding), I centred marginalized scholarship and theoretical understandings of social reproduction, governmentality and resilience narratives. I purposefully chose to explore the realities of Black, Indigenous, and other marginalized communities. It helped me understand my simultaneous experience as a community volunteer: 1. the privileges of caste, class and religion I carry as a Hindu, middle-class brahmin immigrant in Canada and 2. racialization as an Indian immigrant, mother and woman, and my marginalization in accessing social networks for upward economic mobility. My inquiry follows the ontology, epistemology and methodological tenets of research paradigms. Ontology asks the questions: what is knowledge/truth/reality, and constructing the existence of realities in social sciences and, therefore, the type of research that is carried out and how it can proceed (Graham). Privileged, historically popular feminists in their understanding of women's lives, like Simone De Beauvoir, Dorothy Smith, and Virginia Woolf, have highlighted how reality can be created by legitimately centring women's everyday experiences and consciously moving away from privileged perspectives (Hesse-Biber 5).

In this chapter, I present what the originalities of feminist community research can look like when the subjectivities are largely grounded in the labour of FGI women - their labour in particular spaces and times (since their arrival in Canada and until 2024, when my fieldwork occurred) within which social reproduction, governmentality, and resilience narratives were recorded. My research participants largely lived or worked in the Greater Toronto Area's York Region. Participants largely came from Stouffville, Thornhill, Richmond Hill, Georgina, Newmarket, Aurora, and Vaughan. Three participants lived in the Durham region but had volunteered in the York region and the Durham region municipalities.

Feminist epistemological lenses in researching realities of FGI women's community work

I employ an epistemic lens that takes certain aspects from postmodernism and poststructuralism, with a conscious move towards an epistemology of critical theory. Feminist research primers explain postmodernism as an approach that foregrounds the presence of subjective realities, moving away from binaries of individual experiences involving social variables like gender, age, citizenship, race, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. (Hesse-Biber 90–91; Tong and Botts). Postmodernism bases these subjective realities of individuals on relationalities that deconstruct culture, society, and class and question the validity of the power these structures hold (Hesse-Biber 91). Poststructuralism questions the existence of a single reality and objectivity and is beneficial for feminists to argue against women as a monolithic category, unchanging and singular (91). The epistemic lens posits how truths can be constructed by power structures to benefit the dominant, often at the cost of marginalized communities (91). Tong and Botts recognize "Michel Foucault and Judith Butler as representative poststructuralists and Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous as representative postmodernists" (181). These philosophers have influenced subjective realities and their connections to power structures through thought, discourse and language. Take Foucault, for example.

> Foucault frequently claimed that as sexual subjects, we are the objects of a set of intersecting power relations and discourses that inscribe themselves on our bodies and cause us to recognize ourselves in certain ways. Often, we are unaware of the social forces that have constituted our sexual subjectivity. For this reason, we operate on the unquestioning assumption that our subjectivity is really our own. Thus, it is the role of critical thinkers to help us challenge the ways in which power relations and discourses constitute our subjectivity, particularly our sexual subjectivity, so that we can somehow understand it. Foucault maintained that he did not conduct his analyses "to say: this is how things are, look how trapped you are." He conducted them to permit others to help us transform our realities.
>
> - (Tong and Botts 182)

Foucault's understanding of critical theory as an ontological paradigm is important for my research. The transformative capacity of critical theory that Foucault refers to in the above passage has the power to challenge assumptions of traditional research approaches that often present universal behaviours and experiences (Hesse-Biber 101–02). By challenging assumptions and biases, critical theory attends to the issues of justice by investigating power structures and discourses that could impact gender, race, class, ability, sexuality and other social variables (101). Feminist researchers use critical tools to center the marginalized lived experiences of women (102). By centering women's experiences, critical theory challenges dominant forms of knowledges, creating

space for oppressed groups to make meaning of their experiences and strive for their emancipation (Hesse-Biber 17–18).

Intersectionality as a research mindset and the importance of social context and relationalities

Crenshaw's Intersectionality thesis on Black women facing multiple axes of oppression through gender, race and structural barriers has been groundbreaking for feminist theorizing. In a Stanford Law Review article, Crenshaw explained how structural intersectionality, as a concept, can be used to understand immigrant women's experiences (Crenshaw, "Mapping..."). Using the example of domestic violence in the paper, she explains how other structural factors like poverty, language barriers, employment or underemployment additionally contribute to women's oppression (Crenshaw, "Mapping..." 1245).

In the context of my research involving first-generation immigrant women doing unpaid care in the community, structural intersectionality is an important consideration. Structures give a social and relational context to particularizing women's experiences with one another and systems of domination. For immigrant women, these structures of domination or access could be immigration policy, social connections, employment opportunities, class, language, ethnicity, religion and family. Collins and Bilge emphasize that intersectionality is heterogeneous in ways of understanding and adoption (Collins and Bilge 16) and results in it providing space for investigating the politics of not-yet. This excerpt explains the argument on relationality further.

> The theme of relationality that reappears in various forms across intersectional scholarship and practice has had an important impact on both. This insight that the connections among entities that had been seen as separate and often oppositional constitute a major contribution of intersectionality to all types of projects…we introduced intersectionality's basic heuristic, the seemingly simple idea that entities that are typically treated as separate may actually be interconnected. For intersectionality, this interconnectedness lies in the relationships between systems of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and citizenship status. An intersectionality framework counsels that these entities, in various combinations or in total, can all be accommodated under the umbrella of intersectionality……drawing on the theme of relationality to show the complexities of collective identity politics. We also present an argument about the centrality of relationality to coalition politics, investigating how what seem to be scattered social movements may in actuality be interrelated phenomena in response to a global world order.
>
> - (Collins and Bilge 180–81)

In developing an intersectional mindset, I ensured I understood relations of privilege and oppression for myself as a first-generation immigrant food volunteer. As a community food advocate, I was able to see patterns of labour, services and client experiences being impacted by systems of power that held the choice to fund and impact community programs. As a researcher, however, understanding the relationalities of FGI women's volunteer labour, and the impact of their labour on the work of various community organizations helped me contextualize funding and program implementations from a new perspective. An intersectional mindset is also important to focus on particular social contexts that can inform research in particular ways. As written below,

> We also recognize the significance of how politics shapes the way in which physical and geographic space is understood and organized. Contextualizing intersectional categories that define space, for example, matters whether one is a citizen of Syria or Germany, or whether one plays soccer in South Africa or Spain. Intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry and praxis gains its meaning within specific social contexts. Placing greater emphasis on the specifics of social context of local, regional, and national geography would provide a more nuanced discussion of global processes.
>
> - (Collins and Bilge 184)

The social contexts I focused on were women's social reproduction in the community and the pandemic as an entry point for research inquiry, where I had a conversation with various participants on how their volunteering was impacted by the pandemic, besides their migration stories. A relationality that came through in the interviews was participants' knowledge and understanding of food advocacy against food insecurity, and how they consciously tried to ensure food access through their labour. Understanding relationalities and social context helped me focus on particularities within a spatial and temporal context that accompanies current realities in a research field study. I also understood that the sharing of current truths could change with a change in the social context. Recently migrated FGI women had different reasons for volunteering than women who migrated to Canada a few decades back. Marital status, family and societal connections were relationalities, I observed, that could inform nuances in FGI women's social reproduction labour.

Qualitative methodology and the field experience: Positionality, reflexivity and anti-oppressive ethics

Feminists have traditionally proposed qualitative methodology principles to uphold feminist empiricism, standpoint and social construction. As explained in the previous sections, feminist empiricism questions positivist traditions of research that have been considered scientific, objective,

and in search of one truth. While quantitative methods in feminist research do exist currently, in arguing against androcentric biases, feminists have highlighted "how androcentric biases at both the epistemological and the methodological levels resulted in women's experiences being devalued, distorted, marginalized, and pathologized" (McHugh 206)

Smith, Harding, and other feminists have presented feminist standpoint epistemology that centres women's experience, and upholds the existence of value-laden, subjective realities and situated knowledges (Smith and Harding in Jaggar). The feminist standpoint, though transformative in qualitative inquiry, has received criticism for providing space for essentialism, with the dangers of reducing women to a homogeneous group (McHugh 207) .Collins, Crenshaw, Mohanty and other racialized feminists have historically called for methodological nuance that particularizes experiences of women through race, immigrant status, sexuality and other intersecting variables (Mohanty et al.; Collins; Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing…"). Collins's particular contribution that Black women's standpoints give rise to a double consciousness of racism as well as sexism has been a pivotal contribution to feminist standpoint epistemology.

This brings me to also address gender binaries that traditional feminist empiricism and standpoint methodologies might have focused on. While feminist research has called attention to the dangers of clubbing all women into one category, they have also guided researchers to understand the value-laden perspectives of reflexivity and positionality. I adopted self-reflexivity, positionality, and accountability as a researcher to maintain an ethical standard throughout the dissertation project (Harding in Jaggar 334). I ensured to ground my reflexivity in juxtaposition with my social identities –such as race, class, age, gender, sexuality, and religion, among others – to understand their impact on my research agenda and processes. (Denzin and Lincoln, 265).

I understand positionality as "the set of social and economic attributes you bring (as a researcher) to bear in analyzing and interpreting your data" (Hesse-Biber 523). I understand that my social location and the structures that enable or create barriers will affect how I engage with my research processes and participants.

My doctoral project is a direct result of my life experiences as a rainbow mother, a racialized first-generation immigrant to this land. These identities have influenced my social reproduction work in both paid and unpaid care. In my early 20s, I received considerable economic success in my career due to social privileges back home, namely caste and religious privilege of belonging to a hindu,

brahmin community. I had an MBA, a postgraduate degree in psychology and was working as a qualitative consumer researcher. It was interrupted due to family responsibilities as a wife, mother and daughter-in-law, as well as international migration. Child loss has been a significant influencer in my choice of research and career pivot that affected my social and economic standing. In the last decade, my social adherence to endogamy through arranged marriage, subsequent loss and social scrutiny as a rainbow mother (I lost my child in the first year of my marriage in 2013) have affected my academic and career trajectory. I wanted to learn about the experiences of women like me to help me heal, who performed unpaid care as immigrant women to help me heal. I bring a set of privileges as well as marginalizations to my research.

I understand reflexivity in research as researcher accountability. An accountability to reflect on the research process, including data collection, analysis and research representation, reflecting also on the research relationships, power and locating the self within the power structures (Sultana 376). For me, this reflectivity meant providing an introductory reflection at the beginning of every chapter in social reproduction work as a woman, mother, wife, daughter, daughter-in-law and a community advocate, which situated my interest and approach towards research, participants and academic politics (McHugh 213).

As a community food advocate, I had the opportunity to meet FGI women like me for research interviews. Because I partnered with the organization I volunteer for, I came across certain research participants who were fellow volunteers. My research design and theoretical perspectives come from my interactions and shared experiences with my fellow volunteers. However, I also bring in an outsider perspective, as the experiences I shared with my colleagues are partial, temporal, episodic and speak to my social context as a volunteer. As a researcher, having access to data from many such volunteers puts me in a position of power. Also, how I represent them is a power accorded to me, which makes me doubly accountable.

This feeling of being an insider as well as an outsider was a constant negotiation throughout the fieldwork. Hearing life stories and experiences of people in a similar social context of volunteering yielded nuanced and distinct learning. I tried to blend in as much as I could; by volunteering on the same day, I had interviews with fellow volunteers. Many interviews took place in the partner organization's office, local libraries, and cafés, which people were often familiar with. To express my intent and commitment, I offered to cook for a few, as some were able to give me time

only during their lunch. In some other situations, where I was invited to people's homes, I was able to enjoy home-cooked lunches and snacks. While I considered it my job to ensure my participants were comfortable and safe while sharing their experiences, I didn't expect that they would be so collaborative as to make me comfortable. I learnt from so many snippets about politics, about their lives, work, and the shared starting point of moving to a new country. I identified with some of their early struggles.

FGI women participants were very forthcoming with their opinions and shared experiences that pointed to structural barriers of funding and access. They shared unique experiences of negotiating these barriers that gave me new ideas for self-transformation as a volunteer. For example, a research participant mentioned how she built a business proposal through a connection with a fellow volunteer. Going in with an idea to reduce my power as a researcher, to ensure a non-exploitative, anti-oppressive collaboration with the participant, I didn't expect to receive suggestions and advice for my own personal growth and economic perspective. At the same time, I was careful not to conflate all our experiences and ensured that I highlighted as many voices as possible in the analyses. In interviewing women who have lived here for many decades, I realized how much labour must have gone into paving paths for newer immigrants to the country, especially the knowledge of differences in immigrant identities, availability of culturally appropriate food, and ensuring better economic opportunities, to name a few.

So, what can I learn from my positionality and reflexivity to be an anti-oppressive researcher? As a settler, being an anti-oppressive researcher was a commitment that stemmed from narrating my positionality and reflexivity. To be an anti-oppressive researcher, Potts and Brown advise that each step of the research process must challenge dominant ideas and outcomes, which they call "reversing the gaze" (Potts and Brown 25-26). In their own words, "Anti-oppressive research questions why we so easily think of researching those who are marginalized by reason of race, class, ability, gender, and so on while it is so difficult to think about researching dominance" (Potts and Brown 25–26). I first reflected on why I needed to do this particular research, ask these specific research questions and engage with this particular community of volunteers. As a member of this community of volunteers working in York Region Municipality's non-profit organizations, I saw many first-generation immigrant women like me in spaces of unpaid care. From my interactions with colleagues and people I would meet in passing during volunteering, I wanted to understand what made them do the additional work of community care besides working at home and/or working outside for pay. I

didn't think we were all the same, but I wanted to understand why there were so many of us FGI women in here and what our particular experiences could be. I ensured that my position as a community advocate, a rainbow mother, and an immigrant settler informed my understanding of social reproduction work and was evident in my research proposal.

I followed the ethical research guidelines defined by York University's Research Ethics Board (REB). I adhered to specific ethical considerations at every stage of my research, including ensuring participant autonomy and safety, establishing a physical copy of informed consent (and an email copy), and forging respect for enrolled participants (Ogungbure 81). One of the participants, after signing the informed consent form and participating in the interview, asked me not to quote them in the analysis. However, they permitted me to adopt their learning in corroborating other conversations and insights. I followed this request to ensure and uphold participant autonomy and safety.

I followed the tri-agency ethics framework to communicate in an honest, fair, and responsible manner by adhering to the university research ethics board (Secretariat on Responsible Conduct of Research (Canada) et al. 23–24). As a requirement with York University REB, I submitted my detailed research proposal, research partner support letter, informed consent forms, semi-structured interview guides and my TCPS Core 2 certificate: Course on Research Ethics based on the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2: CORE 2022). I went into the field with the approval letter and finished my fieldwork within the time frame the approval was provided for.

Community-based research (CBR): Defining my community

As discussed in the introduction, for this study, I use the spatial site of community to understand food systems that tackle the issue of food insecurity by providing access to food for those who need it. By "community" for this study, I mean my neighbourhood, my hindu and other South Asian relations of family and friends, cultural spaces like the temple, my karate dojo, my colleagues from work, volunteering and fellow parents of my daughter's school friends. Due to my caste privileges and generational social capital, I have a transnational community of relations who offer advice on food, education and living and still help me keep my connections to India, even after I have moved.

> Community-based research aims to connect academic researchers with individuals, groups, and community organizations to collaborate on a research project to solve community-

> identified and community-defined problems. Community-based research is intended to educate, empower, and transform at the individual, community, and structural levels to challenge inequality and oppression.
>
> - (Boyd 746)

Community is a contested concept, as I discuss in detail in the introduction, chapter one, where neoliberal downloading of responsibilities is often passed onto members of a community as social welfare retrenchments occur. I discuss this in detail in chapter one and chapter two, as well as showcase examples in analysis. Choosing to stay within my community for research has helped me make meaning of my experiences, empower me to understand my privilege as well as marginality and connect my academic politics to my community work. It has helped me develop friends and social connections that I would otherwise lack as an FGI woman.

My research agenda centers on the experiences of marginalized standpoints with a focus on the privileges and precarity of FGI communities. Ethically, this research highlights and benefits my community of food advocates. My research does not intentionally position Black, Indigenous, and Dalit-Bahujan communities as my research participants, but I would engage with literary, media, and academic resources grounded in these knowledges and cultures. At every stage, I ensured my research would center my research participants as knowledge bearers and forge a spirit where research is relational (Wilson 91–92) and grounded in the researcher's and participants' historical and current experiences, cultures, or knowledge systems (Denzin and Lincoln; Kovach in Brown and Strega). I will critically situate myself and my life to fulfill ethical, political, and social accountability towards my research and research participants (Jaggar; Kovach, Macias, and Strega in Brown and Strega). I will juxtapose my privileges with my immigrant, racialized identity, whose first language is not English.

Methods: Autoethnography and in-depth interviewing

Besides participant observations as a fellow community volunteer, I use specific methods of autoethnography to ground my analysis and chapter presentations. In-depth interviewing was used to trace participant stories and also to understand the non-profit environment through paid worker interviews with workers in the field.

Autoethnography is a "self-narrative that places the self within a social context. It is both a method and a text" (Holman in Adams et al. 72). I chose this method to ground my reflexivity and recognize how social identities –such as race, class, age, gender, sexuality and religion, among others – impact what and how we study, as well as what we see and how we interpret what we study. Autoethnography accepts the nature of a partial, situated knowledge, and demonstrates that "the value of stories, literary and aesthetic modes of communication, emotions, and embodiment in our work, and the significance of social identities and identity politics for understanding and honouring positionality and difference are interrelated and mutually influencing concerns" (Adams et al. 31). Researchers engaging with autoethnography have reiterated reasons for choosing this engagement. As discussed in the chapter previously, autoethnography foregrounds many feminist research principles, namely, situated and subjective knowledge; illustrating meaning-making of everyday experiences; and questions existing norms of research and representation (Adams et al. 4–7). Boylorn, in *Doing Autoethnography,* explains how they were able to highlight the intersection of rural Black women's lives through their narration, particularities of which could be overlooked in academic politics. In highlighting their parallel narrative of living in the community of Streetwater, they were able to do the same by highlighting voices of women and their experiences from the same community (Pensoneau-Conway 27–28).

In-depth interview

I followed Beth Leech's article on techniques to develop my discussion guide and conduct semi-structured interviews. Leech's article is informed by their experience as a journalist and an ethnographer, which helped me understand the rationale for using specific principles in semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are open-ended questions that allow researchers to enter the worlds of participants but still maintain a structure that is related to the topic. (Leech 665). Leech, in the four page guide, also provides principles of putting participants at ease with questions that create rapport, wording questions to center participant knowledge and prompts that allow for further inquiry and clarification (McCracken in Leech 668).

What I was not ready for was the emotional vulnerability that came with knowing about participants' stories of their migration, pandemic, loss of family members, pressures and stress of caregiving. I constantly reminded myself: your experiences are different; it may sound similar, but the temporality, spatiality and social context of the experiences are different. With this reminder, we

could still share laughter and tears without romanticizing our immigrant stories. The few hours of interviewing and sharing stories, a shared sense of understanding and the power distance seemed to exist together in the same space. I completely understand when Sara Ahmed says, "In research relationships, what I want to suggest is not that friendships between white women and Aboriginal women are not possible—nor that political alliances cannot be made—but that these friendships and alliances will always take place in situations of asymmetry of power. The denial of the existence of power relations is, after all, a means by which power relations are kept in place" (Ahmed 58). I was not their friend; for some I was a fellow volunteer, and somehow this familiarity helped lessen the power distance between us.

In *The Compromised Researcher* journal article, Gabriele Griffin quotes Sara Ahmed and argues that emotions shown in fieldwork could be traditionally seen as a weakness in the research process (Ahmed in Griffin 338) that often privileges positivist epistemologies where an objective, impartial lens is an expectation. However, racially privileged feminists like Griffin can choose to take these stances where they can privilege one racial community researching another community. My positionality and the resultant embodied research experience do not feel "strange" in interviewing immigrant women of other racial identities. Nor did I feel vulnerable in interviewing paid workers (PWs). The PWs were mostly racially privileged settlers who were managing volunteers and dependent on their labour to run non-profit community programs. There is a visible hierarchy of white women doing paid work in the food non-profits and managing volunteers who are FGI women, marginalized youth, persons with disabilities and senior women volunteers. Racially dominant women in leadership positions may not necessarily embody lived experiences of being an FGI and their unique experiences as food bank users as well as volunteers. This is why centring immigrant women's experiences in the research helped contextualize the importance of their work as highlighted by many PWs. Sharing stories with other FGI women volunteers made me hyper-aware of the differences and incommensurability of our immigrant labour experiences. I not only understood the uniqueness of our individual experiences as community food advocates, but also how, at the same time, our experiences are grounded in historical incidents of structural violence faced by Black and other racialized immigrant settlers and Indigenous communities in the nation-building agenda of Canada. I speak more about this in the analysis chapters.

I conducted in-depth interviews with 21 participants, with some follow-up conversations to corroborate and clarify observations. When I highlight conversations and quotes in the analysis

chapters, I also provide detailed explanations of the dates and locations where the interviews occurred. A brief introduction of participants is given below. For paid workers, I did not ask for racial or ethnic identity, or any details of personal identification, if they were not first-generation immigrants. The discussion guide meant for paid workers was largely non-profit sector-based and focused on structural barriers and government policies in the sector.

Table 2. Research participants by paid/volunteer work, migration status and country of origin.

Serial number	Participant Pseudonym	Description
1	Monika	FGI woman, volunteer – Step migration from Sri Lanka to Malaysia to Canada
2	Tania	FGI woman, volunteer – Bosnia
3	Daria	FGI woman, volunteer – Iran
4	Daisy	FGI woman, volunteer – UK
5	Berry	FGI woman, volunteer- UK
6	Himmat	FGI woman, volunteer -Bangladesh
7	Lily	FGI woman, volunteer- Bangladesh
8	Bonnie	FGI woman, volunteer – Hong Kong
9	Hazy	FGI woman, volunteer – Iran
10	Lavender	FGI woman, paid worker – Jamaica
11	Enkay	FGI woman, paid worker – Pakistan
12	Clarissa	FGI woman, paid worker – UK
13	Shiny	Paid worker with international student permit – India
14	Dora	Paid worker with international student permit, now on work permit – Step migration from Brazil to Argentina to Canada
15	Betty	Paid worker - Canadian-born European
16	Minnie	Paid worker - Canadian-born Caribbean
17	Casey	Paid worker - Canadian-born European
18	Grace	Paid worker - Canadian-born European
19	Alice	Paid worker - Canadian-born European

20	Carol	Paid worker - Canadian-born European
21	Sasha	Paid worker - Canadian-born European

Participant profiles, collaboration rationale and interview processes

Through my partnership with the research advocacy organization, my research details were shared with volunteers and partner organizations. I also shared my participant invitations in my social network, social media pages and phone groups of immigrant communities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). I received responses via email for participation requests as well as inquiries. Most of my participants were living and volunteering, or both, in the towns and cities of York Region, barring 3 who lived in Durham Municipalities (Himmat, Lavender and Lily). Some were living in these municipalities but had also volunteered in Toronto and other parts of the GTA, mainly the York Region. Paid workers had worked in different areas of the GTA. Knowledge shared would be based on experiences in all these geographies. Some FGI women collaborators shared their demographic information, such as age range, ethnicity, household and personal income, caregiving responsibilities and family status, anonymously, through an informal survey. Not everyone participated in the survey. I have shared a snapshot of the same below. The reason for presenting the chart as raw data is to show a diverse age range in participants, ethnicities, a gendered gap in household earnings versus personal income and a snapshot of caregiving status. The gendered gap in household earnings and the disproportionate presence of mostly women, particularly immigrants and seniors, in the non-profit sector shows that it is feminized. Feminization also explains the relevance of volunteer work and underpaid salaries that keep the sector afloat.

Among 21 people overall who were living and/or working in York Region towns and cities, 9 of them were volunteers; 12 of them were paid workers. Volunteers were different from paid workers, as they would not get paid for their services in the organization. I had initially planned out different discussion guides for my participants who were FGI women volunteers and paid workers. I found out in the field that there were overlaps in the categories I had drawn out theoretically. For example, Enkay was an FGI woman but a paid worker as well; Dora was a paid worker, an international student turned work permit holder. These overlaps in categories added to unique perspectives. Out of the 12 paid workers, 3 were FGI women, and 2 had entered Canada as international students (one of them, Dora, now had a work permit). These 5 migrants and FGI paid

workers brought in their own experiences of volunteering. Even though the initial focus of my research was FGI women and particularly volunteers, I ended up interviewing the paid workers as well. Interviews with paid workers in food-based non-profits helped me further understand the structural barriers around the non-profit industry. This is because they were able to interact with municipal, provincial and federal representatives for various events, meetings and programs, which helped them get first-hand information on funding and priorities that were not available to volunteers. This information was important for me to understand funding priorities and broader policies that governed the non-profit food sector. Barring the 5 paid workers who were not born in Canada, Minnie identified as a Caribbean-Canadian. The other 6 workers identified as Canadian-born of European descent. The paid workers largely started as volunteers in the sector and moved on to applying for community worker jobs. Some, like Minnie and Clarissa, had their own food-based businesses but later on were hired by their organization as workers. In total, most Canadian-born paid workers had each over 15-20 years of work experience in the sector. FGI women volunteers, who were newcomers and migrant workers, had about 3-4 years of experience in the non-profit food sector. FGI women volunteers who had lived in Canada for 20 years or so volunteered in spurts when they could spare time from paid work. Monika and Lily were retired and spared time for volunteering when they were relatively free from grandparenting. Daria, Berry and Daisy were seniors in precarious, contractual work who volunteered when they were out of work, to remain connected to the community.

Most of my field research took the shape of individual interviews. 2 interviews were in dyads. In the first case, I interviewed Shiny and Dora separately on their immigration journey as international students and together, as they wanted to talk about food security measures and allied programs run by their student non-profit union. In the second case, two elderly FGI women, Daisy and Berry, came to meet me together in the organization after their volunteer work. In the course of interviews, I gauged that Daisy and Berry largely relied on government support for their living and volunteered regularly in exchange for food and community support. Most of my FGI women volunteers characteristically held contractual jobs with low and/or unstable income sources. Some with low personal income were living with family like Bonnie and Monika, but some others like Daisy and Berry were senior women dependent on social supports. Daria, who was also a senior FGI woman volunteer, held contractual positions in eldercare and childcare sectors to support herself financially. Hazy, Himmat, and Tania were managing school, domestic care, contractual work (in

non-food-based sectors) and volunteering. Enkay shared her experiences as a volunteer and the experience of being hired by the same organization. Lavender shared experiences of volunteering in the food bank run by her educational institution for international students. The nature and space of volunteering, and reasons for volunteering, changed in different spaces based on the needs of the organization, which led to unique experiences that I have shared in the following analysis chapters.

I conducted my interviews in the summer and fall of 2023 in various cities and towns of York Region. As a volunteer in the sector, I noted how we were slowly getting called back into volunteering for in-person events after severe cutbacks on services during the COVID period. The interviews were held largely in community organizations where workers and volunteers operated, libraries, and homes of the participants. The location was completely decided by the participants. In some cases, I followed up on some questions via a phone call.

Table 3. Personal information provided by some FGI women*

* (This table was created from a survey that was voluntary and anonymous; 11 FGI women (volunteers/paid workers) and 2 migrant workers opted to take the survey)

Serial No	Age range	Status	Ethnicity	Marital Status	Caregiver Status	Household Income	Personal Income	Family Status
1	30-39	Canadian Citizen	European descent;	Married		Do not want to answer	Do not want to answer	Living with family (partner)
2	50-59	Canadian Citizen	Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Taiwanese descent	Married	Caring for child/ren	$100,000-149,999	$30,000-$49,999	Living with family (partner and children)
3	70 and above	Canadian Citizen	European descent	Single	Care work outside of home	$30,000-$49,999	$30,000-$49,999	Living by yourself
4	70 and above	Canadian Citizen	European descent	Single	Care work outside of home	0 - $29,999	0 - $29,999	Living by yourself

5	50-59	Canadian Citizen	European descent	Married	Care work outside of home	$100,000-149,999	$30,000-$49,999	Living with family (partner and children)
6	50-59	Permanent Resident	Arab, Persian, West Asian descent, e.g. Afghan, Egyptian, Iranian	Married	Caring for family members. Care work outside of home	$70,000-$99,999	$50,000-$69,999	Living with family (partner and children)
7	40-49	Canadian Citizen	South Asian descent, e.g. East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Indo-Caribbean	Married	Caring for family members. Care work outside of home. Caring for child/ren	$70,000-$99,999	0 - $29,999	Living with family (partner and children)
8	60-69	Canadian Citizen	South Asian descent, e.g. East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Indo-Caribbean	Married	Caring for child/Ren; Caring for elderly; Caring for family members; Care work outside of home	$70,000-$99,999	0 - $29,999	Living with husband, and near a daughter who needs care for her children
9	70 +	Canadian Citizen	Arab, Persian, West Asian descent, e.g. Afghan, Egyptian, Iranian	Single	Caring for child/ren	$30,000-$49,999	$30,000-$49,999	Living by yourself

10	50-59	Permanent Resident	African, Afro-Caribbean, African-Canadian descent	Married	Caring for family members; Care work outside of home	$150,000 or more	$100,000-149,999	Living with family (partner and children)
11	18- 29	International Student	South Asian descent, e.g. East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Indo-Caribbean	Single	None	$30,000-$49,999	0 - $29,999	Living with brother and cousin
12	18- 29	Work Permit	Latin American, Hispanic descent	Single	None	$50,000-$69,999	$50,000-$69,999	Living with roommates
13	60-69	Canadian Citizen	South Asian descent, e.g. East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Indo-Caribbean	Married	Caring for child/Ren; Caring for family members			Living with family (partner)

Conclusion

In this chapter, I traced the ontology, epistemology and methodological narratives surrounding feminist research. Within a feminist epistemic lens, I focused on my positionality, reflexivity and tenets of being anti-oppressive in my research. I defined ethical considerations, community and community-based research for this dissertation. I introduced my participants and provided a snapshot of data collection and analysis. An important learning in detailing fieldwork experience, interviewing and analysis has been the struggle of constantly engaging with my self-reflexivity and positionality as I simultaneously engaged with participants' thoughts and

conversations. I had a constant feeling of being an alien, even though I was a part of the system as a volunteer in reality, where organizational decisions affected me in practice. Methodological considerations, however detailed on paper, are challenging to follow in the field as more environmental variables get attached to conversations and analysis. Discussion guides and detailed informed consent forms really helped in orienting research questions while upholding the intention of being anti-oppressive and reflexive.

Chapter 4: FGI Women Volunteering as Social Reproduction - Why Volunteer?

Introduction

In this chapter, I address the first question that led me to embark on this research journey: Amidst demanding household labour, what makes FGI women volunteer in the area of food work in the Greater Toronto Area, particularly in York Region? This question arises from my own experience as an FGI woman volunteer myself, where I speak in chapter introductions about my social reproduction work in my household, community and spaces in-between. This first research question sets the base for governmentality and resilience narratives in the following chapters.

It is the third of March, 2026, today, and I am working on my feedback and revisions for this chapter. Last week, as I was getting ready to drop my daughter off at school, I rammed my big toe in one of the stair steps inside my home, and it got fractured. If not for many FGI community relations (my sister-in-law and brother) and friends (neighbourhood moms) who helped my husband and me drop Svara off at school, get me food, and offer a weekly tiffin service of homemade Indian food, I would not be sitting in peace and editing this chapter. Some of the food work and childcare offered was completely voluntary. However, in this period of temporary mobility challenges, I was specifically thankful for Indian food options that spelled comfort and reminded me of a familiar environment. When I lost my child in India, this familiarity was what I wanted to migrate away from.

We particularly wanted to get away from familiar yet painful reminders of our loss. I have published a book chapter (Raji-Kalyanaraman, "Reflections from a Settler and an Immigrant Mother of Colour: How Motherhood Helped Me Develop My Feminist Politics over the Last Decade") on how becoming a rainbow mother came with scrutiny and fat shaming as explanations for loss. I realized how the social reproduction work of "providing care, familial support during grief" can be seen as empowering, disempowering and an exercise of power, which I describe below. My matrimonial home's ideas of an ideal reproductive body, the right age to have children, and my husband and I not measuring up to it, led us to move away from a joint family with in-laws to Toronto as first-generation immigrants. My husband, having worked in the U.S. in his formative career years, helped us choose Canada as the next best choice. Here, the social reproduction work of cooking, cleaning, and other domestic activities that I shared with my husband was empowering. It led me to have control over what groceries to buy, what food I would cook, and my husband deciding on his own cleaning and laundry schedules. Our egalitarian system of social reproduction would get altered when his late parents and my parents would visit. My parents would visit regularly to keep

their status of permanent residency (PR) afloat and help with my daughter and domestic work since 2018, when my daughter was born. My in-laws started visiting Canada regularly every year since 2017. After my father-in-law died in 2021 during the pandemic, my mother-in-law continued her visits about two times between 2022 and 2024.

It was during my in-laws' visit that I was reminded of the uncomfortable familiarity of losing control over my social reproduction activities of childcare, cooking, and purchasing groceries. I would feel complex emotions of being thankful for the support to help with childcare as well as losing control over a routine. My domestic work was being devalued as my in-laws would have "helpful" comments and advice on how to do things during their visits to Canada, something I would never feel with my parents, despite significant social reproduction labour adjustments during my parents' visits as well. My many attempts to set boundaries with my in-laws and my husband not taking a stand presented me with opportunities to look for empowering spaces with my social reproduction work. That is why and how I started volunteering in the community.

The nuances of disempowerment, empowerment and the exercise of patriarchal power through social reproduction work are not only seen within my own community of FGI women from India. My FGI women research participants, migrating from other countries, also have had migration stories linked to their choice or decision to volunteer. This chapter is my attempt to present some of these stories. Many FGI women participants in my research have pointed out how unpaid care activities are often undervalued in their immigrant households, either directly or indirectly. I present their reasons/ choices to volunteer as the first theme of my analysis. I have used a structural understanding, using the notions of governmentality, social reproduction, and intersectionality to engage with the question. Why did my FGI women participants get into volunteering? I first outline migration stories that are tied to volunteering decisions. Second, I explore reasons for entry into volunteering. Third, I explore the benefits and/or negotiations that volunteers engage in to make meaning of their experiences.

Migration stories are unique and intersectional

I had the opportunity to speak with participants who migrated from the 1970s until 2022. Some fled war-torn countries and unstable political conditions; some had worked with multicultural teams and wanted to explore global opportunities; some moved for economic opportunities from the

United States or Dubai; some moved with their parents, and a couple of them came as international students.

Specifically, two immigrant women from the United Kingdom spoke about how there was an encouragement to travel to Canada between the late 1960's and early 1970's with subsidized tickets through air/by sea for as low as ten pounds. In one of the participants' own words,

> I moved to outside of, well, actually in London [United Kingdom]; I shared a flat with three other girls. Got my first job. Got working, got, um, dating. Having a fantastic life, actually. I can't get into the details of that, but a fantastic life anyway. Uh, when I was about 21, I thought, yeah, I think I need to move on from my situation, so I applied. I had a girlfriend in Australia and my girlfriend in Toronto. Okay, so I applied to Australia host. I applied to Canada House, and they were promoting it at 10 pounds, British pounds. Okay, uh, trip by plane or by boat. This was when, exactly, this was in 1967. Well, maybe it started in 66. So, I applied, and the first one that came through was Canada.
>
> - Daisy, FGI woman volunteer from the United Kingdom, Newmarket, July 22, 2024

This was reflective of how British immigrants were seen as desirable by Canadian immigration policies (Gerald Dirks E). Conversations with other non-British or racialized research participants and paid workers corroborated stringent immigration policies that they or their families had negotiated. Historically, immigration policies have been more stringent with respect to race and religion, which have affected immigration of Eastern European, Jewish, Chinese, Caribbean, and South Asian populations, as pointed out by Dirks and Abu-Laban in their recent article on Canadian nation building and immigration, where they say, "[Canadian immigration] regulations still restricted the family sponsorship of non-Europeans and carried quotas on immigrants from India, Pakistan and Ceylon" (Abu-Laban). There were specific mentions of negotiating these policies when migrating to Canada. As a paid worker, my enquiry points out,

> So, my family immigrated here in the late 60s. And so that was, or yeah, the late 60s. And so that was a time when immigration had opened up to folks in the Caribbean. So, before that, um, there was the domestic [work] scheme in Canada, in which people from the Caribbean could immigrate to Canada, but only women between a certain age and upon arriving, they could work as a domestic [worker]….So, working as, like, a housekeeper, nanny, anything like that, or as, um, I think Healthcare work too, right? Yeah, so it's the only way. Like, even though there's only one pathway and then once women were here, I think you had to, like, work for I can't remember if it's one or two years and then afterwards, you can sponsor someone to come, provided that you had x amount of, uh, like money and this and that. And then you, uh, were also

> permitted at that point to obtain employment in other places. But it was so really challenging at the time to obtain any other, um, employment outside of those agreed-upon categories. My mom and dad came separately. So anyway, they were here. Um, and so then they met, and then they had me, well, they had my brother, and then they had me…
>
> - Minnie, Culinary Director of a food advocacy organization, paid worker, Newmarket, Aug 20, 2024

Red tape in immigration pathways was also observed by other paid workers, as shared below by one of the participants whose family escaped war in the former Yugoslavia to reach Canada in 1991:

> So, then my brother, my dad and I went into a car, and we started to flee for Serbia. We were Croatians fleeing to the Serbian border. My…my brother, my dad almost got shot at the border. They had rifles up to their head. With me in the back seat looking at these guys, it was crazy. Yeah, so long story short, somehow, we went through [to Serbia], my mother came, and then we weren't able to enter Canada. Canada did not recognize that there was a war going on in Yugoslavia. Well, the whole world knew about it. Yeah… but not Canada. Canada said there was no war. So twice, we were refused...so anyways, I'm not surprised [they are] doing the same thing now. Yeah, so that's the kind of short version of the background story [of] how we landed in Canada.
>
> -Tania, FGI woman volunteer from erstwhile Yugoslavia, Aurora, July 15, 2024

Like Tania, other FGI women with experiences of war in their country of origin seemed to have accepted movement and displacement as a way of life rather than something out of the ordinary. It was uncomfortable to hear these stories, where situations of losing a home to go to were unthinkable for me as an FGI woman. While I constantly checked my privilege of being closer to my family and being born into a country where I had caste and political privilege, I realized that acceptance of adversity could have led a refugee from a war-torn place to have a volunteering attitude.

> Um, I'm from Sri Lanka. Okay? So, we were working- my husband was working- in Malaysia, and I was there. But when the war broke out and, uh, things were really bad there, we couldn't go back. So, once his contract was over, Canada was our first choice. Yeah, it is the history with so many [Tamil] people in the world now. So, we came here with our two children. My son was six at that time. My daughter was two and a half. So, the initial few years were very tough. We both had to go back to school, and we took turns going back to school. So, I did my ECE, and my husband

> had to as well- Is a mechanical engineer, but his experience was not recognized here. So, he went back to ….But he…he became an engineer again. And so, we started working, and within the first five years also… were tough… but then we got settled down…like about in 2000 or something like that. We came in the 1980s, end of '86.
>
> - Monika, FGI woman volunteer from Sri Lanka, Stouffville, July 19, 2024

Monika and her husband's successful entry into the Canadian labour market as an early learning teacher and engineer, respectively, outweighed their early years of struggle. Employment led to economic stability and integration into the Canadian social fabric. Monika was filled with pride when she said she is a grandmother to four and to see her children married with children of their own, navigating successful careers. This was an accomplishment for her as a mother who had to flee to safety on account of civil war in Sri Lanka, her country of origin. For Monika, moving to Canada was a safe place, where her family was able to have income, health and social stability. Hence, giving back to the Canadian settler society was one of the driving forces to get into volunteering. She explained in detail:

> So, by 1990 we were settling, but then health issues: my husband had a heart attack and Bypass, and so on. This has been an issue, but we live in a country that has good health care. Fantastic Healthcare. If not for that, I don't know where I would be, but I'm sure. Yeah, that helped us a lot, a bit; then there we are. Through it, and my children have…they went to university here… you put them through, and they have worked, very well settled. Well, doing quite well, and I got four granddaughters. Right, that's amazing. It's a dream.
>
> - Monika, FGI woman volunteer from Sri Lanka, Stouffville, July 19, 2024

Though Monika had similar caste and religious affiliations to mine, it was not a similar privilege. As a Sri Lankan Tamil, her caste and religious affiliations did not accord dominance to her and her family; rather, she had to flee a civil war in her country. As a settler, I arrived at this understanding because scholars like Dhamoon proposed intersectional implications of settler experiences in the land we now call Canada. They helped me contextualize how transnational experiences of seemingly homogeneous women can be implicated differently as settlers. Feminist researchers must "confront the systems of implication in which interactive modes of domination organize marginalized subjects through relative and relational forms and degrees of penalty and privilege" (Dhamoon 34).

Besides caste that accorded privilege to Monika and me, our degrees of penalty and privilege were different as settlers (Dhamoon 34). We speak a similar language of Tamil, but our words, accents, and tones are different. The Tamil I speak in Canada often gets me connections to caste-privileged Tamils from India, like me. I carry this privilege as a hindu, brahmin woman- a dominant social order in India. I did not migrate due to political instability, but for better economic opportunities and other reasons explained at the beginning of this chapter, utilizing our social capital across borders through migration (Ghosh). Additionally, having settled on this land for ten years now, I have benefited from Monika and other people before me with similar culture whose initial efforts of procuring culturally appropriate food and other requirements were available to me easily. The Markham and Steeles intersection in Scarborough, with an established Tamil settlement, gave me and my family access to groceries, restaurants, food, religious items, and other culturally appropriate experiences like temple visits, arts, and entertainment. In contrast, Monika spoke about how in the late 1980's and 1990's, South Asian groceries were hardly available and how she had to additionally labour to ensure her children were exposed to cultural art forms. I understood the difference between adopting culture as a privilege and pursuing culture to reduce the penalty of migration, which follows displacement.

For most other FGI women participants, entry into Canada, either as an individual or with family, was not entirely led by political tensions back home, but often a decision made for better economic opportunities or joining a family member or friend. The process of migration might have been easier in this case, but settling in and navigating the settler society was a challenge. Many participants felt alienated in their own culturally identified community.

Himmat, an FGI woman participant, came as a permanent resident through the Express Entry program in 2016 with her husband and son. After helping her find an apartment near a university where she was a graduate student, her husband and family went back to Bangladesh. Back home, the child was entrusted to her mother, the maternal grandmother, for childcare for close to two years. St. Catharines, Ontario, Himmat explained, was a predominantly white settler community, where she often had trouble having a conversation and decoding their English accent. This was her experience, despite her fluency in English and a sound academic background. As a graduate student and a newcomer to Canada, Himmat recalled how she carried her privilege and culture as a Bengali wife from a reputable background in Bangladesh. She hesitated to foster work-related friendships with men from other communities, even when she found other young students in her class fostering

diverse academic networks and friendships. She tried to make connections with Bengali families she had been introduced to, but somehow felt alienated in those spaces, as she was living alone as a student without her husband and child. The first six months in Canada were a challenge to manage groceries and banking. However, through her resiliency, she recalls forming friendships with graduate students with Native, Ghanaian, and Italian roots who understood her cultural experiences and shared similarities of collectivism, responsibilities of maintaining family honour, and respect for large extended families that were reflective of her culture.

While the stories above are varied, they have intimately affected volunteering decisions, as detailed below.

Community connection was the most common theme for choosing to volunteer.

Community work and volunteering were motivated by the need to manage barriers to employment for newcomers. There were opportunities for building community connections through volunteering, which would otherwise not be easily accessible. These opportunities depended on life stages for first-generation immigrants in Canada. Additionally, structural factors like the social welfare provisions provided by the government and the steady decline of this welfare system were themes visible in the FGI women's inclination for community work. FGI women shared volunteering benefits across three life stages: 1. as newly arrived immigrants to Canada; 2. as economically stabilized Canadians; and 3. as elderly individuals.

Community connections for newcomers

Daria explained, *"Volunteering at that time when you were an early settler helps you a lot. First of all, in getting into the community, integrating into the community and understanding the socioeconomic situation of where you are surviving."* Daria was an urban planning professional in Iran and came to Canada when she was fifty-three years old to live closer to her daughter. As a married woman with dual income in my family and the occasional financial gifts my parents support me with, I noticed how, as a divorced person, Daria had to navigate economic decisions by herself. She explained that many immigrants come here as affluent individuals or families and may not really have a problem surviving economically. She, on the other hand, observed that if a newcomer is unable to form community connections, then one cannot stabilize in the long term.

Enkay's experience, who migrated from Pakistan, corroborated Daria's experience as they both emphasized how volunteering can be the first step towards community connection. They further highlight how community connections can bring about job opportunities through volunteering, as I have explained in the later part of this chapter. Enkay works as the executive director of a food bank for an established charitable organization with international presence. She has been working with this charity since 2007. She was a volunteer with them before landing a part -time position in 2007 and eventually a full-time position in the same place. She was also the first employee of this food bank, before which this was a completely volunteer- run food bank. Enkay belonged to a persecuted community in Pakistan. But she would often see how her father was altruistic towards people of all religions and communities. He would help the socio-economically challenged communities and would encourage his children to do good, from a spiritual perspective and earn the blessings of the people they would support. She moved to Canada as a refugee and said she benefited from volunteerism as a culture in this country. Enkay narrated how she was inspired by her father and later her child's teacher to volunteer. In her own words,

> When I came to Canada in 1999, one of my child's teachers asked me that, you know, if you want to learn more about Canada, if you want to thrive faster…on a faster pace… You have to integrate into the community by doing something, okay? I was on social assistance. And at that time, 24 years ago, whatever social assistance was given to me was enough for me. I survived. My husband didn't come with me. I was a single woman. He came later, after one year, okay? And during that one year, I was, it was okay for me to survive with the social assistance, and I could have been sitting at home, you know, waiting for a work opportunity to come, but things… miracles don't happen like that. Like, yeah, jobs are not hanging at your door. So, you have to go out and understand the socioeconomic situation. You are living where you want to thrive, okay? And learn new skills. And it's a give-and-take situation. The more you give, the more you will get. So, volunteering gives you a platform or an avenue to learn about your community, to learn new skills, to learn interpersonal skills of the outside in the outside world. I didn't need it; I had family support. I was living on social assistance. Economically, I did not need any money.[change in tone] But then that thing that the teacher told me touched my heart. And then I remembered that my father used to say, you know, help others and it will benefit you as well. So, I started volunteering in the school community at every event. I used to volunteer in the library and with teachers' outdoor field trips, cooking for students. Like you, I used to grab every opportunity where I could do something for them.
>
> - Enkay, FGI woman from Pakistan and paid worker, Vaughan, September 19, 2024

Their stories reminded me of Rankin's understanding of creating "social capital" as a government strategy (Rankin, "Social Capital…" 10–12)In the article *"Social Capital, microfinance, and the politics of development"*. Rankin, in her work, highlights women's unpaid work, taking on additional responsibilities of unpaid care at home and in the community. She narrates it as an act of neoliberal downloading of responsibilities, where community members end up being responsible for social welfare (11). These responsibilities were originally supposed to be the duty of the state, which are then passed onto civil society organizations that rely on volunteers. While Rankin mainly highlighted this additional burden of unpaid care from the perspective of microfinance initiatives in the "global south", this is true even for unpaid community work in Canada, where civil society organizations are disproportionately reliant on volunteers. Nonetheless, volunteers exercise agency in their decision to continue volunteering.

Community connection through spirituality and religious practice

> When we were children, my father used to sit with us and he used to counsel us, mentoring us that this is our social responsibility. If we are only feeding our body and mind, then we are very selfish, and we are only living for ourselves. We are only raising ourselves, and it's selfish thinking. So, as a human being, it is our responsibility to help others around us. So, not only live for yourself but live for others too. And then these little gestures, these little efforts that you invest in solving other people's problems will come back to you in multiple folds. Oh, okay. So, this is how we were raised.
>
> - Enkay, FGI woman from Pakistan, paid worker, Vaughan, September 19, 2024

Enkay and other participants like Himmat belonged to families that upheld principles of social service. Parents and elders in their family shaped their ideas of volunteerism through socialization, which shaped their decision to connect with the community. They drew on their lived experiences when choosing to volunteer.

Himmat recalled going to a community centre and feeling ashamed about accepting free food there. She felt some community leaders do not know the true meaning of volunteerism, where she found them "showing off" their altruism. She specifically mentioned how first-generation immigrants and international students shouldn't feel ashamed when it came to accessing food. She, along with her husband and other community members, started a prayer centre through the local chapel that gave them some space on Friday evenings, on weekends and during Ramadan. During specific

religious days every week and during Ramadan, she cooks and offers food to the people who visit the chapel as well as the makeshift prayer center. She explains her thoughts below.

> Food is a basic right for everyone who is giving it; it is not important. But who is cooking is not important. Like, if food is there, you should be able to eat. I am cooking, but if it is in my mind, okay, I'm cooking and everybody is taking, it's not right. It's not a give-and-take thing. When you're doing voluntary work, you cannot expect something in return. Yeah. You are giving to people because when I go there, to be honest, it doesn't come to my mind that they are Muslim [in the mosque]. We keep a lot of food for the people who are homeless. My point is that if I believe in God- if he is the Creator- he's the creator of everyone. Yeah, he's the creator of you. He's the creator of me. He's the creator of a tree. So, my job is to serve them. Okay. So, it's like, it's the true meaning of volunteering. You know, when we go there, we count our service, okay? They think that we are doing this and, in return, what we can get. This is not voluntary, and some people are behaving like that. Actually, your research is very good. When you write, you are writing people's emotions. Food is not only food. It connects with why we give food: because we want other people to be connected. Yeah, we want to serve our God. Everything is valid; everything is voluntary. You know, people don't even understand what is voluntary. Yeah, it's true. Yeah, when I'm explaining them. Like, for example, they are thinking it is a Kind of publicity, which they shouldn't do.
>
> - Himmat, FGI woman volunteer from Bangladesh, Pickering, August 22, 2024

As a volunteer myself and a hindu, the volunteer decisions of Enkay and Himmat were relatable. As a researcher, I was able to rationalize how the social reproduction work of volunteering was the result of neoliberal downloading of responsibilities from the provinces and municipalities. However, I was volunteering for the same reasons as many of my fellow volunteers. I emotionally connected to the community I live in, and felt volunteering was similar to following the tenets of service and prayers taught by my parents to help those facing barriers. By being a community advocate, I was able to develop meaningful friendships where I also received benefits of information for maintaining my home, car, extracurricular activities and/or care for my daughter and chances for socialization for my family.

Building enduring friendships and social capital

Many participants and paid workers recalled stories of FGI women making meaningful connections for work and friendship through volunteering in the community. Building a network in the community was an important path towards information about the settler society and a base for economic independence. Volunteers and paid workers recalled how it was easier to develop social capital by meeting new people, learning about different cultures, explore opportunities for collaborations and friendships.

> We've also had some, um, I think you've spoken to one of our volunteers, Bonnie, but like when she started volunteering with us, it was through the community cooks program. And then, like, there it was like a network of …um…primarily women, but not exclusively, who, like, most of them are newcomers and various and had been here for different amounts of time. So, they're able to form friendships and relationships, and, like, a friend from there [and Bonnie], like, started to, like, go out together, and it could be like, oh, grocery shopping together, or it could be like having, um, coffee together, or they would go to each other's house and, like, connect. And, I know Bonnie, in particular, worked with one to, like, start up, set up her own business. So, it also Kind of just created, I think, a lot of opportunities for folks to, like, yeah, for new connections. Um, and so, what we do as an organization is if…if any of the volunteers, particularly newcomers, ask, they're like, can you, can you write a letter and just like let people know? Or can you be a reference? Like we always say yes to that.
>
> - Casey, Executive Director of a food advocacy organization, paid worker, Newmarket, Aug 28, 2024

Bonnie, one of the long-term volunteers affiliated with the organization Casey leads, emphasized how cooking at home was very different from cooking as a volunteer in the community. She enjoyed meaningful community connections that volunteering provided for her.

> Of course, like at home, I don't like cooking. But over there [at the volunteer organization], everyone's participating… It's quite...um..meaningful.. And you can see, like, on a Tuesday when the people come in to have breakfast, you can see they are so happy, and then.
>
> - Bonnie, FGI woman volunteer from Hong Kong, Newmarket, July 15, 2024

Unpaid community care became meaningful and emotionally satisfying due to community connections; this was a common observation amongst most volunteers. Collaborations and friendships developed through unpaid care in the community seemed to create a sense of value within volunteers. Household work, on the other hand, brought alienation, a feature of capitalism, as discussed in my literature review, Chapter two, which positions unpaid care at home as an isolated, devalued activity. (Tong and Botts; Banks)As Monika echoes,

> [I did delivery for] Aurora food pantry; [it] was once a week. The community members who could not travel to receive food were getting something; this may happen once a month. Because some of those families I saw them more often, very often and then usually I would call and say Mr. So and so. I still remember somebody; I said Mr. So and so, I'm coming in, [and he would say], " See, when you call me mister, it makes me feel very old. Why don't you call me by my first name …And that's how you feel [this work is so] personal, and another man, he was living alone with his dog. And the moment I call, I say, I'll be there in seven minutes, and he would say laugh and say, I'll be out there in six minutes. Every time I dropped off, I would stand there and talk to him for a few minutes. Did chit chat with him, and these were people I had never seen before [but] by the second drop [of food delivery from York Region Food Network], or the third drop. I was not fast friends, but you came to know their faces, you came to know their names, they came to enjoy the moment. I called them [and] they knew who I was. That was a very different experience. I mean, here I am connecting with people. Who had nothing in common with me. And connecting in a very friendly, very... a very different way. This is not family. These are not people who I'm obliged to. There's no obligation. There's That Kind of connection, but here I'm connecting with people. In a way, it's different because when you're doing it in the house, whether your family, you are emotionally more involved, and the repercussions… whatever you are doing or not doing instead of affecting, on a personal level, when you're doing it outside, all of that is taken out. All that emotional. All the attachment is written off here. It's nothing but pure Connection with the community and the people. Um, I found the good food box [food delivery initiative] is fun, fine. But when I was doing that food pantry and the food…. the breakfast program, that touched me a lot; that touched me deeply.
>
> - Monika, FGI woman volunteer from Sri Lanka, Stouffville, July 19, 2024

Developing an alternate sense of worth through community connections is a purpose that FGI women have achieved in a neoliberal, capitalist-dominated society, even if the spaces are non-profit organizations. As Marxist feminists point out, overthrowing capitalism is necessary to value women's work (Jaggar in Tong and Botts 74). However, within these dominant spaces, FGI women have leveraged unpaid work to find meaningful community connections. It is negotiated differently

in different cases, as we have seen in the above snippets of stories. Connections could range from interdependence for short yet meaningful conversations, in the case of Monika and could even result in friendships and business collaborations, like in the case of Bonnie. For Berry and Daisy, FGI women and seniors over the age of 70, volunteering was a path to battling social isolation.

Volunteerism as a tool to battle isolation for retired and senior FGI women

I have presented below a slightly longer extract from my conversation with Berry and Daisy, senior FGI women immigrants over the age of 70. They share how volunteering helped them make connections with people across classes, races and cultures. They also recall how the COVID-19 pandemic intensified their social isolation, as they could not volunteer at the time. They were living alone because they had lost their partner to separation and/or death, and they recounted stories of how they could not meet their families physically. Berry recalled how she felt miserable without being able to hug her grandchild and her children, who lived separately but visited often to check on her. This ultimately intensified their need to find enduring community connections. Daisy spoke of government initiatives that were geared towards keeping seniors healthy and safe from COVID-19, but felt the experience left her feeling alone. While volunteering helps senior FGI women battle social isolation (Employment and Social Development, Canada; Naidu et al.), their labour is co-opted in the neoliberal "responsible citizenship" narrative. The government benefits by enlisting the help of many FGI seniors who are eager to contribute back to the society that they have integrated into.

Daisy on developing a friendship with an unhoused family…

> Daisy: A son and father lived in the park called Shepherd's Bush or something. Uh-huh. Yeah, that's where they [uncomfortable to say, they were unhoused].That's where they lived. Oh, and I mean, just sad to say, um, they both have passed. During COVID. No, I think it was before COVID that they passed. Oh yeah. The son was in very, very bad shape. Actually, I think he was… I'm going to say, I think he committed suicide before the father. Um, I'm pretty sure, that's right. And then the father, I don't…we don't know what he died from, but I went to the funeral. I think I went to both funerals, actually. Yeah. All these people, two people. Without the home. I guess the father arranged for the funeral. I can't quite remember that. It's terrible. Sad things, you know, but so beautiful that a community was formed where you actually attended someone's funeral that you wouldn't have met otherwise [Berry to Daisy]. We don't form connections with people who are not at the same class level otherwise, right? I mean, I see.. We have a group of Iranians that come… an old man, and then a young couple come, and they sit…. and sit together, and I think that's their little

community meeting, and I don't think it's about food at all. I think it's just about eating and, yes, to share.… Like different people coming together and from different countries…different cultures…Yeah, that Kind of promotes a sense of community.

...and developing friendships with people from different cultures

Daisy: But it's actually a social thing for us. I mean, Berry lives alone. I live alone; P is fortunate. She's married; D's married [P and D are volunteers]. But um, I, I think, as I said before, Berry loves to cook and she's happy to cook at home. But for me personally, on my own, um, I don't- there's no social aspect to it [to cooking]. I've got the radio playing, or something's going on, in that sense, but it's… I'm not getting anything out of it. I'm cooking for me. Basically, who cares?

…She also talks about how cooking for others gives her a purpose and helps her beat social isolation

Yeah, you know, I'm not somebody who opens a can or anything. I… I don't eat canned food, nothing like that. But because I have to eat, I'm not going to restaurants and stuff. Of course, I can't afford to do that. So most of the time, I cook at home, um, but I don't… I honestly don't get anything out of it. Oh, I don't. You know what I mean? It's like it's a means to an end. I obviously have to eat something, but here it's a combination. I love the community feel. I love all these people. Yeah, and I enjoy the fact that we're providing... uh, a meal to these wonderful people who come every week, and we're always so happy to see them. They're happy to come. You know. And uh, yeah, it's nice, it's really nice. I mean, I do enough. I think I do enough volunteering now because I do other volunteering… um, at my church. Oh, you have a community dinner every Saturday. Wow, there are teams of us. So, I'm on one of the teams.

- Daisy, FGI woman volunteer from the United Kingdom, Newmarket, July 22, 2024

Berry explains how cooking for a large batch has helped her understand and cater to different food choices and cultures

Berry to Daisy: I didn't know that about you. Figuring out new things about each other…[Daisy continues] and we rotate, you know. So, I think it's every… I don't know… It's every fourth week, I think, so I'm… I'm cooking there; I'm… I'm sort of the lead cook there. Because of the budget, obviously, we don't serve, we don't use lamb or beef. We never serve pork. No. Oh, that's the original thing. Yeah, yeah, so it's either chicken or turkey? Yeah, basically that's right. Okay, whatever: chicken in the soup or turkey sausages. Oh, well, yeah, like last week we did tuna pasta was one. So, we had plain pasta with the vegetables and…and the tuna version. So, that is very interesting.

Volunteering helps Berry to receive positive energy and compassion from other people

> Berry to me and Daisy: So, yes, [volunteering] is my therapy, but when you cook at home, and you live alone, you're in your head all the time. Other than the dog, who is waiting for bits to fall…my dog was like, hello! I'm here. So, yeah, he gets little treats, and that's fine. But I find here I… I just come here automatically, unless I'm ill. And even if I feel like $#it, which I did a couple of weeks ago, I just felt horrible, and I thought I've got to go because I need that [positive] energy and I need that compassion because we're all doing it for one reason only. And in fact, that's not true because it's a bit selfish. I'm helping someone, and that makes me feel good. Do you know what I mean? But when we get in that kitchen, it's interesting. You know to watch P likes to stir, doesn't she? She likes to fry things; you'll do anything at all [to Daisy]. [Daisy to me and Berry] I will not chop an onion; it makes me cry, anything, but the onions. You know, I will do other things.

A positive intention to collaborate with different people and personalities

> [Berry continues] but you can guarantee that, whatever your cooking, P will come up and stir it. And I like that idiosyncrasy of everybody fitting together, and there's no, "I'm the boss, and I know more than you". It's very, very collaborative. There's no agenda behind that collaboration. And that's what you don't get at work. Yeah, I have collaboration, but there's always an underlying sense… for some [thing] to receive… yeah. There [at home] there's no motivation. Here, we set an agenda for a week, and we all work around that agenda, as you know.… It's absolutely people. I mean, people, these people [motioning in general to the spaces around her] and…and you get, but here [at home] there's no other motivation at all to make a nice meal and serve it the next day. Yeah, and people are [walking in] more and more. I find they're becoming more and more warm towards [me]. [Daisy] Oh, absolutely [Daisy]. [Berry continues] They wave, and they smile, and they say, "How lovely to see your smiling faces", then that makes me smile. You know, it's like a baby when you smile at a baby. The baby smiles. You smile, and the baby smiles. And that's what it is; it ends up being [contagious, reciprocal].
>
> - Berry, FGI woman volunteer from the United Kingdom, Newmarket, July 22, 2024

Daisy and Berry go on to explain how community connection, a very important benefit of volunteering for seniors like them, was almost severed due to the pandemic and the stay-at-home and social distancing orders that limited volunteer work. Since Daisy and Berry were seniors over seventy, they were encouraged to stay at home and not volunteer. Social isolation amongst seniors was a widespread concern during the pandemic. Immigrant seniors' mental health, particularly racialized seniors, as well as seniors living alone on low income and loss of community were some of the risk factors identified by the Government of Canada that could lead to social isolation. Berry and Daisy voiced their isolation during the pandemic, reiterating the disposability of unpaid community

labour and systemic indifference to its sustainability. Many paid workers who were running food advocacy programs during the pandemic spoke about how these programs were deemed essential but lacked labour resources to see the work through. Most spoke about how they lost touch with most volunteers and had to build their volunteer database often from scratch.

Naidu et.al. talk about how the pandemic compromised the social safety net for many seniors (Naidu et al.) and investigated the Student-Senior-Isolation-Prevention-Program, a registered non-profit program that emerged during the pandemic. The program started in Toronto with medical student and physician volunteers who connected seniors to community resources and ensured regular check-ins with them. This initiative grew into a national programme with a few chapters across Canada. The social welfare of community volunteers is often left to community organizations like the above or individuals themselves. Governments undervalue marginalized volunteers who share their labour to be connected to the community, and they are treated as a reserve army of labour (Das Gupta, *Racism and Paid Work*) – workers who have irregular employment, an ever-present supply of disposable labour for the government that could benefit an organization and reduce their cost (Prendergast 266). Volunteers working in food organizations are composed largely of unemployed and underemployed groups of people (FGI women, youth, seniors) who are called upon to do volunteer work from time to time. Governments do not seem to carry any obligation to support them, nor to provide funding to non-profit organizations to compensate this labour. During the pandemic, they were left to be tended by non-profit organizations, families and neighbourhoods. As Berry and Daisy converse with each other;

> Daisy: Pandemic made volunteers very isolated, especially we are age-compromised. I never left the house for six weeks. Like, stay at home orders. Some volunteers dealing with delivery driving worked, we're age compromised too. So, we're older. So even more [isolated].
>
> Berry: So, I had to be very particular. [To Daisy] I'm sure you were as well. Well, they told us not to come. They told us. I just didn't go basically anywhere; my Kids did all my shopping. I didn't go out. Yeah…. She worked [motioning to Daisy to say she volunteered intermittently]... And my Kids came, and they Kind of over there in the garden and we have a wave. Oh, yeah. If you didn't live together, then you could not [left it unsaid]…… couldn't touch my grandchild, it was horrible, awful and no one could touch me [we all got emotional and hugged each other in turns].
>
> Daisy: Because you didn't get hugs or anything. People were doing that. Yeah. Like the elbow and the fist bumps and yeah, I need my hugs. People need to be touched. Oh yeah, it was miserable. Yeah, I can understand and you could not like, go out for a

> walk or something. We would sit in our own car and talk to each other with coffee. Yeah, yes. Just so we could have another person [to chat with].
>
> - Berry and Daisy, FGI women volunteers from the United Kingdom, Newmarket, July 22, 2024

Some seniors and long-term volunteers like Daria, were able to work after the pandemic. Daria trusted me with her story of being a cancer survivor and especially narrated how volunteering helped her recover her physical and mental health. She explained how she felt she belonged to a community and her labour had value.

> They [partner organization - PO] needed help with something, and they called me. There, I extended my hand to help them. Yeah, because I had a good time and then the community helped me [overcome] challenges with my sick time. [Helped me work with] my feelings and my mind, okay? Because when you are sick, you're thinking you have a, um, big issue. Your body and your brain are not working properly when you are going outside of the home. You're helping other people. And then your feelings are changing? Because you think you are not useless. This sick time was so challenging. It's very challenging, like...to get back your health. Oh my God, the best way they're helping me to go there to help, and then I'm not thinking about it. Because when I went there from 10 AM until, yeah, 3:30 PM. Sometimes until 2: 30 used to be in the PO. I would go to the Hospice on the same premises for therapy and Yoga classes. But now, I'm not thinking I'm sick. I was thinking I'm a member of this PO family. You understand what I'm saying? Yeah, it's not sickness. Volunteering is helping me to build up my feeling of belonging again. I built up my body again. That's why volunteering, is very, very helpful. It's very helpful. And then I came back to the volunteer job with them. When I think back, I had a good time with them. I'm satisfied. I don't want to leave them. That's why I want to continue until I can do it, you know? I know what I mean. I can't help them with money. But I can help them with my hand, with my intention. Volunteering is for everyone, as a man as a woman; it doesn't matter at any age or place you can volunteer, as Kids, give newcomers opportunity to work.
>
> - Daria, FGI woman volunteer from Iran, Richmond Hill, September 3, 2024

Daria further mentions volunteering at PO as less isolating than doing one's own vegetable shopping, one's own cooking. It gave her a feeling of belonging in the community and ultimately in the country as a newcomer. Her mentioning that volunteering helped her heal from cancer by creating a hopeful, positive environment speaks to her choice and agency to stay with volunteering. Daria and other participants' stories made me think about the impact of governmentality, but also acts of

resilience surrounding volunteer decision-making. I detail this conversation in the section below on "giving back to society".

Grace, an employee at one of the food pantries in York Region, reflects how volunteering reduces isolation and brings about community benefits that go beyond a meal. It also helps connect community resources for service-seekers as well as volunteers who are seniors.

> Volunteering at one of these organizations, which really helps take them out of their isolation; it's not just a meal. I would say every week, or at least three or four times a month, we community groups are allowed to set up a table for free. As you provide a service to Georgina residents cause it's a Georgina program, we have the fire department, the Police Department, the library, the Legion, the York Region Public Health, the food pantry, and the Hospice, to name a few. Almost every week, we have a community table that we just let them set up, bring their information about and talk to the residents about what they can offer. Right. So that's kind of fun.
>
> - Grace, Outreach Specialist with a food pantry, paid worker, Georgina, September 3, 2024

Giving back to society

Many volunteers felt unpaid work in the community is simply giving back to Canadian society, which helped them settle when they were newcomers. There is repeated mention of reciprocity, a mutual development of empathy and connection, wanting to give to receive goodwill in return. It took me back to my literature review discussion of Alook's work on Indigenous principles surrounding miyo-wîcihtowin, which translates to good relations and unity; sihtoskâtowin, which looks at the concept of uniting to survive; and manâcihtâwin, which is all about showing respect and reciprocity to the land (Alook et al.). There is no doubt that volunteers shoulder the responsible citizenship title that neoliberal retrenchment of social welfare has imposed on them (Illner; Rankin, "Social Capital, Microfinance, and the Politics of Development"). But I also wonder if the feminist question of agency to volunteer can lend a different meaning to "responsible citizenship", as "stewards of the land"? Alook, Maynard and Simpson explain stewards of the land as being mutually non-exploitative, reciprocal, and respectful towards the land and its various human and non-human living beings (Maynard and Simpson; Alook et al.). I saw a similar sense of empathy, respect, and reciprocity that my volunteers showed towards service seekers.

> One time, I remember starting early in the morning, and by the time I finished, there were like eleven or twelve food delivery drops here, as part of the breakfast program.

> I would start at 9:30 or something. By the time I dropped the last one, it was like 11 o'clock. This old lady was living alone; she opened the door, and I handed it to her. And the look that she had on her face touched my heart that day. She made me feel like I was a fairy. I really enjoyed doing drop offs for the breakfast, more meaningful because you actually saw people there and, you know, yeah. And it was something that they actually needed.
>
> - Monika, FGI woman volunteer from Sri Lanka, Stouffville, July 19, 2024

Conversations with Monika and Bonnie made me understand how they treated volunteer opportunities as active ways to give back to society. This work gave meaning to their lives beyond being caregivers at home. For Monika, it made her feel like an angel, and for Bonnie, she felt lucky, as if she was the chosen one to give back to the community.

> I think I'm quite lucky. Most of the opportunities- they came to me easily. My friends introduced me to XYZ. My daughter's school asked me to volunteer. I think I'm quite lucky. We get to know people; I can know the community. If you volunteer, you Kind of give back to the community. Whether it is a man, a woman, or whoever.
>
> - Bonnie, FGI woman volunteer from Hong Kong, Newmarket, July 15, 2024

Enkay felt her faith-led decision to volunteer helped her settle with material comforts like buying a home, which was an important marker for integrating into the settler economy. Volunteering for her was an action of reciprocity.

> Enkay: It's whenever you do something selflessly for others. It comes back to you, in multiple folds. Early years, especially, um, the more I did for the community, the more I saw blessings coming into my home. We, we became homeowners. We used to live in the basements, and people used to tell me that, you know it's so hard to buy a house. Or unless you have a highly paid job here. Both my husband and I were paid the basic rate [i.e. minimum wage]. We were not very affluent in the first few years. When we came here, I believe it was the blessing of whatever both of us did for the community. We became homeowners within for first five years.
>
> - Enkay, FGI woman from Pakistan and paid worker, Vaughan, September 19, 2024

In giving back to society through volunteerism, many FGI women have shown instances of the need to theorize social reproduction work in the community in different ways. From volunteering

to pay-it-forward to hoping that a good deed will be rewarded with better blessings for family and self, volunteers found a sense of self-fulfillment in giving back to society.

Challenging systemic barriers through volunteer work

Volunteering or unpaid community work was often an entry point to integrate into the workforce. Most participants who migrated here as adults often spoke about the lack of Canadian experience trampling their chances to find a job in their chosen field. To challenge the barriers to finding a job, many participants were encouraged by friends, families and community organizations to actively look for volunteering as an entry into the workforce. The other option was to re-educate themselves in an occupation that would have lesser barrier to enter. Participants who could be sure they could handle the debt of education, chose to re-educate themselves in an occupation they were pursuing back home. Some, like Daria, chose to volunteer to re-skill in catering and kitchen assistance which would give them an easy entry into workforce, even if they did not have employment in their chosen professional field. Daria was working as an urban planning professional back home. She was fifty-three years old when she came to Canada to join her daughter. Daria was living alone in Iran after her divorce from her husband, and her only daughter was living in Canada, so she decided to move to Canada and arrived here in 2003. Daria recalls how volunteering and learning to work in the care sector in the kitchen and catering department helped her enter the labour market in Canada.

While she worked in urban planning and construction back home in Iran, she was not able to get a desirable position in her own career in Canada. She mentioned how she went to the newcomer centre and recruitment firms to find opportunities, but her efforts were futile. She said some immigrants from Iran had come with funds from back home, so they were able to relax and understand the country, and its culture for at least a year. For her, it was a matter of survival, and she needed to find a job that paid for her living expenses. Volunteering helped rebuild her skills to find a survival position in catering/serving. She volunteered at a senior's center and later on was able to find a position in their cafeteria.

One of the key reasons to volunteer, especially as a newcomer immigrant, was to address barriers to employment. While studies on immigrant volunteering talk about community connections and rebuilding cultural and social capital, there is little academic evidence of economic success or integration documented (Ruiz, Greenspan, et al.; Wilson-Forsberg and Sethi). A study conducted by

Ruiz, Greenspan et al. places an onus on organizations to help volunteers succeed in the economy by training them in a relevant manner, finding connections and references (Ruiz, Wang, et al. 95). A few volunteers in the field spoke about negotiating barriers to employment through building Canadian work experience, improving language skills, getting access to licenses or professional tools and sometimes being absorbed by the same organization they volunteered with. I narrate their experiences below.

Building "Canadian" work experience

Lack of "Canadian" experience has been identified as an employment barrier by many researchers in the last few decades- a situation where internationally earned degrees, professional designations and licences are not recognized by the employment markets within Canada(Sakamoto et.al. Chatterjee, in her book, *"Skills to Build the Nation: Immigrant Labour Market and Canadian Nationalism"* unpacks how the unsaid exclusionary factor of "Canadian" experience has been used by post-secondary educational institutions in their economic growth, while doing little to benefit internationally trained immigrants (Chatterjee 117–18). Empirical studies have detailed how volunteering does not really help newcomers to integrate into the sector of their choice, but rather to adapt and get a 'foot-in-the-door' through some employment (Wilson-Forsberg and Sethi; Thomas). Immigrants then must find ways to enter the labour market either through volunteering, educational re-qualification or a job not in their field. My participants also highlighted how volunteering helped them understand what a Canadian labour market would look like and how it was a way to find information about jobs available, to build networks and references to enter the labour market. It helped them observe and understand how to apply for jobs.

> As a volunteer, I was able to make great observations, received great learning and opportunities. This is, you know, truly what volunteering should do. But in other industries people were there mostly because they needed Canadian experience. As a newcomer. Volunteering was my passion. Yes, it was, you know, part of, you know the chain of, you know humanity.
>
> - Enkay, FGI woman from Pakistan and paid worker, Vaughan, September 19, 2024

Many of my participants who had arrived in Canada, including people who travelled from London, UK, in the early seventies embodied a preferred English accent. They had faced rejections in employment in the name of "Canadian" experience. Das Gupta identifies this labour market

requirement as an act of discrimination that looks objective in its face but often results in un/underemployment of immigrants (Das Gupta, "*Twice Migrated…"* 105–07). My participants seem to be reconciled to this requirement and were clear and vocal about gaining benefits from unpaid community care. Enkay mentioned how she benefited from gaining "Canadian" experience, learnt about different cultures and philosophies of various organizations and people engaging with them. As Enkay continues,

> But also, I needed Canadian experience too. I wanted to experience different fields and besides Canadian experience, my passion and human duty. I also wanted to learn more about the community. I wanted to learn, you know, what are the differences between western community, Western society, and Eastern societies, and how different they are. In terms of, you know, values in terms of perspectives, in terms of services and philosophy of services. So, these are all my reasons that I wanted to explore different fields, you know, from working with children, how to respond to community alerts and work in different, you know, organizations.
>
> - Enkay, FGI woman from Pakistan and paid worker, Vaughan, September 19, 2024

Working on language skills

Similar resignations and reconciliations are observed with FGI women when they talk about barriers created by English language requirements. FGI women did not question the existence of discriminatory labour market expectations around Canadian experience or English language; rather they used volunteering and other means of re-skilling to integrate into the market. Hazy explains how she was an internationally trained professional from Iran and needed to learn English to break into the labour market. Language class was the first option suggested to her and her husband, but they figured that their levels were higher and the classes really didn't help with connections to economic opportunities. Their family got into the traditional role of her husband being the breadwinner (Das Gupta, *Racism and Paid Work* 52; Bezanson and Luxton 147–48), while Hazy volunteered in her son's school to help improve language skills, ensuring she is available to come back home with her child. Bonnie also started volunteering in her daughters' school to mutually help herself and students in the school, providing her with English-speaking opportunities.

> Like many other immigrants from outside of Canada, my husband and me both got into, like, you know, English class learning because English was not our first language. Both participated. About three to five months, I would say this window, and

then we thought, this is not helpful for us. Our level was higher than that, and our goals were different. So, we thought, it's waste of our time sitting in this, you know, LINC classes, or yes, that's why, we thought, you know, diving into work, . Industry is a better way to earn money and learn English. So we started working, and I started my volunteer job. While my husband was the breadwinner, I volunteered. I started volunteering because my son at the time was in grade one, and I wanted to, you know, learn more about the system here, and, as well as, you know. Also be an emotional support and emotional support for him. So I started volunteering in his school. Worked in a kindergarten class for about less than a year, I would say. And then we would go to school together, come back home together. And then, after that, it was all, you know, personal time developing relationship with him.

- Hazy, FGI woman volunteer from Iran, Thornhill, August 23, 2024

I couldn't speak full [fluently] in English. And I'm not the white people. My concern, these were… my… um…my weak, my weakness. But teacher in my daughter's school said, don't worry, it's fine. Um, the Kids just needed more opportunity for them to practice English.

- Bonnie, FGI woman volunteer from Hong Kong, Newmarket, July 15, 2024

Empowering oneself with professional tools and specific licenses needed for a job

Paid workers working in different organizations highlighted how volunteers had opportunities to get experiences that would help in furthering economic opportunities. These could include learning to work in commercial Kitchens, getting licenses related to food safety, serving and professional tools or software that build skills relevant to settler society.

Every time I volunteered, I learned many skills. I learned how to talk to people. I learn how to get out of my depression. I was alone at that time, husband was not with me. Yeah, I learned so many interpersonal skills. And that's how I built my resume. I built my profile. I learned how to use computers at that age. You know, I was not used to absolutely using computers, just the internet age. At that time, there were no cell phones, like they were, but not many people had. Yeah, especially middle class, people didn't have cell. Yeah, I'm talking about the year 2000. I didn't have any cell phone, you know, we didn't have social media. I did not know how to use, Microsoft Word, Excel, but just through my volunteer work helping in the school community and in my Ahmadiyya community. I used to make reports of monthly activities. That's how I learn how to use, Microsoft Word without any paid training. I learned those skills free of cost because I was offering my time my effort. Also, by volunteering with my school community, I learned a lot from them. How to handle conflicts, how to understand the norms of this community of Canadian Society.

- Enkay, FGI woman from Pakistan and paid worker, Vaughan, September 19, 2024

A volunteer gets hired

Enkay landed a full-time position with the food bank of the charity she worked with. However, as per other participants, getting a job with the same organization they volunteer for, is rare. With funding being so limited, not many volunteers get a chance to get integrated into the same organization they work as volunteers.

> I was handling both jobs [daycare teacher and supply teacher in school], and then I quit daycare, and then I became a full-time supply educational assistant. Uh, I'm talking about 2000 until 2007, okay? And then I remember that their food bank was launched uh in 2007. Okay? And it was completely a volunteer service, and all the operations were covered by volunteers, but it was becoming very hard because 2008 and 2009 was the time of a big recession, a recession, a recession and a lot of families were turning to food banks. They were not able to, you know, meet everybody's needs within the volunteer framework. Absolutely. So, at that point, they were looking for funding to hire an employee to, you know, take care of the daily operations of the food bank. Otherwise, the operations cannot be carried out smoothly. It would be absolutely haphazard. Because volunteer forces are always changing… It's just sustainability. At that time was very difficult to have volunteer labour every day, so they applied for funding, and then they opened the job position, and I was offered that job but was only paid the bare minimum. Of course, with no benefits. Nothing. I accepted it because I had a passion to do this work. I was the food bank clerical coordinator in 2008. We got the funding, and we built up our resources; we hired another person.
>
> - Enkay, FGI woman from Pakistan and paid worker, Vaughan, September 19, 2024

Non-profit organizations came to rely on volunteer labour for their sustenance. In the 2008 financial crisis, the time Enkay is talking about, many families turned to food bank resources, which increased the need for dedicated workers, as she explains in our conversation above. It is due to the resilience and endurance of the individual that she has risen to be a leader in the organization, as community organizations do not necessarily have a growth plan for capacity building and labour retention. While there are benefits of integrating into the settler society through volunteering(Ruiz, Greenspan, et al.)it is important to center the labour of women and consider the responsibilization of residents of a community to commit to these care duties (Ilcan * and Basok * 130). Later in our

conversation, Enkay shared how many women stepped up to offer their services for food banks and grocery delivery right in the middle of the pandemic when the organization had lost many volunteers.

Volunteering to handle crises like the pandemic

Tania and her parents, living a couple of towns away from each other, started feeling the effects of price gouging and retail mark-ups that made living difficult during the Covid-19 pandemic. Everything seemed to be expensive in the retail stores. She started personally calling farms for discounts on meat and produce, so that she could buy at wholesale rates for her family. Soon she found other people in the neighbourhood and her community, mostly seniors, reaching out to her for help with buying food and groceries during the stay-at-home orders. She recalls voluntarily taking orders on the phone or through traditional modes of short messaging services (SMS), as many seniors were not technologically savvy and helping fulfill delivery orders across many towns in the York Region. She still offers this volunteer service, but it is not as often as it was during the pandemic. Her volunteering was a response to the crisis of price gouging that the pandemic had created. In her own words,

> I had my husband's complete support to fulfill this service. We didn't make any money. We did not eat for free by offering this service. We paid for our food, so, um, my family. Yeah. So that's how we're able to keep the cost down. We basically gave wholesale pricing, okay? Okay. Like whatever you basically, like, whatever the store buys for- I learned in the food industry, there's a 400 percent markup. This is produce. I'm not talking about canned goods or stuff like that... I'm talking specific fresh food, fresh food. Yeah, it's a four. hundred percent [emphasized]. That's the markup. We didn't do this to make money. Okay? We did this. For our families. I knew that. This stuff was really expensive. And if I can get more people on board, then that means my family can eat at a wholesale price. Okay. So, I don't know if this is for-profit or not-for-profit. We charged a little bit, maybe a dollar more than what we were buying. The stuff you needed to pay for your gas. That's it. Yeah, so we paid for our gas. Um, I did not pay for the phone bill out of there. I paid for the gas. The maintenance of the car, which was, I think, like $100 to do the oil change. And oh, we had to buy the crates; we got those for four dollars. I think we invested four hundred dollars, so we made that money even out. And um, paper bags. Okay, okay, just basically to cover the cost, like different Kinds of costs, like product, some service, whatever that is.
>
> - Tania, FGI woman volunteer from erstwhile Yugoslavia, Aurora, July 15, 2024

Volunteers shared stories on how they were able to feel the presence of food insecurity in the community during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the stories shared by Monika refers to communities feeling the need for better social safety nets, especially related to food access.

> Another time, there was a church that was cooking food and supplying dinner to some other families because they asked me if I could do that for them for a while, and I was doing that also for a while, okay. I remember dropping off a dinner. Once, I dropped off the food at all stops, and in the last drop, when I called the person, she actually said to me, I'm sorry. I'm not in town. I won't be using whatever you bring. Can you give it to somebody else?"
>
> These are cooked foods. You can't keep it either. Yeah, and by this time, wherever I picked up the food, they had closed up and gone. Okay? Here is the food that I have. So, I called my previous drop because that was the closest. I said, here's the situation. I didn't even finish my statement. She said I will take whatever you have. That's when I realized how much need there is... Or want there is; I don't know, it's a want or need. Clearly, there isn't enough food for everyone in the communities.
>
> - Monika, FGI woman volunteer from Sri Lanka, Stouffville, July 19, 2024

Volunteering to support community expectations

The story of Lily from Bangladesh made me reflect on a relatable case of volunteerism towards the Bengali community and other community networks formed in places she migrated to, namely, Dubai and ultimately, Canada. Lily's altruism towards the Bengali community and her official networks were a lesson passed on to her by her late father. She has been an active volunteer in the local Bengali Association, a community informant for the Bengali community, where she has hosted countless community members in her household and helped them settle in Canada. Her volunteer work with the Bengali Association got her a volunteer award from the local town municipality. However, Lily reflected on how unpaid community care is unavoidable to adhere to social norms and women's labour in such cases can be taken advantage of. Lily's niece helped translate some thoughts during my interview with Lily. Below is Lily's niece's translation

> Sometimes Lily aunty doesn't know the people who are coming, but because they say that they are Bangladeshi through common networks, she supports them. She supports them with food and boarding, and they can stay in her place for five to seven days or even until they find a place to stay in Canada. Lily interjects, sometimes, "I have to turn away people, as I do not have space to host them". She stopped voluntary cooking for the mosque and the Bengali association because so many newcomers to Canada started requesting food and boarding help from her.

> Niece continues: I can give you an example: one of our common relatives, a cousin of mine; I don't even know her. Lily aunty has never met her. She just got information about Lily aunty, and she stayed here for close to eight months. She even got married in Lily's house, and Lily arranged everything for the Nikah [wedding ritual] ... Including cooking for 50-55 people, arranging for the whole wedding completely voluntarily.
>
> Lily interjects, "If I say no to helping out, then people in my community back home will say, Lily does not want to help, now that she's settled in Canada
>
> - Lily, FGI woman volunteer from Bangladesh, Ajax, July 19, 2024

Community expectations can be a burden sometimes. While it has been possible to trace neoliberal downloading of responsibilities from the state to the province and ultimately to civil society organizations and to community members, the community work of FGI women geared towards community expectations is difficult to measure in terms of economic impact and growth for self and the organization. Miraftab's ideas on how systemic inclusion of volunteers can still prolong material exclusion are very relevant to understanding the invisibility of this work (Miraftab 252–54). Volunteering in order to ensure our membership in our community can be disempowering rather than empowering and can take a toll on the health and well-being of the individual. Lily is a cancer survivor and stopped volunteering in the community for a period of time during her illness. She went back to work later, paused volunteering with local Bengali associations, but continues to be a volunteer host out of respect and adherence to social norms.

Volunteering can be a privilege

What could be disempowering for some can also be a privilege for others. A few volunteers and paid workers in the community recognized that volunteering could be a privilege, as it came with class and better access to resources. For example, one could volunteer as a delivery driver in the suburbs of York Region if one has the privilege of access to a car and can pay for gas. Some people can afford to volunteer due to passion and personal interest. Some voices below corroborate this:

> I met people who came into volunteering jobs mostly because they wanted to. They needed Canadian experience; they needed that experience on their resume. But there were some people who were passionate, and, you know, came there because of the personal interest. But when I was in a volunteer with the stress center, I met people who were. Truly there, because. they strongly believed this is their duty. Love. To serve other people, and I think it was like, you know, it absolutely makes sense because most of them were, you know had a stable life. They were, you know

> professionally settled. But in other industries people were there mostly because they needed Canadian experience. Sometimes I feel volunteering is also a privilege. You know. That it's not there for everyone. No, it's not for everyone. It's a privilege, and it needs, you know many skills including a stability…
>
> - Hazy, FGI woman volunteer from Iran, Thornhill August 23, 2024

> Educated middle class women are volunteers in the place I go to. I can volunteer.. Um Because I have a car. Yeah so you can get to the community. Yeah so I have a car and everyone has a car I live in uh Newmarket which is now a very expensive area. So I…. it's not that only White Suburban, middle-class women do this. But in order to volunteer, you need to have a car, you need to be able to pay for gas. One of the reasons I'd never like going up to Keswick was because they [the organization] will not give you gas.
>
> - Betty, Outreach Co-ordinator in a food services non-profit, paid worker, Aurora, Aug 9, 2024

Transient nature of FGI women's volunteering

Participant stories on immigration and volunteering, like many other forms of social reproduction, seemed to be episodic. It happened at different immigrant life stages as they negotiated their life in the settler society of Canada. As newcomer volunteers in Canada, immigrant women were able to understand the settler communities and find a path to enter the workforce. In later periods, even though this volunteering labour was intermittent, depending on work and family responsibilities, it continued sporadically and fulfilled various goals these women had such as connecting with community, looking for paid work, giving back to the society, building Canadian experience to name a few. While volunteering, women encountered episodic, transient situations that changed their tasks temporarily, added to existing labour or led them to perform a completely different task.

In my research, I see the labour of volunteer food work by FGI women as transient and transitional in social reproduction. Besides being temporally episodic, even spaces of work were transient, sometimes within an organization, sometimes on the move, in a client's home and in community spaces like a church, mosques, parks, to name a few. I will explain more in the following sections and in the next chapter.

It is important to note that, even within the dynamism of temporal and spatial transience, FGI women throughout the conversations reflected on creating and owning a sense of value for themselves as community volunteers. They continued forging connections in transient spaces of the community through delivery in the foyers of homes, cooking and serving community breakfasts, and periodic conversations in the hallways of volunteering organizations and shared community spaces.

Elaborating transience in social reproduction (TSR)

Social reproduction activities are often intangible and invisible, as reflected in the previous chapter, but I also noticed a sense of transience to this already imperceptible term when participants shared their stories of volunteering in food work. Some words that describe "transient" include temporary, momentary, fleeting, ephemeral, brief or short-lived, and transitory in the Cambridge Dictionary (*Transient* in Cambridge Dictionary). Reading about care work and advocacy negotiated through historical structures of colonialism, genocide, slavery, racism and other forms of exclusion by Black, Indigenous and racialized mothers and caregivers showed various instances of disruption in social reproduction work. With FGI women's labour, the transient nature of care labour stayed with me. Their labour against the above structures seemed episodic, momentary, yet persistent against the immensely long-term devaluation of their labour by neoliberal organizations and structures.

In the migration stories overall, volunteering to do food work was seen as a benefit towards self-expression, learning English, gaining work experience and personal growth. There was recognition of societal, state and community expectations and pressures when it came to choosing to volunteer, but all volunteers recognized it as an opportunity for themselves and others beyond looking at it as offering free labour. However, many paid workers, as we will see in the next two chapters, do recognize welfare retrenchments by the government that put civil society organizations in a constant state of transience. Transience is visible especially when it comes to seeking funding, struggling to stabilize its dependence on volunteer labour and sustainability during crises situations, such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the concluding chapter, I have tried to map social reproduction, including transience in social reproduction (TSR), further using my personal example of performing it. In the following two analysis chapters, I show how TSR can demonstrate both resilience and governmentality.

Conclusion

A key learning from narrating FGI women's stories was to understand how volunteering decisions can be different for each. This chapter also pointed me to understand nuances of transience in social reproduction I observed in my life and work as a community volunteer and my fellow volunteers in the partner organization, their community partners and my neighbourhood. The existence of various benefits sought and the reasoning to choose to volunteer speaks to the agency that FGI women hold in navigating these decisions. At the same time, neoliberal downloading of responsibilities is embodied in the way the non-profit sector works. I address this important argument in the next chapter on Governmentality. I try to place volunteers' labour in the context of Governmentality and the economic impact of volunteers who benefit these organizations.

Chapter 5: Social Reproduction Labour in Non-Profit Food Work and Governmentality

Introduction

In this chapter, I empirically explore how structural factors affect community social reproduction in non-profit food work. I specifically ask: 1. How is community food work by FGI women implicated within the settler colonial, neoliberal context? 2. Within the frame of the pandemic, what were FGI women's volunteer experiences of food work? These central themes set the base for resilience narratives in the following chapters, where I show how structural negotiations are carried out by volunteers and paid workers in the process of community social reproduction.

> I remember somewhere since 1982, Food banks were band-aided, short-term responses- the years turned into decades, and then we've institutionalized this response at the community level. And now the community feels like they are responsible for dealing with this food crisis. Which is why we have this, like, charitable sector that continues to propel, perpetuate forward --- it's like everyone's happy to run food drives and like to donate their time, and they want to volunteer, and we see a lot of people who want to give back and support their community, but there's not enough people questioning, like why are we doing it? Like, the Government of Canada has said everyone has the right to food. So why aren't they doing more to make sure people have the right to food? Why is it falling on the community? So that's where I kind of see a gap in the advocacy system.
>
> - Casey, Executive Director of a food advocacy organization, paid worker, Newmarket, Aug 28, 2024

The above quote is from one of the paid worker participants, who has worked in this field for over fifteen years and has seen changes in the food services offered to service-seekers. They went on to share that food programs and services had to be discontinued due to changes in federal, provincial, and municipal funding priorities. Changes to services offered and a lack of volunteer labour were key features during the COVID-19 pandemic, and Casey recalled how staff stepped up to do the additional work of keeping the services running. They were unable to bring in volunteers, as many were seniors, youth below eighteen, and they had to safeguard this population as well as maintain a safe bubble within existing workers. The state disciplinary measures on pandemic-related food safety

and the number of workers in their nonprofit kitchen positioned as “essential” were stringent, they recalled. The staff and volunteers who came in accepted it all as a form of natural integration and responsible citizenship. There were also cases where cooking classes turned virtual, as did breakfast services, which turned to a take-out instead of dine-in. I remember facilitating an online cooking workshop for the team where the chef, who was one of the workers, would take a set of seniors in a partner organization through an easy food preservation process that would last them for some time and reduce waste and effort in food preparation. I remember doing this for eight weeks, and then the funding for this project ran out, and I did not see those participants again. Funding was one of the key controls in services offered by many of these organizations, from which I interviewed participants. The unreliability in funding was one of the key features of neoliberal retrenchment or redistribution in the food advocacy sector.

Using the context of non-profit food work, I present in this chapter the voices of my research participants and the transient labour performed by them as volunteers in various food-based non-profit organizations. I further reflect on how non-profit food work gets impacted by governmentality and the neoliberal downloading of social responsibilities from federal to provincial to municipal, and finally to community organizations and volunteers. My membership as a volunteer with my partner organization helped me gain access to their logistics and program partners. This included food banks, religious charities (Catholic and Muslim)-run food banks, food banks provided by the student union, local food pantry, community fridges initiatives and non-profit food delivery driving partners. I also got access to Community Action Tables, a group of organizations and volunteer community members from various York Region neighbourhoods that included all the above partners. Community Action Tables of York Region come together to partner with other organizations in applying for funding, developing communication toolkits and leading policy discussions. I had created a short digital flyer that was put up in these organizations and sent on their email listservs. My flyer also mentioned a $25 gift coupon that could be used towards groceries. Volunteers and paid workers sent me their interests for further screening and information.

My goal in this chapter is to analyze the transitional nature of food work of FGI women volunteers and paid workers. I have identified a list of activities performed in community food work through participant interviews. These sets of activities are sometimes clearly laid out as part of volunteering but may also be performed as and when the need arises. They are detailed below:

- Starting a community garden
- Inform the organization of retail deals
- Arrange food items in the community closet/cupboard
- Pack groceries for up to 15- 20 families in a 2-hour frame
- Volunteering to take care of one plot in a community garden
- Unload items from food trucks onto warehouses
- Understand dietary needs of service-seekers looking for services
- Send/find partners to send the surplus food (depending on availability)
- Bag groceries
- Sort and check expiry dates of packaged products
- Delivery driving from retail stores to the organization, and to users or service-seekers
- Front desk / direct service to walk-in clients
- Pack food bank client orders
- Place food in the fridge/ freezer
- Pack dairy, eggs and bread loaves (depending on availability)
- Managing/setting generic table of food giveaways for member visits (depending on availability)
- Sourcing food according to dietary preferences (e.g. halal)
- Provide service in community-specific language- hiring Farsi-speaking volunteers, for example
- Cooking creatively, from ingredients available in the Kitchen
- Cooking a diverse cuisine every week to support different communities
- Packing food for a larger group- 50 or more
- Digital workshop facilitation Event management
- Take–out meal planning and service during the pandemic
- Planning for in-person transition of services after the pandemic
- Dining table setting and clean-up
- Dishwashing
- Collaboration with other community organizations
- Advocacy for service-seekers

- Volunteering in different sectors like housing, food, childcare, to name a few
- Assisting in the kitchen and clean-up for large-scale cooking of over 50 people
- Business ideation
- Brainstorming
- Greeting and serving coffee
- Affordable grocery procurement for seniors
- Negotiating with farmers and vendors
- Order taking on phone, email and messages
- Manage church or mosque dinners solely or with a team

Most of these activities are performed episodically or for a temporary period of time or on an emergency basis. By episodic, I mean the activities could be done for a few weeks to a few months or could also be a one-time task. While volunteers have the choice to sign up for activities, the signed-up activities may not be a long-term possibility and are dependent on funding. In these situations, I have observed that volunteer activities changed due to funding changes, policy restrictions by municipalities, the pandemic, changes in one's organizational structure, changes in one's own health, moving to different neighbourhoods and so on. Every time a new activity or a task is taken up, there is some new learning required in it. Many of these activities may be like those carried out at home, but in an organizational / community kitchen, there are regulations and laws to be followed as per municipal/ provincial standards. For example, the advocacy organizations I spoke to offered funded "Smart Serve" and "Food Handler" certifications and other food spaces and kitchen-related training for volunteers. This would help the organizations they are volunteering in to maintain provincial hygiene standards, as well as help volunteers get paid work opportunities. Again, these skill development opportunities are funding specific. Many paid workers mentioned that skill development opportunities have reduced since the COVID-19 pandemic, as there is little to no funding from the government and other partner charities. I detail other such environmental and structural factors that have impacted FGI women's volunteering in community food work and the food advocacy sector.

Governmentality creates disproportionate dependence on the transient labour of FGI volunteer women

Arat-Koc explains the existence of structural limitations created by governmentality, defining Foucault's concept of governmentality as a tool of neoliberalism. She explains governmentality as a "form of governance that produces subjects, forms of citizenship and behaviour, and a new organization of the social" (Bakan and Dua 312). Volunteers, who are expected to behave as responsible citizens through their community work, seem to represent this new organization of the social. Through conversations and analysis, most volunteers and paid workers reported a disproportionate dependence on volunteer labour in community food work. When I asked each one to elaborate, paid workers mentioned that, on average, one paid worker enlists the assistance of at least four to five volunteers, a one-to-five ratio of employees to volunteers. Across the board, workers mentioned how it was impossible to fulfill day-to-day tasks without the help of volunteers. It is clear from the roster of work activities how volunteers engage in every aspect of food work in an organization: be it the procurement of groceries or raw materials, helping with shipping and receiving, assisting in the kitchen, event management, or delivering food and groceries to community members and service-seekers.

A striking observation that stayed with me was how the unpaid work of volunteering is intricately woven into the existence, financial viability and success of many programs these community organizations run. The Canadian culture of volunteering is more of a necessity needed for rolling out social welfare in the community, originally the state's responsibility. This is evident from the list of volunteering tasks detailed above. Naples presented empirical conversations with three African American and Latina women in her 1992 publication, centred on unpaid or underpaid community workers in the low-income communities of New York and Philadelphia (Naples 459–60). Naples reported volunteers and community workers experiencing a sense of empowerment and an increase in personal and political power on one hand, but also facing conflicts in domestic responsibilities and less time with family due to their community engagement (Naples 453–55). The argument highlighted deep connections between social reproduction work within the household and the community to ensure the maintenance of both. The economic contribution of volunteers in the non-profit sector was not directly highlighted, though it is implied. I observed how this unpaid labour had intimate connections to maintaining the economic viability of community organizations. While the non-profit advocacy organizations in my research have recognized the importance of volunteers in

maintaining a “band-aid” to the solution of food access, their volunteering impact needs to be understood empirically and their voices amplified. TSR was voiced in many conversations about the participants' work. I further detail this observation of positive volunteer impact through a few instances below:

Volunteers, including FGI women, impact the catchment areas where service is provided

The reach of an organization to offer services and programs to the community is directly dependent on the labour of volunteers. Since York Region does not have public transit that is affordable and/ or well-connected within the region (Quigley)only service-seekers with access to a vehicle are able to avail of in-person services, events or food pick-ups. Consequently, some service-seekers, including women with small children, seniors with mobility issues, and persons with disabilities, request delivery of groceries and meals from organizations. Volunteers play a huge role in delivering food materials from retail to the community organization for further processing, cooking and meal preparation. In food banks, delivery volunteers help with further sorting and packing. Ultimately, volunteer help is required for the delivery of groceries, meals and personal hygiene items for service-seekers. Alice, a food bank subsidiary leader of a religious-led charity, spoke about the importance of volunteers in delivering bread to a shelter north of Barrie. She spoke about their collaboration with a bakery retailer in East Gwillimbury that would donate their surplus, perishable bread. A volunteer would pick up and deliver the bread from East Gwillimbury, Ontario, to the Aurora, Ontario, location, a distance of about thirteen Kilometres. Once bread loaves are sorted for food bank use, additional bread and other products are delivered to a shelter, north of the city of Barrie, from Aurora to Orillia, a distance of close to a hundred Kilometres. In Alice's words,

> So, here's the reality, Shruti. It's only possible to service right up until Orillia because of the volunteers that are currently involved in that program. Some of my volunteers are seniors who are really one foot away from the grave, I tell you. My thinking is right now, I'm going to allow that to continue because the volunteers are actively involved, and they have contacts that need bread. If some of them start to no longer be able to volunteer for various reasons, I'm not certain to what extent I'm going to be able to take care of those other groups [the Shelter up in the north].
>
> - Alice, Executive Director of a Food Bank, paid worker, Aurora, August 2, 2024

Catchment areas are the neighbourhoods where the organization serves its service-seekers, and these areas also feature in an organization's funding proposals. If volunteers are not available to serve these catchment areas, there are many instances where service-seekers are unable to be served. Monika, an FGI woman volunteer, shares an instance where it was difficult to find volunteer drivers for delivering to the west end of York Region near Highway 27 and Steeles, and the organization ultimately had to stop their services in that catchment area. In Monika's words:

> I remember it was just before Christmas. I think I had to do about 13 drops [food delivery stops]. Oh wow, I started at about 12 o'clock- 12:15. I would pick up the stuff, and by the time I finished and came back, it was close to 4:35 PM, and I did this at least 20 to 21 times. The pickup spot is Midland & Steeles. I used to do a few drops around there, and then I would take Highway 7 and go all the way down to the West end of York Region. Those are the locations that were dropped because it was so far out of their way. Oh my God… [flustered and disappointed expression], I'm not sure what's happening to that area at all.
>
> When I did all the deliveries, a few times when I was away, they were able to find somebody who was able to drop off at one or two places, and sometimes they couldn't find anyone. And one of the organization's staff members used to make deliveries. That's when they realized that they shouldn't ask the drivers to go out of their way. That's going to be too much gas [for drivers]. Yeah, so I think I did that [drop] for one year, maybe two years; they dropped those service-seekers as there were no drivers. Not sure what's happening…
>
> - Monika, FGI woman volunteer from Sri Lanka, Stouffville, July 19, 2024

It is important to note here that Monika utilized her time, energy and money to do delivery driving from the east end of York Region to the west, without any reimbursement for gas. Without her service, the organization had to stop serving the area. This not only affects the service-seekers, but also reduces coverage of services for the organization, which would ultimately impact their funding. The less the reach of an organization to serve the areas in need, the less will be their access to funding, ultimately affecting the existence and growth of the organization.

Volunteer availability impacts the quality and continuity of services to service-seekers

Grace, a food advocate, stated that having a diverse group of volunteers is integral to the success of their community lunch program every Wednesday. Her organization serves service-seekers in the northeastern end of York Region, which has a limited public transportation system and a dearth of volunteers. The town they serve has a higher proportion of seniors and is comprised mainly of a farming community; the proportion of FGI populations moving into the area is low. I explain this further below. She highlighted how this summer, the organization was fortunate in enlisting the help

of different groups of volunteers, FGIs, students, and persons living with mental disabilities, which was key in ensuring that the lunch program was a success.

> We were really lucky this summer. We had a lot of students who wanted to help us out, so we had a lot of Kids who were getting their volunteer hours helping us on Wednesday, doing the dishes, setting the tables up, serving, cleaning and doing all those things. So that was really fun for us. We had more students this year than we've ever had, so.
>
> - Grace, Executive Director of a food pantry in Georgina, paid worker, September 16, 2024

She further explained that the lunch program was a pay-what-you-can model. Any profit could be passed on to volunteers who mostly represented marginalized communities. For example, Grace explains:

> If we get paid more than the cost of food materials, we can pay the volunteers as well. We do because we have people from CL [name changed], who volunteer with us, and one of the ideas behind the whole good food lunch program was to create employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities.

It is important to note here that, being in the northern part of York Region, Grace's organization serves a unique neighbourhood clientele composed of seventy percent of seniors who are first-generation English, Irish or Scottish settlers, mainly in farmlands and small businesses. The town also has a significant number of Indigenous communities whose identity I have left out to ensure the anonymity of my research participants. The Indigenous population is probably one of the few that reflects a bit of diversity in the area. Potential youth and younger volunteers, racialized FGIs, and other second- or third-generation racialized settlers are only now moving into the town. Consequently, any volunteer help requiring physical labour is scarce, and organizations recognize the importance of honouring their commitments. The initiative of a community lunch on Wednesdays had an aspect of remunerating community members who volunteered to ensure retention and continued support.

FGI volunteers advocated for community needs and provided specific knowledge to draw in more members

Volunteers and paid workers both mentioned how FGI volunteers were able to help the organization cater to service-seekers better through their expertise in international languages,

knowledge of culture-specific food and forming connections between people by directly working and interacting with them.

Daria and Hazy, two FGI volunteers with experience of over ten years in different organizations, spoke of cultural knowledge that helped improve member experiences with food services. Daria spoke about how she assisted in multicultural cooking programs that were funded by provincial and municipal governments. Every week, a group of service-seekers, a non-profit company employee and volunteers would get together to cook community lunches of different cuisines, including Indian, Chinese, and Persian, to name a few. They would cook and clean up together. There would be information sharing on what groceries are available locally, and they were involved in cooking every day. Daria explained how each community member was able to contribute to knowledge of different cultures, which improved overall understanding of food access and usage in the community.

Hazy and Enkay mentioned food banks being able to incorporate culturally specific foods to suit preferences for halal meats, vegetarian-friendly food, and allergy instructions, to name a few, through volunteer feedback from those in close contact with the needs of their different service-seekers. Hazy noted how the pandemic reduced programs on culturally inclusive programs being funded, and how that somehow reduced many of their efforts as volunteers. She spoke about a transient quality in the services provided in a food bank she worked in, which was not always able to serve individual needs.

> Due to a lack of human labour or lack of other resources, some food in the food bank I volunteered at was outdated. Expired. For many service-seekers, an expiry date is a luxury. When you're in a position of receiving. Like, if I put myself in that position, I would never be able to ask for fresh food and not canned food. This is my good food according to my culture. Thankfully, some service-seekers called and said the food was expired. As a volunteer, I felt so ashamed, and I was angry. Service-seekers must be able to keep their dignity, even when they have to ask for food.
>
> - Hazy, FGI woman volunteer from Iran, Thornhill, August 23, 2024

Berry and Daisy recalled how they also collected data from volunteers to serve them better and know their needs.

> I don't think we've ever done the noting down of demographic information. I think we were collecting postal codes for a while, and I think that's probably something we might want to do, just to get an idea of who's coming from where. It makes me very curious about people, because if someone is coming from Stouffville or Markham [to Aurora] all year, I would be like, wow, you know, like they're coming for the community.
>
> - Daisy, FGI woman volunteer from the United Kingdom, Newmarket, July 22, 2024

Through all these participant voices, I show that volunteer impact is financial and operational for an organization's success. Particularly in the non-profit food services sector, there is no core food policy for program implementation, so paid workers mentioned how they would include food in the event funding that they would apply for. This made the work of volunteers even more crucial in navigating the unknown, new implications of funding and consequently working with different tasks. Navigating new issues, systems, programs and tasks is a feature of transience in social reproduction, over and above the unpaid care work done at home. It also points out the episodic, transitional need for volunteer labour, over and above the tasks performed by the organization's employees. Despite this crucial impact of volunteer labour on social reproduction, there were very few instances where volunteer honoraria or funding efforts were mentioned in the interviews. Hazy, an FGI woman, besides volunteering with a few food banks, also volunteered in different organizations providing a variety of services for over a period of 15 years:

> I started my volunteering work with the Toronto District School Board. After a year or so, I got into the field of volunteering with school-age children. I worked and volunteered for those programs, where we serve kids on a daily basis. I worked in both rich and impoverished areas of Finch and Jane. Then I moved to translating and booking for the Y.M.C.A… you know, welcome centers. For a while, I translated for Persian service-seekers there and then. I volunteered as a student. I had my practicum with a senior home, and then continued work as a volunteer in senior homes for, say, 2 years. Yes, so all of them were related to [various kinds of] work, and all of them were unpaid work. Yeah, many years and many hours of unpaid work, great observations and great learning opportunities. Working in different teams was good, but you have to make constant adjustment, be flexible all the time. People take advantage of your Kindness and think you will show up all the time. It is unfair.
>
> - Hazy, FGI woman volunteer from Iran, Thornhill, August 23, 2024

Volunteers take on initiatives that financially benefit the non-profit organization.

FGI volunteers' actions bring positive financial and operational contributions to the organization. However, some voluntary tasks are not easily defined or do not occur every day, yet follow a pattern through routine actions.

For example, volunteers bear expenses like filling up gas for the delivery, buying and dropping off some raw materials or food for the organization. These are normally not refundable, and FGI volunteers are not claiming any of these funds back from the organization. Another paid worker mentioned how volunteers would make it a point to let her know about many deals in retail stores, especially on eggs, dairy and butter, which are highly perishable, high in price, and often missing from the shelves of their food bank. However, these contributions were not discussed as an important task by FGI volunteers. They just mentioned it in passing when they were highlighting other tasks they were performing. These observations relate to Susan Ferguson's statement on labour beyond housework that is not often discussed under social reproduction definitions (Ferguson 114).

> The point is that all processes of social reproduction (not just those in individual households) come up against capital's hostility to life—if for no greater reason than that the vast majority of the resources essential to reproducing life (the means of subsistence) are owned and controlled by capital and the capitalist state. And all the work that goes into producing this and the next generation of workers (inside and outside of patriarchally organized households) is caught up in specific social relations of oppression that are not directly subject to capitalism's direct control but are nonetheless caught in the crosshairs of this contradictory dynamic.
>
> - (Ferguson 114)

The non-profit food service sector and the social reproduction processes within the sector are placed at the opposite end of capitalism through unpaid/underpaid labour and the nature of not seeking profit and not being controlled directly by capitalism. However, non-profit organizations are still dependent on unequal social relations like immigrant status, gender, race, ability, age and so on, exhibited by volunteers and funding from large charities, retail organizations and governments that favour capitalism. Volunteers and workers provide services by engaging with these structural barriers of funding and place restrictions, discussed more in the next chapter. My proposal to define transience in social reproduction is intimately tied to its engagement with broader structural factors. For FGI volunteers, I observed how the nature of their labour also

interacts with paid workers who manage a team, the non-profit food sector in general and funding access for programs. I explain further in the next couple of sections.

Transience in Social reproduction Activities of Paid workers

For paid workers, transient labour is performed with a little more autonomy as compared to FGI women volunteers. Here, the nature of labour is ever-changing, but some paid workers are neighbourhood food advocates and are consistently available. They have better social networks, a better economic position because of their employment and better access to resources.

Privilege among volunteers helps in handling the transient labour in social reproduction to an extent.

Many paid workers in my research had many years of volunteer experience, were second- or third-generation Canadian settlers and had a good sense of the non-profit sector. They would be able to choose and negotiate which places to work in. Access to information, reliable access to a vehicle, and community connections add to this privilege. Betty, one of my research participants, has been volunteering for over 20 years and comes from a family which has strong multi-generational community connections. Betty is a long-term volunteer, and she is working with a few organizations. She is also a paid worker in food services. I positioned her in the category of paid worker participant, so I could understand how different volunteering can look for those with access to resources and with social connections. Her areas of service were the territories of Richmond Hill, Newmarket and Stouffville regions of the York municipality, which coincided with her volunteering choices. She was able to deliver infant foods and essential supplies for an organization that caters to young, marginalized mothers to these areas in days or at times suitable to her schedule.

> My [job's] territory is Newmarket, Aurora, and Richmond Hill. This is why I'm able to incorporate my Thursday volunteer work, where I will deliver food. So, I can say, uh, listen, on Thursday, I'm going to be in Richmond Hill. Okay. Could you give me the Richmond Hill people who would like food delivered to them? Um, so XYZ's [organization she volunteers with] delivery to Richmond Hill is taken care of. XYZ [where she volunteers] serves everywhere; they'll go up north to Keswick and down to Scarborough. I have done Keswick a couple of times. Um, but that is way out of my territory. I can deliver in Richmond Hill, and then I can go to the local ABC because that's one of my service-seekers. So I try to be efficient.

- Betty, Outreach Co-ordinator in a food services non-profit, paid worker, Aurora, Aug 9, 2024

There is a degree of privilege for volunteers who are second- or third-generation settlers. Access to transportation and social capital helped Betty handle situations involving emergency food and deliver grocery hampers amongst service-seekers who were unable to access services directly from the non-profits. Their privilege, as against the marginalization of FGI women volunteers (lacking resources and social connections), was clearly visible in their stories as long-standing volunteers. The interviews with volunteers who were paid workers also helped in understanding structural and historical changes in the voluntary sector and impacts on community work.

Social reproduction labour of paid workers

Many paid workers spoke about periodic increases in perishable food items delivered from distribution centres during "giving" seasons like Christmas and Easter, which increases the necessity to share food with labour and advocacy partners. This is not a part of the job description of workers and, consequently, volunteers. Here, all paid employees and volunteers are required to employ multi-axial thinking skills, meaning thinking more creatively, which is not necessarily compensated. In this case, the glorification of volunteering as altruism masks the job capabilities and skills required during that time.

Take the example of a supplementary food bank run by Alice. Alice, an executive director in a food bank attached to a religious charity, spoke about the gaps in their supplementary food bank. Supplementary food banks, she explained, are organizations that might be partially funded by the municipalities, but they are not the first choice when it comes to servicing or stocking food by the regional municipalities, unlike food banks that were built for that purpose. This particular food bank operated out of church premises and was part of a larger charity group. Alice was more in a fundraising role earlier and explained how she was able to note gaps in the food work done by her organization because she was placed in the same area due to constraints of space. She could not share her observations freely as that was not her primary role.

However, she was asked to take over the running of the supplementary food bank. She realized that she needed to empower recipients/service-seekers with better information about their food access besides their food bank services, as the food bank was clearly not well-equipped initially. She actively tried to form relationships with other local organizations that were involved in

community food services and in advocacy. Fresh food market initiatives with my partner organization on their church premises were born out of this collaboration.

In my experience as a volunteer, I have often seen most workers on the floor coming together to ensure the smooth running of an event, even if their work responsibilities are different than what they are doing that day. One of the paid workers, Minnie, who is a food service leader and culinary director, has experienced her parents' life as FGIs from the Caribbean to Canada intimately. I have spoken more about her work in the next chapter, as it seamlessly connects resilience to transience in social reproduction. Her work involves being a community chef, and she conducts cooking/preserving classes; her work would take different forms depending on space, funding and demographics. This would involve planning differently for people living with specific social needs. For newcomer communities in Richmond Hill and Markham, the classes and workshops would involve knowledge of local food availability and knowledge sharing of ideas between different cultures. For demographics of seniors in areas like Keswick and Georgina, it would be to reduce social isolation amongst seniors, to help them cook for one or two persons in a family to reduce food waste and increase the possibility of food storage with minimal effort. She further mentioned how she worked with her team to plan for funding accordingly and had received municipal grants specific to newcomers and seniors.

Due to the efforts of feminist researchers, social reproduction at home and in the community is recognized as political and key in the sustenance of society. It is visually a continuous process needed to sustain and develop generational labour; hence, the work done during emergencies and transitions is not always visible and falls through the cracks of academic research. Paid workers and non-profit workers perform transient labour in many of their tasks. This labour equips them with an understanding of structural and social barriers faced by service-seekers in various situations. They can identify multiple identities and marginalities (Crenshaw, "Mapping...") that a neighbourhood or community may face and can develop connections and programming accordingly.

> Um, the beautiful thing, and the challenging thing about York Region is – it is Canada's most Multicultural region. So Markham is the most culturally diverse city in all of Canada. This is seen in other parts of York Region. You don't often see this. You will generally have ethnic concentrations everywhere. So, of course, you're still seeing ethnic concentrations in certain neighbourhoods, but from our clientele perspective--- it's just like EVERYBODY lives in York Region. In Markham and Steeles, big community hubs or plazas, they have Caribbean stores, which is my community, Sri Lankan stores and East Asian stores, all in one community.

- Minnie, Culinary Director of a food advocacy organization, paid worker, Newmarket, Aug 20, 2024

Minnie pointed to various cooking programs where service-seekers would also be volunteers, as they are community members who are participating in the program but, at the same time, are also running the program by participating in various activities. This could range from meal preparation and clean up, and discussing social issues over food, which I will elaborate in the next chapter. It made me realize that interlocking areas of oppression that Crenshaw originally defined are being constantly addressed by volunteers through unpaid community initiatives. This work is what Banks, a feminist economist, recognizes as non-market work, work that sits outside of a capitalist economic exchange where producers and consumers are different (Banks 8–10). Here, volunteers are also transitioning as service-seekers and are not just consumers as defined in an economic exchange in capitalism. This transient labour makes the volunteer's labour as a service-seeker measurable as a community benefit.

Governmentality imposes precarity on community food services

Volunteers, workers and their time and space are organized in such a way that they are to carry out their work under specific constraints imposed by the government and other large charities. Cameron refers to the historical responsibility of provincial governments in maintaining social welfare as compared to the economic responsibilities that the federal government focuses on. From the 1980s onwards, due to the federal government's decision to download social welfare services to provinces and municipalities, provinces had to take various actions towards neoliberal economic development, privatization and cuts in public spending (Bezanson and Luxton 68). Consequently, funding was directed towards voluntary organizations that could focus on rolling out social welfare measures under the provincial and municipal funding more cheaply (Cameron in Bezanson and Luxton 67).

Foucault reflected in one of his lectures on governmentality that governments use a twin tool of discipline (policing and surveillance) and care (social welfare policies) to regulate the lives of what he called "subjects of the state" (Duschinsky and Rocha 144–45). The government uses spatial and other constraints as a disciplinary tool but rewards these community organizations with an opportunity to seek welfare funding to run these programs within these constraints. This benefits the government, since it can download social welfare responsibilities to voluntary organizations and concentrate more on capital accumulation and economic expansion, a move towards privileging

neoliberal globalization. At the same time, the government can also control funding for social welfare, as community organizations depend on external government and other charitable funding. Workers and volunteers negotiate these limitations and raise particular questions on constraints of space, inconsistencies in funding available to organizations and the resultant episodic nature of services available to service-seekers. Workers and volunteers highlight difficulties in measuring the impact of services provided and an overall ecosystem of unreliability. I explain each below.

Constraints of space

The food advocacy organization I partnered with for my research presented here shared space with three other organizations working in the areas of child and youth mentoring, a food bank and a hospice. As a researcher and a volunteer, I would notice shared usage of the Kitchen, meeting areas, and rotation of employee work desks due to the necessity created by a lack of space.

There were limited conversations surrounding these spatial limitations. Many workers and volunteers reflected very briefly that they were used to this limitation and have experienced a similar lack of space in other organizations they had worked with. For some, it helped them navigate their work and household in a better way, as they were able to take on other forms of income and/or give some time to household work due to some work-from-home opportunities on some days. Some reflected on having difficulty in differentiating their services when placed alongside other non-profit organizations. As a researcher, I observed similar space-sharing situations when I visited other organizations, for example, food banks and advocacy organizations being situated inside a church, an educational institution, or a broader charitable organization. What I also found was how these space-sharing opportunities led to coalitions that would not otherwise occur. Casey, a paid worker, mentioned how their team managed to conduct a children's cooking class when a neighbourhood organization that catered to children approached them. This workshop, according to them, opened advocacy conversations on food waste and cultural food options with children, which then led to ideas for reaching service-seekers of different age groups. These opportunities paved the way to reach a larger group of service-seekers, yet there exists an environment of inconsistency in services due to reduced funding. This is compounded by issues of limited space, state-led disciplinary measures around food safety, pandemic-related protocols, and an overall ecosystem of transience where workers, volunteers and service-seekers are expected to respond to structural limitations rather than raise such structural issues as concerns. It is concerning because an overall ecosystem of

transience could further subsume the labour involved. Once the workers and volunteers sort out the issue, their labour might also become disposable and forgotten. In sections below, I highlight instances of transience in the non-profit sector and how workers and volunteers offer solutions through their labour.

Unreliable environment of funding due to the lack of an earmarked central food policy

Employees in food services, non-profit organizations and advocacy laid out issues arising out of unreliable funding from governments at various levels. For a food advocacy organization versus a food bank, Casey, who leads the former, reflects on how it is easier to write funding proposals for tangible programs, but difficult to explain food advocacy work to funding organizations and government. Advocacy organizations write petitions and emails and chase political leaders to hear about food-related news. Advocacy is difficult to measure, as the efforts are often long-term and may not yield results for a significant time, so research and advocacy are often difficult to seek funding for. In contrast, food bank program initiatives are easier to fund, due to relative tangibility and visibility that can be shown to funders.

> When you do policy-based advocacy work, you don't get photo opportunities [visibility]. Then like, like for instance, if we're doing a cooking class or a gardening program or even the affordable food market, there are hundreds of photo opportunities every single class, and they have like really engaged people, and you have like a lot of laughter, and you have like fresh produce, and it's like really bountiful, and there are lots of just like stories and, again, photo ops that come from that. That makes it really easy to communicate in, like, newsletters and social media.
>
> - Casey, Executive Director of a food advocacy organization, paid worker, Newmarket, Aug 28, 2024

She explains that, until 2018, there was no central food policy defined by government at the federal, provincial or municipal levels. This is one of the reasons why funding proposals usually have some events and programs where food is incorporated through a cooking class, a food preservation workshop, access to health through food, etc. This also feeds on unreliability in funding and a lack of job security. Leaders in the nonprofit food sector, other than food banks, for example, advocacy organizations, food pantries, collective action tables, community fridges, perform additional labour of advocating for their employees' salaries. As Clarissa (Paid worker 2024) reflects,

> I still feel it is inconsistent. Yeah, working in the food sector. In general, I mean, the money is precarious at the end of the day. Although my organization has Casey, who is gonna fight for all of our jobs and make sure that there's money to support people.
>
> - Clarissa, Operations Manager of a food advocacy organization, paid worker, Newmarket, Aug 29, 2024

Even though individual leadership mattered and ensured some continuity in employees' work life, larger crises like the COVID-19 pandemic led to long-term effects of precarity in employment security, as Clarissa continues to explain:

> We all had to lessen some hours after the pandemic. I should say we had to lessen some hours because there wasn't funding. We're lucky in that way; we're very lucky. Because, yeah, of who is leading our organization. I feel very grateful. We get paid a better wage, a livable wage, but yeah, a little bit more. I would say we're underpaid, compared to what people working in York Region municipality are making. My family cannot live off of my income. My husband works for himself, so sometimes we're up sometimes, sometimes we're down.
>
> - Clarissa, Operations Manager of a food advocacy organization, paid worker, Newmarket, Aug 29, 2024

As workers in a student union that led a food advocacy organization, Dora and Shiny have spoken about an extreme crunch of funding that impedes them from supporting international students in need and working in an institution where funding to the student union is kept at its minimum. Their case is unique as they often serve people like international students who have liminal citizenship status and interlocking marginalities of race, gender, English language barriers, lack of social connections and lack of understanding of new Canadian systems. Shiny recalls how most of the students seeking service are international students and/or economically marginalized students taking diploma courses. With very minimal funding, the student union runs programs and events and tries to incorporate food in each of its proposals for event funding. They run meal programs, cultural events where food is provided so that students are taken care of and a dedicated emergency food bank service, as students with temporary migration status are excluded from accessing food banks off campus.

> At XYZ College, we pay $8,000 CADs [for international student tuition] per semester. Do you know how much it goes to our student union? $60. That's our membership fee -Sixty dollars per semester, not per month. Then our union administration fee is $37 [for each semester per person]- this is what we use to pay our staff. This is what we use to pay for all

the services. We are an institution that receives sixty dollars per semester, per student, and we have done more than the parent college that receives most of the tuition fee. And we do MIRACLES. We went to conferences where the other student unions get like, six hundred dollars per student, per semester. And what we're doing with 60 is amazing.

- Dora (from Brazil) to Shiny (from India), migrant women and paid workers, King City, September 17, 2024

Students [like us] are suffering because we are in a huge crisis, not only a food crisis, but also a housing crisis, and we need the institution's help----- we are planning to ask for yearly donations. We want an agreement from the parent institution that every year, we're going to receive a fixed amount just for food support. … because everybody needs that's why we have free breakfast every day in all campuses…we sell grilled cheese sandwiches for one dollar….we have just opened a Kitchen in the other campus, and we are trying to sell some protein-based food options as well…..like beef, chicken, tofu, paneer…

- Dora (from Brazil) to Shiny (from India), migrant women and paid workers, King City, September 17, 2024

This took me back to the dichotomy between discipline and surveillance versus the social welfare supports that Foucault talks about in governmentality, as written earlier. On the one hand, there is a definite observation of neoliberal downloading of responsibilities from federal to municipal and to under-funded community organizations (Rankin, "Governing Development"). Here, federal government regulations on immigration give institutions of power like municipal governments and leadership in community organizations cater to social supports of only those "subjects" (permanent residents and citizens) that can be defined as having rights to services of social welfare.

Students with international admission status are seen as individuals who have acquired their rite of passage into Canada by bringing in funds from their home country. Food banks in certain neighbourhoods have been reported to decline services to international students (Nair; Bhugra) without considering their living situation with high rents and work restrictions that do not help them survive. In this case, citizenship status decides connection to the nation and the nation-state's responsibility towards the "desired "subjects". The communities that do not fit the normalized definition of a nation's desired "subjects" do not get equitable access to social supports but are subjected to surveillance and discipline in the form of exclusion from social supports.

In the case of Shiny and Dora, in their dual roles as student union leaders and underpaid workers with a student union at a community college, there is the stress of additional labour that funding

limitations cause. They continuously emphasized the lack of structural accountability of universities and community colleges, as well as of the state's immigration rules, to solve international student crises.

Every community member working towards social welfare, including users, volunteers and workers, has experienced transience in social reproduction due to funding limitations, including learning new tasks for new programs, reducing hours in their job but still performing necessary functions, and many areas of unpaid work and advocacy for colleagues and community members.

According to many paid workers, the COVID-19 pandemic created an unpredictable ecosystem for services provided. Many lost service-seekers, their regular volunteers, and observed key shifts in municipal or provincial funding which required new funding proposals. As Minnie (Paid worker, 2024) reflects,

> It was interesting, so during the pandemic is, when I had that, um, Newcomer Grant, it was a three-year Grant. It started in 2019. Oh, and then the whole mandate was to reduce social isolation. And then the pandemic struck in 2020. How do we reduce social isolation for newcomers when we are asked to isolate because of the pandemic?

Minnie went on to explain that the team created a delivery of the program that was successful, and I talk more about it in the next chapter, which is on resistance and resiliency of volunteers. Downloading responsibilities onto community organizations rid governments of their responsibilities for social welfare. At the same time, they can discipline and pass judgments on the efficiency of community programs without taking the responsibility, purely by controlling future funding opportunities (Miraftab). Funders, as many paid workers highlighted, often asked for measures of successful programming, which is not always easy during moments of crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. Paid workers explained that measuring and explaining food advocacy, including writing petitions to political leaders, writing organizational and personal emails around knowledge mobilization and fundraising, holding teach-ins and organizing, is difficult. The indeterminate quality of measuring the effectiveness of such programs adds to the unreliability in funding and the need to constantly look for newer funding horizons.

Conclusion

This chapter spoke about many features of community social reproduction shaped by government control over their funding, which contributes to an environment that makes it difficult to have mutually beneficial relationships amongst workers, food recipients, other service-seekers, partners, and volunteers in non-profit organizations. Yet employees and volunteers of such organizations navigate around these obstacles, as I explain in the next chapter through specific initiatives, collaborations, and the development of a personal sense of advocacy and purpose. Hooks, Collins and Banks have argued that unpaid or underpaid care for Indigenous, Black and other racialized women occurs in-between spaces and times of restrictions imposed by funding policies or lack of policies of the government, imposed by neoliberal retrenchment of social welfare, unequal access to necessities, to name a few. In the particular case of community food work by FGI women, neoliberal structures create unique necessities of transience in social reproduction labour. In my previous chapters, I have argued that community volunteering and care are political in nature as theorized by Naples, Banks and Rankin, where volunteers negotiate household responsibilities to volunteer in the community. The volunteer work of bringing in new learning and knowledge to the organization made them feel empowered, emancipated, valued and connected to the community. The wide acceptance of volunteers does not always translate to paid work opportunities within the organization. It may have been a stepping stone to paid work for a few, but it largely remains a series of volunteering experiences for most.

By not having adequate provisions for a "core" food policy and policies around hunger and poverty, the government has depoliticized, privatized, and excluded the work and impact of service-seekers, volunteers, workers and partners, largely women. They are left to constantly navigate between understanding community needs and seeking funding to ensure the survival of food organizations. This often gives rise to transience in social reproduction. This labour, however, does not stop at navigating limitations and hurdles, but creates a sense of resilience in the lives of many volunteers and employees in community food work that helps them form collaborations and learn new skills. In the next chapter, I detail how strategies of resilience, resistance and reworking are negotiated by workers and volunteers in the non-profit food sector.

Chapter 6: Collective Continuance and Strategies of Resistance, Resilience and Reworking

Introduction

In this chapter, a research question I have attempted to explore is: How does community food work by FGI women position them as active agents? I center Indigenous concepts of collective continuance and strategies of resistance, resilience and reworking to understand what advocacy can look like in non-profit food work.

"Ichigo Ichie" and resilience

In September 2025, my mother-in-law passed away, and I had to rush to India with my daughter to support my husband. This labour of supporting my husband, my sister-in-law and her family, along with taking care of my daughter and the household left behind by my mother-in-law in India, was clearly an example of transience in social reproduction for me. These activities included preparing materials and following a schedule of Hindu rituals, caring for guests who would visit my husband and my sister-in-law during specific days of mourning, and supporting and learning from Hindu priests when they performed rituals, to name a few. All the while, I was navigating patriarchal comments and judgements surrounding my disinterest and lack of understanding of brahmin rituals surrounding death, by "well-meaning" relatives, while helping me with childcare, a transience in social reproduction activity for them, that arose out of the death of my mother-in-law: an episodic, fleeting labour provided above and beyond the routine social reproduction activities of cooking, cleaning, childcare, domestic work, elder care, to name a few. I was back in a hostile environment where I held unresolved conflicts with my in-laws from my time as a resident of India. This loss was particularly devastating for my husband, and I had suppressed my emotions about being surrounded by my past conflicts and focused on what I seem to do best - unpaid caregiving.

Weighed down by emotions, emotional labour and unpaid care work surrounding bereavement rituals for over a month, I found it difficult to get back to a routine after coming back to Canada. As I tried to get back to my everyday social reproduction activities and my contractual teaching, my dissertation writing suffered and many other avenues of learning and personal growth were affected too. I missed a month of Karate Lessons, and I, particularly, seem to have lost my grasp of a form or pattern or "Kata" as we call it in the dojo (my place of training) – the Bo Kata, a pattern involving

the use of a staff. I also missed my annual belt testing, which further contributed to a sense of upheaval in my mind about losing control of a routine. My Senseis (teachers), Mr.S and Mr. M, senior Goju-Ryu Karate practitioners who lead classes I jointly attend with my daughter, introduced us to the concept of "Ichigo Ichie". The concept they mentioned roughly translates to "one life, one encounter" or "once in a lifetime". My Sensei explained that, in martial arts, it often refers to practicing each of your "Kata," or pattern or form, as if it were the last, giving it the mindfulness and concentration it deserves. The fleeting moment, he added, can be made meaningful by utilizing it with this mindful action of practicing a "Kata". I also came across this term in Kimine Mayuzumi's academic blog (an alumna of OISE, University of Toronto) that talks about "Ichigo Ichie" as seeking joy in transitions and paying attention to each moment with care (Mayuzumi, "Ichigo Ichie" Ichigo Ichie: Embracing joy in transitions). The blog post directed me to Mayuzumi's academic work on tea ceremony as a decolonial epistemology, where she positions intergenerational learning of her community's tea ceremony in relation to "Ichigo Ichie" (Mayuzumi, *The Tea Ceremony as a Decolonizing Epistemology* 6*)*. There are parallels and learnings drawn from decolonial concepts of reclaiming and reconnecting to one's generational learning and seeking traditional knowledges from the land we now call "Canada", away from a Eurocentric, colonial perspective (Alook et al.; Kimmerer). Her work translates to the benefits of slowing down and paying attention to moments and experiences in the colonial academic space that thrives on speed and deadlines. This made me understand how important it is to reclaim my labour, my action that often gets swept under the transience of social reproduction activities. As for the story of gaining control of my staff "kata", my bow pattern or "ufugusku no kon", I did get the hang of it, roughly after a month. I saw myself training in my dreams, not just in the dojo or at home, but I learnt to accept the importance of my actions in those moments where I was learning the "Kata".

Claiming back this concentration of "being in the moment" helped me reclaim my actions as empowering, enduring, and resilient against the transience in social reproduction activities in my life. It also helped me make sense of care labour that racialized, marginalized communities navigate against structural limitations and barriers. I understand that community food advocates, including FGI women volunteers, show resilience in many ways. They offer their volunteer labour in different forms despite funding limitations and spatial constraints, through volunteering in different organizations and learning to adapt to new skills. In the previous chapter, I spoke about many such instances that demand additional social reproduction from community food workers.

TSR has led me to understand that community advocates and volunteers are not passive victims on whom social reproduction labour is imposed by neoliberal structures, but that this persistent labour is a response against neoliberal retrenchment by governments. Community resilience is not just a response, but a critical tool against neoliberalism and other structural limitations posed by institutions and governments. This knowledge opens up new possibilities to think about how resilience can be defined in different ways and its dynamic interaction with resistance and reworking, as discussed in the literature review.

In this chapter, I uncover instances of collective efforts by community food advocates. As discussed in the literature review chapter, Chapter 2, resilience could be seen as a response to governmentality (Wright) as a form of reciprocity and reclamation (Kimmerer). I supported Kimmerer's description with Kyle Powys Whyte, Citizen Potawatomi's, definition of resilience as collective continuance (Whyte) and Simpson's narration of bush economies informed by historical Anishinabe knowledges of utilizing resources in a non-exploitative way (Maynard and Simpson 181–82). Finally, I take ahead the explanation of Cindi Katz's triad of political engagements in the form of resistance, resilience and reworking and argue how these three concepts are not necessarily disjointed in their existence (Katz; MacLeavy et al.). FGI women volunteers and other actors in food non-profits, as described in the following sections, are creating new ways of existing through their labour. I engage with these concepts by centering volunteering as a form of reciprocity and ultimately care as a form of resilience or collective continuance against colonial and capitalist structures (Alook; Maynard and Simpson).

Partnering to offer programs with other organizations – resisting limitations of funding

Paid workers, Minnie and Casey, specifically highlighted how many of the programs and events that are planned are in association with other community organizations within the ambit of York Region. This helped their organization to collectively benefit and reach a larger group of service-seekers, geography and funding sources beyond the government.

> If I'm doing a program with Aurora's seniors, I will partner with the seniors' center near the town. So, we do cater. And so that's volunteer-supported, with some staff support. We also do a bi-monthly meal program in support of the caregivers with our neighbour here, the hospice [name masked to protect identity].
>
> - Minnie, Culinary Director of a food advocacy organization, paid worker, Newmarket, Aug 20, 2024

Thus, their funding, collaborations and fundraising efforts are all geared towards the needs of the community and partnerships with local organizations that bring together volunteers and community members. This helps them cater to many people, which is not possible to serve as a single organization, as community service organizations are often understaffed. In this case, one staff member oversees coordinating with many volunteers and partner organizations for a single program. The event is facilitated by Minnie, who is the staff person. Minnie continues,

> So, you know, our team is really small, right? So there's 12 of us in total, uh, three of us work full time. And the rest are all part-time. So, this entire arm of this catering piece is being supported by volunteers and we will produce 50 meals per session. So in a month, we'll make 100 meals in support of that, all through volunteers, for the caregivers at Hospice. And because we're housed in this area where there are four more organizations, it's Kind of easy to, you know, partner too. Yeah, well we do a lot of work so it's easy to partner, obviously with the people here but we do a lot of work at just building relationships with other organizations.
>
> - Minnie, Culinary Director of a food advocacy organization, aid worker, Newmarket, Aug 20, 2024

Minnie also emphasized that partnerships not only help them reach out to a larger number of clientele but also help them understand specific community needs. This is especially important when the government rolls out funding for specific programs. In this case, she makes a mention of the circular economy.

> We often want to make sure that we're tapping into what the needs of the community are specifically, to understand who is there in the community and what you can do with the partner organization's support exactly. Even though like, I'm like, okay we're gonna do this circular economy piece. Like I tend not to just come with [in a rigid top-down approach]- this is what we're doing, and then we're the people (but more of understanding community needs) it's just Kind of like, okay, where are we gonna do our programming, what are they [community members] interested in? So, there's some curiosity that needs to be there and then how can we communicate our message? That's going to reach the people who we're talking to, okay. It has more to do with the waste reduction, okay? And supporting the local economy, okay?
>
> - -Minnie, Culinary Director of a food advocacy organization, paid worker, Newmarket, Aug 20, 2024

Minnie was talking to me about "Circular Economy"-an initiative by York Region municipalities to reduce wastage of resources (*It's Circular Economy Month! | York Region*).

Through circular economy initiatives, the region offers many programs in partnership with local non-profit organizations and local businesses. For example, these initiatives, as per the municipality website (*Circular Economy | York Region*), have offered, since 2018, repair cafes that repair and re-use items. Donations of used bicycles are repaired and given back to people in need in the community. Household equipment is repaired by volunteers for re-use by residents. There are textile donations and small kitchen appliance lending libraries in the community. As a part of this initiative, the region offers funding amounts of five thousand to twenty-five thousand Canadian dollars to non-profit organizations for running programs related to this initiative.

Minnie explains how they used the concept of circular economy in one of their programs below.

> Circular economy projects tries to involve people in the community. York Region, of course is involved. Yeah, Farms are involved in it, we have our partners so we're partnering with a local organization in Georgina, okay? We want to make sure that the community is reporting back the community. We are not coming from outside the community to tell you what you need. This is how you should access it and all this Kind of stuff. We have our food delivery partner organization who have been really amazing and instrumental in identifying----- okay, this is a good area, or this is a good organization, we should connect with …uhm…here's a great farm that we can partner with. That is how we are going to do a farm tour at one of the farms. This partnership came together in the form of a community tomato canning workshop. We partnered with a farm in Georgina for this program to procure produce for the workshop. And, all the programming is geared towards residents in Georgina.
>
> - Minnie, Culinary Director of a food advocacy organization, paid worker, Newmarket, Aug 20, 2024

Political theorists like John Shields, Meghan Joy and Siu Cheng, in their recent paper discuss the intersections of neoliberalism, the pandemic and precarious resilience shown by non-profit organizations. To explain precarity in resilience, they investigate how the COVID-19 pandemic had intensified precarity in the sector, which included a chronically understaffed situation, a shortage of volunteers, and inflation during and after the pandemic, leading to financial precarity in the community, which overstretched the services offered by non-profits, while funding remained limited (Shields et al. 22–23).

I was able to relate to the well-rounded arguments calling out the limited nature of state accountability and social responsibility of federal, provincial and local governments. Shields et.al, al.

referred to a neoliberal tool as the NPM (New Public Management) administrative model by Ontario government agencies, a tool to govern non-profits by positioning them as private organizations. In order "to survive, the (non-profit) sector had to raise its own source of revenue through membership fees, social enterprises, donations, and private funding" (Shields et al. 4). They further proposed a call for governments to promote a sense of non-competitive funding (Shields et al. 24). For food-based non-profits, I propose more robustness in the existing central food policy to understand why advocacy for funding and attention to the sector is needed at every level of the government. At the same time, the state should encourage collaboration with different leaders in the non-profit food sector – workers, volunteers and service-seekers- to roll out programs informed by traditional knowledges of the land, with every leader in the sector being compensated fairly for their knowledges, collaboration and labour.

Efforts to empower volunteers through paid honoraria and co-lead positions, and encouraging choice of work – reworking different ways of being

Most organizations have a volunteer appreciation event, which involves a lunch event. Going beyond showing gratitude, paid workers highlighted instances where they have started developing programs to include paid opportunities and honoraria for volunteers, when volunteers would spend longer hours for an event regularly. For a food-based non-profit or a food advocacy organization, where volunteer turnover is constant, this could mean volunteer continuity and a sense of stability. As a volunteer who has worked in the sector, an honorarium, beyond a lunch invitation, would give me a sense of my work being valued and respected. I would feel less alienated and more open to sharing my knowledge and experiences in an environment of inclusion and collaboration.

> York Region Municipality, okay, is one of our main funders, but there are other funding sources. With the Fresh Food Markets specifically, we have like market co-leads. Every market has two market co-leads. So now we have received funding from York Region to not only cover our staff income, but also our co-leads that's going to give them an honorarium for their work in supporting the market with us.
>
> - Carol, Community Cooks Co-ordinator of a food advocacy organization, paid worker, Newmarket, Aug 30, 2024

Carol explained that the organization advocated for compensating volunteers when they assisted in market events in schools, local parks and other community spaces. Volunteers were designated as market co-leads, and the organization acquired funding to compensate them for their

time, travel to market events and other services as an honorarium. In addition to being compensated as volunteers, it also empowered many volunteers, as I have mentioned in earlier chapters, that they could choose what they would help with. Organizations encouraged volunteers to choose a line of work that would make it meaningful for them in the future and make the work valuable towards a goal they might have. This is an example of reworking towards a new future, because, as a volunteer, this made me feel like I was not just disposable labour but could gain something valuable from my experience as a volunteer. I was able to partner with the same organization for my PhD field research and get more connections through it, and this turned out to be a collaborative, non-exploitative experience for me.

Racialized paid workers discussed ideas of programs that centred on addressing marginalization and discrimination

Five of my paid worker interviews were with racialized community members, and four out of the five were FGIs themselves. While most paid workers recognized the importance of racial exclusion and other marginalizations affecting community members, some addressed these inequalities through inclusive programming of events. These were mostly workers who were racialized, marginalized and/or were FGI themselves. Representation of paid workers from the community involved upfront conversations about centring traditional knowledges of the land and conversations around food insecurity in Black, Indigenous and other racialized families. Some current events surrounding the exclusion of marginalized communities were brought up by the paid workers. These included some off-the-record conversations on settler colonialism, particularly the Israel-Palestine war that created severe food insecurity and malnutrition. Some also discussed the status of international students and how they were excluded from food advocacy by non-profits. I could feel that there were many layers of social, emotional and environmental factors that made FGI women volunteers and employees work in food advocacy. These discussions were examples of resisting barriers created by systems and developing attitudes that could eventually create inclusion and equity in program development.

Minnie, Casey and Grace made subtle remarks on how there was an abundance of food available, but they mentioned how lack of access to food can be due to discrimination and exclusion of various service-seekers. Casey spoke about neoliberal retrenchments affecting the sector through reduced funding after the COVID-19 pandemic and a lack of commitment from the government

towards developing a federal food policy and budget. Some connections between neoliberalism, settler colonialism and mutual accountability for food advocacy were highlighted by some paid workers in the interviews.

> In my cooking classes, I had a discussion piece that was called lunch table. We would choose a dish or an ingredient that was commonly found throughout all cultures. Okay? And then we would just talk about it…What is it? Um, how do we interact with it? And so the focus had changed …uh from that Eurocentric perspective, ….to really embracing our cultural commonalities, okay? And differences. It ended up being a beautiful program, and it became, like, so we called it "food in history". We talked through the lens of Black, Indigenous and people of colour. So we only focused on this demographic even if we had a more Eurocentric audience who was listening, but then they got to learn about all these different cultures, or if it was people from these different cultures, all coming together and talking and sharing about their food and their culture. We had a representation from a lot of different cultures-- like African to Caribbean to, um, Asian like whether it was China or Korean or, um, like India or Sri Lanka.
>
> - Minnie, Culinary Director of a food advocacy organization, paid worker, Newmarket, Aug 20, 2024

Minnie spoke about programming on teach-ins and workshops that addressed racial exclusion, settler colonialism and their connections to food access. The organization she works in addresses the above social issues through advocacy and partnerships for funding collaboration, sharing communication toolkits, research partnerships and community engagement groups. Even though there were many instances where informants were clear about tending to community needs in their programming, some of my conversations with them seemed to be stuck in the maze of funding shortages; this shortage could be a result of not having a clearly defined national food policy. The government has a national food policy, but the labour of defining it, detailing it, and advocating for changes is downloaded upon these organizations. As food-based non-profits and charities vie for private gifts and government funding, programming efforts are geared towards the language of donors. The community needs that are communicated through evaluations and needs assessments could also stem from previous funding priorities, often selective in their vision. For example, some volunteers spoke of how only postal codes were noted for service seekers. Detailed research on policy or community engagement is often done at the organization's cost, since research and policy work required hiring people for the job, which needed substantial funding from donors.

Led by funding limitations, the existence of non-profit programming could indicate acts of resilience as a response to governmentality. At the same time, there is a consciousness amongst FGI women volunteers and paid workers that there is a better funding response to events on culture and recreation, as compared to food security initiatives. This political consciousness sets the base for actively looking out for community needs as a sign of resistance and proposing programs to funders for better inclusion and reach in the community. Rolling out new programs is supported actively by volunteers as they rework on themselves to learn new skills. These acts of resistance, resilience and reworking do not necessarily occur on a continuum or as distinct areas of a triad as proposed by Cindi Katz (Katz) but could exist simultaneously in the consciousness as well as in their actions. Similar acts of resistance and resilience are seen in the example in the next section. The community members, as detailed below, laterally seek help from each other to solve the issue of international student food insecurity, originally the responsibility of government and higher educational institutions that benefit from international student enrollments in Canada.

Leaders forming informal collectives to counter structural limitations

Some paid workers clearly mentioned that they saw the need for equitable food access to all residents in the York Region. Lavender, who was involved in a food bank project for her institute in York Region, mentioned that this project was initiated as some of her international students were food insecure. Her students would go to the student services section of the institute and ask if the institute could help them with access to food for the month. She said, in turn, the faculty members would be asked if they could donate and help procure food through student services. Considering how this was a very dire situation where international students were excluded from provincial or municipal food bank access because of their status (Bhugra), she worked with a student-led team to put together a food bank project in 2023. Her team would set up stalls every month and would provide tokens to students. Students could use the tokens to buy food and other essentials from their grocery stalls. A set number of tokens was provided to students when they registered for a term at the institute, which they could use for buying food and other essentials in times of need.

Lavender and I went on to discuss how a few tokens could be a compensation for food access against heavy international fees that leave them food insecure in the first place. Clearly, so much more responsibility had to be shown by systems, both institutional and federal, that benefited from

international student enrollments. Shiny, an FGI woman and a student leader in an advocacy organization, emphasized the need for food access to be an institutional responsibility.

> It is because we're in a huge crisis, not only a food crisis, but also a housing crisis, and in all crises, we need the institution's help. We are planning to ask for yearly donations. We want an agreement from them that every year, this is how much we're going to receive just for food support.
>
> - Shiny, migrant woman and paid worker from India, King City, September 17, 2024

There has been an increased academic, media and policy interest in international student experiences in Canada. Media and research publications have connected the federal government's decisions (in the last decade) on increased international student permits to the ensuing crises of food, housing and safety, leading to the eventual capping of international student targets since early 2024 (Bhugra; Nair; Chowdhury and Pasipanodya; Das Gupta and Sidhu; Bolger; Prince and Maiangwa). Many international students have advocated for community support for the continued thriving of the international student community (Prince and Maiangwa), but also committed to settler accountability and solidarity (Gharibi; Fu). Enough research and advocacy bodies urge governments and institutions at all levels to make provisions for the well-being of international students. Solutions are often led by international students to combat their lived experiences of exclusion, alienation and discrimination, faced in the form of disproportionately high international student fees ("Fairness for International Students…") in classrooms, at workplaces (Dhunna and Gill) housing, healthcare, access to services, and so much more (Huls)This was visible in my conversations with Shiny and Dora (international students themselves) about how many services the student union provides with the limited support that the institute provides.

This exclusion and discrimination can be directly related to Mbembe's understanding of the exertion of power by sovereignty (in this case, governments and institutions of power), specifically power over life and death (Mbembe and Corcoran). This power is exerted through "the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations" (Mbembe and Corcoran 69). The labour of International students is necessary to maintain the Canadian economy, as they contribute close to 1.2% of the total GDP, approximately $30 billion (Kunin and associates). Governments and institutions instrumentalize the bodies of international students through their tuition fees, living expenses and cheap, precarious labour while keeping their lives outside of livable income, food and health through state control of limited

working conditions. Barriers to gainful employment that would ensure a livable wage often force international students to accept income-led food insecurity and force them to work for cash jobs where hours are not recorded on their social insurance number, where small and medium businesses take advantage of their vulnerability. State, institutions, homeowners that rent their places and hiring organizations are complicit in the marginalization of the lives and immigrant status of often racialized international students to maintain their own lives and work as fully functional, preferred sovereign subjects (67)

Historical Black and Indigenous experiences of exclusion and alienation set a precedent for understanding collective continuance with different marginalized groups (Macelheron; Gharibi). Such collaborations can help us understand that colonial apathy towards marginalized residents is not individual instances, but rather a historical, discriminatory tool that looks at residents as resources instead of living beings that need social welfare and state protection. There are advocacy organizations that have identified the power of collectives and community collaborations. I have detailed some collaborations below:

Community collaborations and advocacy

A few organizations attempted to mobilize the community with the help of volunteers to reach people and institutions of power. These initiatives can be seen as efforts towards a broader restructuring of processes and re-imagining political changes (MacLeavy et al. 1566) for better food access and inclusion.

This observation is unique to two or three organizations that have been existing for the last two to three decades, possibly because they were able to appoint a dedicated food advocate in their organization. The person hired was to mobilize and chair conversations of different organizing groups across York Region, which would unite to advocate for food policy and funding. I joined these periodic meetings organized for this cause as a resident volunteer and gained access to networking, educational events, and materials related to food advocacy. I was able to represent personal and community needs to diverse groups and learn about political decisions and, municipal government initiatives that community organizations are partnering with to enable food access and literacy. Casey, Executive Director of a food advocacy organization and my paid worker, pointed out specific initiatives that food advocacy organizations are involved in:

Collaboration with local municipalities and members of provincial parliament (MPPs)

In an act of collective continuance and resilience, some organizations, like the one led by Casey, try to find opportunities to dialogue with local government officials and share knowledge that could be used by partner organizations working in the food services sector. Specific to the circular economy, local farms, retail, and community organizations all come together to exchange and share knowledge. Many paid workers and volunteers mentioned how there is development and sharing of resources like health and nutrition indicators (healthy menu for daycare, schools, nutritious food groups, daily nutrient requirements, etc.), organizational communication toolkits to share best practices and advocacy ideas with the non-profit community, workshops and training through conversations with politicians.

> We ask local MPPs and municipal leaders-How do we work with you, how do we [put] initiatives like Community Gardens on your radar? How do we make sure we get affordable food access into that plan. But again, you don't see it, [it is not advertised on social media]. It's just a different type of advocacy. As an organization, we are trying to figure out like, how do we better communicate what we do? In a way that people actually want to read and acknowledge and see some of the things that we've been doing. We have just created a food asset map that's available on our website. We are also going to be doing some trainings to service providers in government to use our toolkits.
>
> - Casey, Executive Director of a food advocacy organization, paid worker, Newmarket, Aug 28, 2024

Developing some tangible measures for government accountability

Casey explained that collective accountability and collegiality within an organization have helped workers and volunteers to stay on their advocacy journey over a period of time. The organization is 'reworking' by creating new ways of keeping government accountable by developing tools and report cards that measure food access and nutrition in the York region municipalities.

> The other big thing we're working on in this space is a food system report card for York Region as well. We're trying to kind of have more tangible tools. So when we're talking about advocacy and systems change, we can be more tangible by developing common indicators for grading. Our York Region food system report, released every couple of years, can show improvements. Thus, we can help to hold the government accountable.
>
> - Casey, Executive Director of a food advocacy organization, paid worker, Newmarket, Aug 28, 2024

These tangible measures of keeping government accountable can be related to the 'reworking' of going a step beyond recognizing problematic conditions (Katz 247). Katz's research creates a counter-topography to compare the everyday lives of children in Howa, rural Sudan, as against New York and how communities use strategies of resilience, resistance and reworking to adapt to changes surrounding economic restructuring and capitalism (240). Katz differentiates 'reworking' as acts of creating localized improvements without completely advocating for change or restructuring of existing structures (256). By creating common indicators to measure York Region Food systems and access to food security, non-profit organizations may not completely overhaul the neoliberal systems of food services, but are definitely trying to create localized movements to empower themselves and their communities.

Advocating for fair wages across an organization

Unique to Casey's organization was collective bargaining for wages of all employees. Advocating for uniform wages, according to Casey, was helpful in keeping wages fair in the organization by making salaries less hierarchical. She also mentioned that her wages were not much higher than the rest of the staff, and that has really helped her build meaningful work relationships with the staff.

> Umm… we as an organization have been really unusual in the sense that we have almost no staff turnover. Like, I started in the executive director role in 2020, and we've had, um, one person retire since then. We've been able to hire a handful of new staff, but we've had no other transitions of staff. It's just maybe some people are working from home a little bit more or out in the community a little bit more, but we are all here.
>
> - Casey, Executive Director of a food advocacy organization, paid worker, Newmarket, Aug 28, 2024

This sense of continuity and cohesion in staff, which she now sees being developed in the food advocacy community, has helped their collective efforts to not only work with governments at various levels but also hold the government accountable in ensuring equitable food access. Katz defines resistance as practices that produce critical consciousness to redress historically placed oppression and confront it to seek change (Katz 251). This collective bargaining by leaders in the organization to improve team cohesion and reduce turnover that is so rampant in the non-profit sector can be seen as resistance.

Conclusion

Developing oppositional consciousness, making small changes to combat systemic barriers, and making space for new solutions require collective work from all actors in food non-profit organizations, including FGI women volunteers. Understanding resilience shown by the food advocacy community and FGI women volunteers in the interviews led me back to Foucault's idea of governmentality, which positions acts of critique as a response to governmentality.

> If Governmentality is the "movement through which individuals are subjugated in the reality of a social practice through mechanisms of power that adhere to a truth", critique functions as the "movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth" (ibid. : 32). As a response to Governmentality, then, critique might be understood as an "art of navigating power relations". As one of those techniques and practices that challenge and thereby loosen the link between truth and power, critique characterizes and in turn promotes modes of subjectivity that likewise challenge self-sacrifice. It retains a critically (self-)reflective character and there-fore possesses emancipatory potential.
>
> - (Foucault qtd. in Taylor and Foucault 179)

Collective continuance and resilience shown in action by the food advocacy community have made inroads in keeping government accountable by developing non-competitive, collaborative partnerships to seek funding and develop programs. The programs developed are also rooted in community needs, as explained earlier, rather than following the top-down approach of funding allocation. Many critiques of neoliberalism have hoped for such a phenomenon, evident in their past research reports and arguments (Shields et al.; Rankin, "Governing Development"; Miraftab). It takes me back to my introductory story of trying to practice "Ichigo Ichie"- a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see the present from a holistic perspective. The critical self-reflection of working to change and utilizing each moment of non-profit volunteering may seem fleeting, transitional and episodic in efforts. As Foucault posits in the quote earlier, TSR in the community can be a negotiation, an art to navigate systemic power relations that place social welfare responsibilities on the community.

Chapter 7: Conclusion- FGI women's Community Food Work and its Relation to Governmentality and Resistance

Introduction

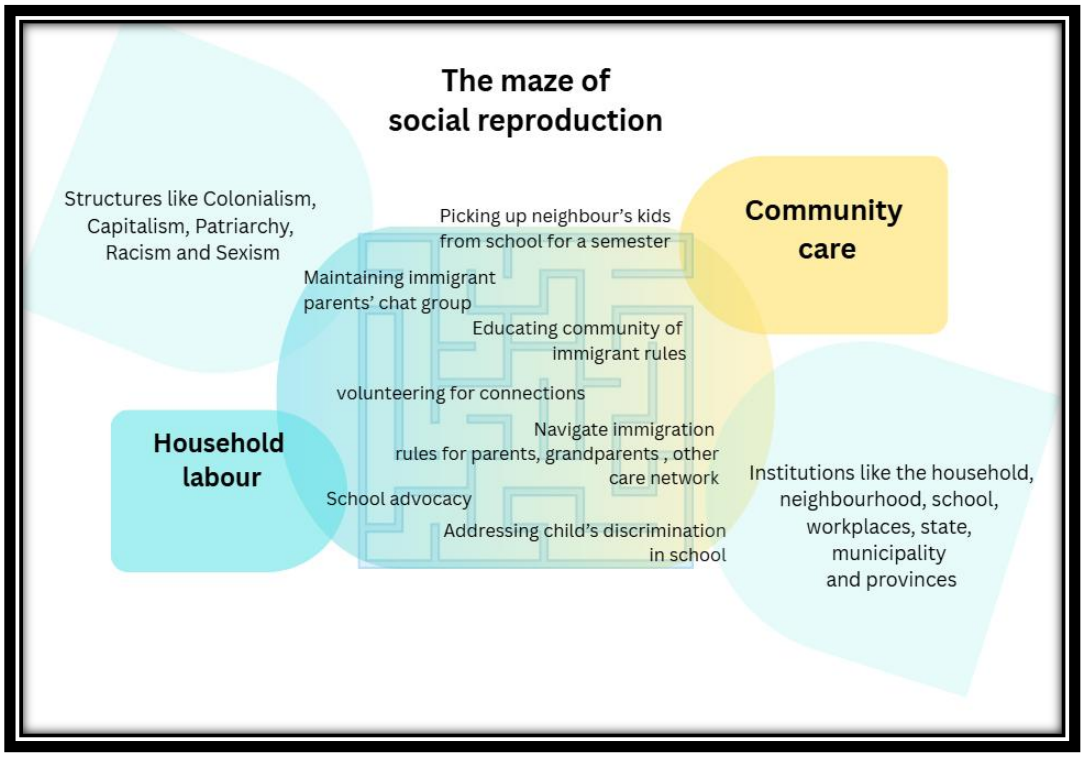
Seema is a fellow FGI mother, a newcomer to Canada and my neighbour. Her husband had to suddenly travel to India for elderly care duties. Besides social reproduction activities of cooking, cleaning and childcare, she has been navigating supporting her child who's missing his father and taking on additional duties that would have been done by her husband. Seema and her son are also navigating a new neighbourhood, a new school, seasonal weather changes and isolating winter storms. As an FGI on a work visa, she also must navigate socio-economic and structural limitations that keep her family from seeking preferred housing, transport, and social life.

As a fellow FGI woman and mother, I have been helping her and other people with similar needs whenever they reach out to me. This is not an everyday phenomenon; these favours could be episodic. Sometimes, it is picking her child up along with mine, getting him home and ensuring he is fed along with my daughter. They have impromptu play dates until Seema can pick him up, after an hour or so. Sometimes it is to help another parent by picking their child up and getting them home from school. Sometimes, there are pyjama parties at my home, where one or two children might have a sleepover if a fellow FGI mother must get to an early work shift and I drop all the children off at school. I also rely on fellow FGI mothers when I am in a similar need. Seema has helped me pick my daughter up from the bus stop if I am late from work due to unforeseen circumstances. She has also helped me with childcare, occasionally. These are temporary social reproduction activities – done in transience, which may occur in the same spatial sites of my childcare- my home, the neighbourhood park, library, etc. But the timing and nature of work change. I have defined these activities as part of transience in social reproduction - temporary activities that often get subsumed under broadly defined activities of social reproduction like cooking, cleaning, childcare, eldercare, volunteering, advocacy, etc. Transience in social reproduction (TSR) described above is fleeting, periodic work performed by FGI women in addition to social reproduction activities that are part of their routine. These episodic exchanges of help might be observed in other instances of community social reproduction, but I am situating TSR from my observations as an FGI woman and a volunteer in the community.

Mapping transience in social reproduction

Supportive transitional exchanges between FGI community members are not necessarily isolated incidents; they must be seen as effects of governmentality, in which social welfare support and access to many welfare-state services are selectively provided. For example, for many newcomer services, one needs to have permanent residency to access employment services, free language lessons, settlement services, etc. Immigrants on temporary work visas who have the intention to settle in Canada may not have this support.

Figure 1: The maze of social reproduction



Government policies affect social reproduction activities of marginalized women, increasing unpaid labour, adding to the "core" of everyday activities. In addition, structural factors such as governmental regulations on labour, systemic racism faced by the self, family and community, immigrant status regulations and unforeseen emergencies, such as COVID-19 or death in the family, can add to their unpaid labour. The issues presented could be new and different each time, could be brief but recurring, which is why I use the word "transience". However, the additional labour involved cannot be easily added to the existing roster of social reproduction activities, nor easily

defined, as they are constantly changing, with different structures of dominance. The carer navigates their labour through a maze of dominant structures surrounding care work in a household, community and their intersections. Centering, for example, my social reproduction activity of childcare, I have created above a graphical Canva sketch of this maze of activities, of what I call, "The maze of social reproduction".

The activities of filling in for neighbourhood school pick-ups, navigating travel and housing arrangements of immigrant parents and grandparents following changes in family emergencies, immigration rules, etc., volunteering and advocacy in schools, navigating discrimination faced by one's children in school and many such activities are episodic, unique, temporal, yet warrant recurring in some form or the other. These appear in the centre of the graphic and contribute to community care. My "core" everyday childcare activities include ensuring timely food, fresh clothing, weather-appropriate accessories, school pickups and drop-offs for my daughter, and management of after-school activities including martial arts training, swimming, tennis, cultural dance, music and religious activities on an everyday basis. These are part of regular household labour. There could be days of sickness, conversations to support my daughter's emotional needs, maybe school bus issues involving some additional adjustments. Such TSR activities get buried under regular childcare and are often affected by structures, institutions and other environmental elements.

Situated knowledge of social reproduction

The transient nature of social reproduction work is relevant for me and other FGI women who volunteer in local neighbourhoods and for me. It brings out nuances of unpaid care, which may not be applicable universally. Also, geographies detail unpaid care in specific ways. My research was largely situated in York Region municipalities. Ethnic concentrations, socio-economic situation, race, immigrant status and other social variables can differ across different geographies. I have tried to address the following research questions in this thesis.

1. Amidst demanding household labour, what makes FGI women volunteer in the area of food work in the York Region?
2. Within the frame of the pandemic, what were the FGI women's volunteer experiences of food work?
3. How can community food work be conceptualized as social reproduction?

4. How does community food work by FGI women position them as active agents?
5. How is community food work by FGI women implicated within the settler colonial, neoliberal context?

When I went into the field with these research questions, it was open-ended, following a research guide that had prompts for all the above questions. Participants focused on their volunteer experiences, their knowledge of food programs, funding cutbacks and reconceptualized social reproduction labour in their own way.

Limitation in this study

A limitation I faced was related to finding data on the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on community work. Because isolation was a requirement, many volunteers, often vulnerable due to pre-existing health conditions, were asked to stay away. This resulted in a shortage of volunteers across community food programs, which were still running as an "essential business". I was unable to get details on volunteer experiences during that time, though I have information that I have shared in earlier chapters. But I was told by paid workers that the lack of volunteers placed enormous stress on the running of food programs, and they had to be modified at very short notice. Many essential programs also had to be shut down if modifications were not possible. Volunteers who were delivery drivers were the most sought after at that time, so they could help drop off food and essentials. There were conversations on government regulations to ensure safety measures, but there was silence on the government addressing food access needs during that period.

A second limitation in my study is a lack of layered analysis with caste in the fieldwork interviews. In centering FGI women volunteers and problematizing governmentality, transience in social reproduction, and resistance-resilience-reworking narratives, my presence as a caste-privileged individual in the research dynamics was reduced and inadequately addressed. I focused on self-problematizing (Dixit 387–88) my caste privilege in my auto-ethnographic accounts, but could not engage with caste efficiently in my fieldwork analysis. I present the concept of epistemic impunity to explain my self-problematization attempt in this thesis. Anukriti Dixit defines epistemic impunity as a freedom enjoyed by socially privileged researchers where they are permitted to produce "knowledge" while completely ignoring the history, context, and agency of marginalized groups (Dixit 382). Through this definition, Dixit explains how caste-privileged researchers can afford to omit caste from their analysis due to their privileged positions. She encourages caste-privileged

researchers to address their caste impunity by self- problematization throughout the research process, going beyond addressing privileges in their positionality (388). This will help a privileged researcher to understand the omissions related to social barriers that are missing from their own lived experiences and affect research with marginalized groups. Self-problematizing helped me think of a possibility where I could reorient caste in future studies of food work, moving beyond self -reflection and autoethnography to dissect structural limitations food work could entail in caste-disadvantaged diaspora.

Governmentality and the transitory nature of FGI women's volunteer work

An important learning for myself and my social reproduction labour through this study has been acknowledging the existence of transiency and its connection to governmentality (discussed in chapter five). By highlighting nuances in social reproduction activities, I attempt to go further than add to the existing knowledge on social reproduction by other feminists. I took on this project to understand how my care labour and the volunteer labour of other FGI women working in the community can be implicated in the dominant structures of neoliberalism, capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy. Across field notes and my analysis, governmentality and its impacts were dominant in community social reproduction, corroborating my literature review.

It is important to underline the mutual influences of neoliberalism, capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy. Each of these systemic structures uniquely affects FGI women's labour as I have discussed over the course of earlier chapters. Specific to community work, the ethical power of neoliberalism (Bloom) seemed to be dominant in my research. Bloom explains the ethical power of neoliberalism and its reliance on social justice ethics in the community to perpetuate its existence.

> … "What particular ethics does neoliberalism crucially depend upon structurally and subjectively for its continuation and expansion?" It is not a coincidence that the "inevitable" advancement of the market into every corner of the globe and all spheres of social existence has been met with a flowering of desire for social justice and greater individual morality...If neoliberalism is totally devoted to the market ideologically, it nonetheless requires a decidedly nonmarket "ethical" subject for its perpetuation. More precisely, it benefits from the construction of individuals and groups who, due to their ethical beliefs, are willing to regularly and creatively help resolve the deep moral problems caused by neoliberalism.
>
> - (Bloom 37–38)

Overwhelming reliance on volunteers, many of them being FGI women, is a stark reality of food-based non-profit organizations. Every single participant was aware of this fact and their role as an "ethical" subject. Most research participants pointed out funding issues that led to many program changes that had been beneficial to needy community members. There was some dissatisfaction with how governments handled social welfare specific to food insecurity and access. However, they were more focused on their personal accountability towards issues of food insecurity and food access and kept reiterating the importance of food as a basic human right. Some FGI women who were long-term residents of Canada were well-read on the political environment, health, and access issues surrounding food. I learnt about the existence of community gardens, local grocery store sales, and offers. Some FGI women also shared information on terminologies surrounding the "organic" definition of food, ideas on circular economy, nutrition guides for children and families offered in school by the government and innovations they have observed in agriculture. Due to limitations and scope surrounding my current research focus, I hope to revisit this subject for further analysis as a future project.

There is little accountability expected from local governments and charities that fund programs. Accountability towards oneself as a resident of a particular neighbourhood, or as a worker with a food advocacy organization, was more visible. As mentioned in previous chapters, participants focused on personal benefits to volunteering like community connections, gaining "Canadian" experience, battling social isolation, improving language skills, etc. Conversations went back to state supports and supportive communities that helped them settle in as newcomers.

This paradox of accountability to self and lesser expectations from state structures seems to work well for the perpetuation of neoliberalism, while community residents bear the load of social welfare. This relates to Foucault's idea of how governments use power to discipline citizens and ensure they comply with neoliberal policies (Foucault and Rabinow 66). The same bodies are disciplined and excluded if they resist powers that perpetuate neoliberalism (182). Using the empirical case of community-based waste collection strategies by municipal governments in Cape Town, South Africa, Miraftab explains this paradox.

> By reducing notions of empowerment and participation to individualized and economic change, neo-liberal governance depoliticizes emancipatory concepts [such as community empowerment]; meanwhile, to seek legitimacy for its acts, it adopts a socially concerned posture of social upliftment that politicizes decisions that government technocrats, policy makers and planners have traditionally claimed as mundane and technical. These sorts of

> double moves—depoliticization/politicization; inclusion/exclusion—are an important feature of neo-liberalism, highlighting the paradox of its policy processes and framework.
>
> - (Miraftab 16)

The waste collection strategies involved the gendered labour of unpaid or underpaid township workers, with unpaid volunteers mostly being women (Miraftab 13). The women volunteers in the study were not clearly told that this was volunteer work yet continued to work in the hope that one day the work would be economically compensated. This study, conducted between 1997-2001, is relevant even today, as volunteerism has more economic benefits for governments than workers. FGI women in my research were well aware of not being compensated but still narrated their benefits for volunteering and accountability of themselves towards community welfare.

Transience in social reproduction as a way to resist the impacts of governmentality

As discussed in earlier chapters, governmentality imposes precarity on community food services. Food-based non-profit organizations work in a limited space. There is an unreliable environment of funding owing to a lack of a clearly defined national food policy. Volunteers take on initiatives that provide financial benefits for the organization.

As I have detailed in chapter four, FGI women volunteers perform various tasks that do not have a defined job description. They not only help in successfully conducting programs but also help organizations with direct and indirect financial benefits. For example, with their local knowledge of neighbourhoods, they impact the catchment areas where services are provided. With their knowledge, FGI women volunteers provide information about community needs and draw in more members. Volunteer memberships impact the quality and continuity of services to service-seekers.

Both volunteers and paid workers perform various activities to reduce the impact of cuts in governmental funding. Organizations have recently started empowering volunteers through paid honoraria, co-lead positions, and encouraging choice of work. This honours the work done by volunteers in a more tangible, economic way. Being able to choose tasks helps them ground their efforts towards particular goals. Racialized paid workers shared ideas for programs that centred on addressing marginalization and discrimination. These translate into specific programs that directly address issues faced by specific marginalized communities. There are also instances of establishing informal collectives to discuss structural limitations related to food access and advocacy. These

community collaborations and advocacy take the form of partnerships with local municipalities and provincial MPPs to enforce the development of some tangible measures for government accountability. Petitions, development and sharing of toolkits, and meetings with local members of parliament and municipalities are examples of ensuring accountability.

Future of (unpaid community) work

Current conversations on the existence of a national food policy since 2019 have been geared towards reducing household insecurity (Martin and Andrée; Tarasuk, Li, et al.). The Government of Canada, in its budget since 2024, has recognized the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on increasing issues of food insecurity, exacerbated by income insecurity (Department of Finance, Canada). The five-year report on National Food Policy and the current 2026 budget declare increased funding and benefits to improve agricultural infrastructure, the National School Food Program, and build community resilience (Environment and Climate Change, Canada)Canada's Food Guide, a Government of Canada website, provides comprehensive recipes, grocery shopping, health information, nutrition labels and healthy eating recipes (Health Canada). These initiatives are current and have only been visible recently.

The National Food Pathways was another important initiative by the government to reduce food insecurity and build better food infrastructure. The document lays down key goals related to post-pandemic food insecurity that include elimination of hunger, reducing food waste, and building better Indigenous food and health systems, to name a few. Community and citizen-led projects are key conversations in the document, and non-profits are specifically funded for the same. As a goal to support local food economies and a strong workforce, the government posits below statement,

> Canada invests in context-relevant support for local community food systems that support vibrant communities across the country. For example, the $60-million Local Food Infrastructure Fund (LFIF), launched under the Food Policy for Canada, is aimed at community-based, not-for-profit organizations with a mission to reduce food insecurity by establishing and strengthening local food systems. The LFIF is supporting a wide range of community-led projects that improve access to safe, nutritious, and culturally diverse food, such as greenhouses, community kitchens, projects at food banks, and projects that increase access to traditional foods that are led by Indigenous communities.
>
> - (Agriculture and Agri-Food, Canada)

For local food projects to succeed, unpaid community work is essential. It is important to recognize volunteer work not just as a social welfare action but also as an important economic driver

for the non-profit food sector that warrants compensation. I discussed this point in chapter four and earlier in the conclusion. I observed in the field that one worker is able to enlist the help of four to five volunteers. I have also elaborated on how volunteers bear expenses for driving, occasionally bringing in products and working longer hours without asking for reimbursements.

And finally, there is the question of how artificial intelligence can affect social reproduction. Future of work conversations on how AI will affect paid employment are a popular academic and community focus. However, AI impact, its literacy, and accountability in unpaid care is a conversation of urgency as well. I recently contributed a chapter on AI and Social reproduction, where I discuss the impacts of AI on transnational social reproduction in my household (Raji-Kalyanaraman, "AI for a Just World"). My chapter centered on border control of racialized immigrants and its impact on social reproduction. The book is supposed to be published in the latter half of this year. Nuances on artificial intelligence and its impact on community work and the re-organization of the non-profit sector are an important conversation that needs to be a focus for volunteers, workers, employers, municipalities and the state.

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Appendix 1 – Consent Form – FGI women participants

Informed Consent Form – FGI Women Participants

Date: May 13, 2024

Study Name: Pandemic, Immigration and Social reproduction: Unpaid Food Work of first-generation Immigrant Women in the Community

Researchers: Shruti Kalyanaraman, principal Investigator and PhD candidate, Gender Feminist and Women's Studies Program, skalyan@yorku.ca. Graduate supervisor – Dr.Tania Das Gupta , tdasgu@yorku.ca

Purpose of the Research: •

- To understand the experiences of first-generation immigrant women who volunteer in food advocacy organizations, and/ or do volunteer work around food security in the community
- To understand the unpaid labour of first-generation immigrant women around food and hunger
- To understand women's unpaid labour in sustaining families and communities
- To understand women's community work as mother-work
- To understand the environment of food advocacy, its purposes, challenges and opportunities
- To understand key influencers reflections in the food advocacy environment and around volunteer labour

The research will be presented and reported in the forms of class presentation, dissertation, article, conference presentation, report, etc.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research:

- Research participants will be interviewed through a set of open-ended questions on their journey in the field of food advocacy
- Topics will include their entry into food work, experiences in volunteering or working in the sector, advantages, limitations, experiences of working in the pre-pandemic, pandemic and post-pandemic period
- Interview will last for about 2 hours
- For their time participants will be provided a $25 gift card, that can be used towards grocery

and essential items

Risks and Discomforts:

Participants are made to be aware of this situation: Certain questions or conversations may spark emotional or psychological discomfort. It may make one angry, sad or uncomfortable. Participants can skip any questions that spark these emotions. Below is a link to a set of resources, that could help them reach out for help to process psychological and emotional stresses that could arise from the interview questions:
Mental Health resources can be sought through Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) website:
Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You: This research does not claim to have monetary benefits (except for a $25 gift card to respect your time) or life-changing benefits for the participants. Labour by the food advocacy volunteers, especially immigrant women's unpaid labour in the community is often invisible. This research could put their volunteering experiences on the map and help develop mutually beneficial relationships in the food advocacy community.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal: *Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer, to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions will not influence the [treatment you may be receiving] [nature of the ongoing relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff] nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future. For their time, participants will be provided a $25 gift card, that can be used towards grocery and essential items.*

Notes to potential participants:

"If you stop participating, you will still be eligible to receive the $25 gift card for agreeing to be in the project, even if you withdraw without completion of the research. Should you wish to withdraw after the study, you will have the option to also withdraw your data up until the analysis is complete.

Confidentiality: *Unless you choose otherwise, all information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Your email IDs maybe collected, to send you the gift cards, in case you prefer it that way. The information will be destroyed latest by April 30, 2026 or earlier, if the study is completed.*

The principal investigator will keep a link that identifies you to your coded information, but this link will be kept secure and available only to the principal investigator and/or selected members of the research team. Any information that can identify you will remain confidential.

Any collected in the form of handwritten notes, audio tapes, digital device like recorders or zoom will be secure and accessible only by the researcher and the supervisor. Your data will be safely stored in a locked facility and only research staff/research team members will have access to this information. Recordings (audio) will be saved in a password protected file to research team members' local computer and related devices, not the cloud-based service.The data will be stored in a non-cloud offline databank, like computer hard drive, external hard drive and will be destroyed latest by April 30, 2026 or earlier, if the study is completed.

Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

"Teleconferencing/videoconferencing technology has some privacy and security risks. It is possible that information could be intercepted by unauthorized people (hacked) or otherwise shared by accident. This risk can't be completely eliminated. We want to make you aware of this. If you are concerned about this, we would be happy to make alternative arrangements (where possible) for you to participate, perhaps via telephone. Please contact Shruti Kalyanaraman at – shruti86@yorku.ca and/or 647-323-8186 for further information.

Please note that it is the expectation that participants agree not to make any unauthorized recordings of the content of a meeting / data collection session.

Questions About the Research? *If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact Dr. Tania Das Gupta either by telephone at 416-736-2100 Ext: 66345 or by e-mail* tdasgu@yorku.ca*. You may also contact the Program in Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies Department at Dr.Patricia Wood gpdgfws@yorku.ca and/or Yemi Adebisi, gpagfws@yorku.ca.This research has received ethics review and approval by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board 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 Manager, Research Ethics in the Office of Research Ethics, York University (e-mail ore@yorku.ca). This office oversees the ethical conduct of research studies and is not part of the study team. Everything that you discuss will be kept confidential*. **Legal Rights and Signatures**:

I_____, consent to participate in "*Pandemic, Immigration and Social reproduction"* conducted by *Shruti Kalyanaraman*. I have understood the nature of this project and

wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature _____ **Date** _____

Participant

Signature _____ **Date** _____

Principal Investigator

Additional consent (where applicable)

You must seek additional consent by including check boxes or requesting additional signatures for the following:

1. **Audio recording**

☐ **I consent to the audio-recording of my interview(s).**

2. **Consent to provide contact information for gift cards delivery. This contact information will be deleted as soon as I receive the gift card.**

☐ **I consent to sharing my contact information for the purpose of delivery of gift cards.**

3. **Consent to use of quotes**

I consent to the use of quotations in any final reports/ publications of the research? Y / N

Appendix 2 : Informed Consent Form- Paid Worker

Informed Consent Form – Paid Worker

Date: May 13, 2024

Study Name: Pandemic, Immigration and Social reproduction: Unpaid Food Work of first-generation Immigrant Women in the Community

Researchers: Shruti Kalyanaraman, principal Investigator and PhD candidate, Gender Feminist and Women's Studies Program, skalyan@yorku.ca. Graduate supervisor – Dr.Tania Das Gupta , tdasgu@yorku.ca

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The research will be presented and reported in the forms of class presentation, dissertation, article, conference presentation, report, etc.

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- Topics will include their entry into food work, experiences with volunteering or working in the sector, advantages, limitations, experiences of working in the pre-pandemic, pandemic and post-pandemic period
- Interview will last for about 2 hours
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and essential items

Risks and Discomforts:

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Mental Health resources can be sought through Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) website: CLICK HERE.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You: This research does not claim to have monetary benefits (except for a $25 gift card to respect your time) or life-changing benefits for the participants. Labour by the food advocacy volunteers, especially immigrant women's unpaid labour in the community is often invisible. This research could put their volunteering experiences on the map and help develop mutually beneficial relationships in the food advocacy community.

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Confidentiality: *Unless you choose otherwise, all information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Your email IDs maybe collected, to send you the gift cards, in case you prefer it that way. The information will be destroyed latest by April 30, 2026 or earlier, if the study is completed.*

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Any collected in the form of handwritten notes, audio tapes, digital device like recorders or zoom will be secure and accessible only by the researcher and the supervisor. Your data will be safely stored in a locked facility and only research staff/research team members will have access to this information. Recordings (audio) will be saved in a password protected file to research team members' local computer and related devices, not the cloud-based service.The data will be stored in a non-cloud offline databank, like computer hard drive, external hard drive and will be destroyed latest by April 30, 2026 or earlier, if the study is completed.

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Signature_____ Date_____

Participant

Signature_____ Date_____

Principal Investigator

Additional consent (where applicable)

You must seek additional consent by including check boxes or requesting additional signatures for the following:

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3. **Consent to use of quotes**

I consent to the use of quotations in any final reports/ publications of the research? Y / N

Appendix 3 : Interview Guide – FGI women

WARM UP-10 MINUTES (Time durations are not absolute, just flexible and suggestive)

This is where I introduce myself, and my topic, I take permission to record the conversation and get the consent form filled, if not done earlier.

Objective is to make the participants feel comfortable:

1. Tell me something about yourself, your dislikes and hobbies
2. Life in general
3. Migration stories
4. Daily routine- food work
5. Household information

BROAD UNDERSTANDING-25 MINS

The topic I am discussing is very close to your life and there might be many private questions that you may not want to share or share. I would urge you to feel comfortable and share your experiences, and opinions. I will respect your experiences, ideology and opinions, on the topic.

1. How did you start volunteering in food organizations?
   a. I encourage them to go on with phrases, words for some time and try not to interrupt.
2. How easy/ difficult was it to get into this volunteering? Probes-negotiations, challenges they had to overcome?
3. When it comes to volunteering, does one need support? Probes-Can you share some incidences of how people around you supported you?
4. Did you voluntarily choose to work in the community?

Make note of any instances you may need clarification for and wait for them to finish before I ask questions

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY FOOD WORK AND PLACING IT IN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR UNPAID WORK-25 MINS

If I say the word “community food work”, what comes to your mind (noting down in terms of mind mapping, listing their thoughts and ideas) For each phrase, I will ask them to elaborate. I offer them paper, crayons or pencils, in case they want to note down their thoughts

5. Is working at home, different as compared to the community? Why do you feel so?
6. Why do you like this place of work as compared to others? Probes- As a volunteer myself, I often am overworked at home, hence this question
7. Do you think working in the community outside the home, helps you work at home and take care of children? Does it help you for yourself or care for others?

BEING A COMMUNITY FOOD ADVOCATE-30 MINS

8. What is food advocacy? Have you heard of this term? Probes- who are food volunteers? Why is their work important?

Personification

Let us have an interesting exercise, if a food advocate/ community food worker walked into this room, what would the person look like? Please explain what their personality would be? Note to self: DO NOT PROMPT, but be alert for mentions around margins of space, gender, ability, class, race, religion and other identities and ask further.

- What is your ideal world of food access?
- Where would food advocates or workers live?
- If there is a world of food advocacy, what will it look like?
- Who will live in this world? What will their environment be?
- What kind of moods or feelings will be present around?
- What kind of images will be there?
- How do you see yourself as a community food worker or advocate (CFW/A)?
- How do others in the family, community see you as a CFW/A? Does it matter?
- How important is this work to you? Can you share some incidences of how it contributed to your life in general?

PANDEMIC FOOD WORK AND THE IMPACT IN COMMUNITY- 20 MINUTES

9. Have you been volunteering in food work or in other areas of community work, before or during the pandemic?
10. Is this experience, different than before the pandemic?
11. What happened during the pandemic? Can you comment if it changed the way you looked at advocacy and volunteering?

Note to self: DO NOT PROMPT INITIALLY, but be alert for mentions around margins of space, gender, ability, class, race, religion and other identities and ask them to comment further.

INFORMATION FOR VOLUNTEERS IN FOOD ADVOCACY- 5 MINUTES

12. If there's someone who has not volunteered in food advocacy before, what specific experience would you like to share with them to make their journey better?

13. What should they avoid?

TRACE ANY STORIES/ EXAMPLES OF THEIR OWN AND DOCUMENT THE SAME

OPINIONS/AWARENESS AROUND FOOD POLICIES- 5 MINUTES

14. Do you get to know about food policies that are discussed/implemented in the organization?
15. Experience with food advocacy (actions, recommendations, program actions) trends over a period of time. Share examples and ask opinions around advocacy- breakfast programs, fresh food markets, gardening, etc.

At the end of the interview, I have a short form for you to tick. It contains basic information about you as a person, only for my analysis and research purposes. You choose to answer questions based on your comfort.

Thank you for giving your valuable time! I will be in touch with you if you would like to know more about the research.

Appendix 4 : Interview guide – Paid Worker

Discussion guide and questions:

WARM UP-10 MINUTES (Time durations are not absolute, just flexible and suggestive)

This is where I introduce myself and my topic. I take permission to record the conversation and get the consent form filled, if not done earlier. Objective is to make the participants feel comfortable:

1. Tell me something about yourselves-likes, dislikes and hobbies
    1. Life in general
    2. Daily routine- food work

BROAD UNDERSTANDING-25 MINS

The topic I am discussing is very close to your life and there might be many private questions that you may not want to share or share. I would urge you to feel comfortable and share your experiences, and opinions. I will respect your experiences, ideology, and opinions, on the topic.

2. How did you start working in food organizations?
    1. Probes-Can you share a little more about your job duties? Is it a paid, or unpaid position?- what do you like about your work, anything you would change?

I encourage them to continue with phrases, and words for some time and try not to interrupt.

3. How easy/ difficult was it to get into this organization?
    1. Probes-negotiations, challenges they had to overcome
4. How would you describe the work you do? Note information on sector, food work or advocacy as an NGO
5. How is you work and the work that volunteers do different? Can you give me some examples…?

Make note of any instances you may need clarification for and wait for them to finish before I ask questions

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY FOOD WORK AND PLACING IT IN THE CONTEXT OF FOOD ADVOCACY-25 MINS

If I say the word “community food work”, what comes to your mind (noting down in terms of mind mapping, listing their thoughts and ideas)

For each phrase, I will ask them to elaborate.

6. What community programs does your organisation have?
7. Is there a particular one that is your favourite? Can you elaborate
8. Would you slot any of these programs in the space of advocacy? Can you share your reasons
9. Food advocacy, in current times versus future- What attributes would you like to keep and change or add to? What would you change about food advocacy? What are the good things that you would like the sector to continue doing?
10. Where do you place volunteers in the world of food work, advocacy?
11. Within volunteers, do you see differences in labour and social circumstances of first-generation immigrant women?
12. I have understood from my research that working in the community in areas like food, feels like doing care work , mother work – do you also feel the same?
13. What kind of food work goes on in the community and organizations?

14. What kind of labour takes place at home? Do you, as a paid worker, also think you are doing care work outside of home? Can you elaborate on your reasons?
15. How is volunteer work and paid work in food advocacy different?

BEING A COMMUNITY FOOD ADVOCATE-30 MINS

16. What is food advocacy to you? Note synonyms, explanations, etc.

Personification-Let us have an interesting exercise: if a food advocate/ community food worker walked into this room, what would the person look like? Please explain what their personality would be? Note to self: DO NOT PROMPT, but be alert for mentions around margins of space, gender, ability, class, race, religion and other identities and ask further.

- Where would food advocates or workers live?
- If there is a world of food advocacy, what will it look like?
- Who will live in this world? What will their environment be?
- What kind of moods or feelings will be present around?
- What kind of images will be there?
- How do you see yourself as a community food worker or advocate (CFW/A)?

17. Do you see volunteers as food advocates? How do they contribute to the food advocacy goals of your organization?
18. How important is volunteer contribution or work to you? Can you share some instances of how it contributed to the organization in general?
19. When it comes to the work of immigrant women, do you see any particular differences in their labour, their contribution?
20. How is food work a way to get involved in the community?
21. How are FGI women collaborating as volunteers with paid workers in food work organizations?

PANDEMIC FOOD WORK AND THE IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY- 10 MINUTES

22. Did the pandemic change things in the organization?

Prompts- changes in areas of- funding, working with volunteers, labour, community, partnerships

23. Have you been working in food work or in other areas of community work, before or during the pandemic?
24. Is this experience different than before the pandemic?
25. What happened during the pandemic? Can you comment if it changed the way you looked at advocacy and work?
26. How did you negotiate your work during the time?

Note to self: DO NOT PROMPT INITIALLY, but be alert for mentions around margins of space, gender, ability, class, race, religion and other identities and ask them to comment further. Within the frame of the pandemic, what were the community advocates particular experiences of food work?

INFORMATION FOR VOLUNTEERS IN FOOD ADVOCACY-10 MINUTES

27. If there's someone who has not volunteered in food advocacy before, what specific experience would you like to share with them to make their journey better? What should they avoid?
28. Do you see specific issues, challenges, and strengths that FGI women can bring into advocacy?

TRACE ANY STORIES/ EXAMPLES OF THEIR OWN AND DOCUMENT THE SAME

OPINIONS/NAVIGATIONS/AWARENESS AROUND FOOD POLICIES- 5 MINUTES

29. How do you follow trends on food policies that are discussed/implemented in the organization and in the field of food advocacy?
30. Experience with food advocacy trends over a period of time

Thank you for giving your valuable time! I will be in touch with you if you would like to know more about the research.