

Nourishing Roots:
From Food Insecurity Towards Food Sovereignty for Toronto's Black diasporic community

By

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We acknowledge and respect the Lək'wəḡən (Songhees and X^wsepsəm/ Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək'wəḡən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the capacity-building needs required to advance food sovereignty as a strategy for reducing food insecurity within Toronto's Black diaspora. While existing research documents disproportionately high rates of food insecurity among Black Canadians, less attention has been paid to the skills, resources, and structural supports needed to sustain community-led food systems. Using Toronto as a case study, this research employs a mixed-methods approach combining questionnaire data and semi-structured interviews with individuals engaged across the food system, including community leaders, farmers, food workers, policy actors, and advocates. Findings highlight land access, household income stability, and sustained funding for Black-serving organizations as central priorities, alongside the importance of culturally grounded education, youth engagement, and policy reform. The study situates these findings within Critical Race Theory, Community Development Theory, and food sovereignty scholarship, arguing that advancing food sovereignty requires coordinated structural, community, and institutional action beyond short-term emergency food access interventions.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Figures.....	vi
Dedication.....	viii
Acknowledgements.....	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Problem Statement and Significance of Contribution	1
Purpose, Scope, and Research Questions	4
Main Research Question:.....	4
Secondary Questions:.....	5
Structure of Thesis	5
Positionality Statement	6
“Canada” and “Toronto”	8
On Blackness	9
Chapter 2: Background	11
Black Communities in Toronto.....	11
Food Justice	11
Black Food Sovereignty Movement	14
Policy Landscape: Shaping Black Food Sovereignty	15
Historical Antecedents of Food Security	17
Chapter 3: Literature Review.....	19
Introduction.....	19
Mapping the Process	19
Overview of Literature on Food Sovereignty	19
Black Food Sovereignty.....	24
Capacity Building	26
Theoretical, Conceptual, and Analytical Frameworks.....	28
Food Sovereignty as a Conceptual Framework for Assessing Integrated Food Systems	29
Chapter 4: Methodology, Methods, and Data Analysis.....	33
Methodology	33
Methods and Tasks	34
Data Analysis	35

Trustworthiness, Reliability, and Validity: Ensuring Data Quality	36
Ethical and Research Review.....	38
Strengths and Limitations	38
Strengths	38
Limitations	39
Chapter 5: Findings.....	40
Introduction.....	40
Quantitative Findings: Participant demographics.....	40
Quantitative Findings: Priority Areas for Advancing Black Food Sovereignty	42
Qualitative Findings: Topical Insights.....	43
Determinants of Food Security	44
Intervention Strategies	45
Defining Food Sovereignty.....	46
Chapter 6: Discussion and Analysis	49
Thematic Analysis	49
Answering the Research Questions	55
Main Research Question:.....	55
Secondary Questions:.....	56
Revisiting the Conceptual/Analytical Framework.....	63
New Themes and Ideas for Future Research	64
Summary.....	65
Chapter 7: Conclusion.....	66
Strategic and Research Implications.....	66
Final Reflections	66
References.....	68
Appendices.....	82
Appendix A: Questionnaire	82
Appendix B: Interview Questions.....	98
Appendix C: Recruitment Materials	100
1) Social Media Post	100
2) Email Recruitment	101
Appendix D: Ethics Certificate.....	102
Appendix E: Consent Forms.....	103
1) Questionnaire Consent Form	103
2) Interview Consent Form	111

List of Figures

Figure 1: Percentage of people living in food-insecure households by racial/cultural identity & Indigenous status in the ten provinces, 2024	25
Figure 2: Food Sovereignty Conceptual Framework	30
Figure 3: Highest level of formal education attained or in progress.....	41
Figure 4: Participant household income range.....	42
Figure 5: Resources or supports most needed to improve food security/sovereignty in Black communities	43

List of Tables

Table 1: Food Regime—Food Movement Matrix	12
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Dedication

First and foremost, I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Kathene Johnson-Henry, B.Sc.—for keeping me nourished, in every sense of the word, and for raising me with a curious and determined spirit.

To my sisters and my grandmother, who always gather around good food and who have inspired me to learn, grow, and explore my passions with love and integrity.

To the folks at MakeWay Foundation, thank you for trusting me to start another degree while working full-time. And to FoodShare Toronto, thank you for supporting me through the final stages of writing—providing a work environment that allowed me to ground this academic work in real, everyday practice.

To my peers in the MACD program, though we only saw each other once a year in person, your unwavering encouragement, humour, and commiseration sustained me from day one.

“We’ve always been involved in food, because food is a very basic necessity, and it’s the stuff that revolutions are made of.”—David Hilliard, former Chief of Staff, Black Panther Party (Hilliard, 2011, as cited in Broad, 2016)

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research explores the specific capacity-building needs of Toronto’s Black diasporic communities, with a focus on improving food security through the advancement of Black food sovereignty. Using Toronto—home to the largest population of Black individuals in Canada and the country's only municipal Black Food Sovereignty Plan—as a primary case study, this research identifies effective strategies and necessary capacities to empower these communities. By examining Toronto’s unique context, this study provides insights into the capacity-building efforts required to support community-led urban food sovereignty initiatives.

Problem Statement and Significance of Contribution

This research addresses the significant and multifaceted problem of food insecurity within Toronto's Black diasporic community. The United Nations has identified *Zero Hunger by 2030* as one of its Sustainable Development Goals, and despite Canada's reputation for high living standards, hunger and food insecurity remain alarmingly prevalent, disproportionately affecting Black communities. According to studies conducted by PROOF (2024), in 2023, 40.4% of Black Canadians live in households experiencing food insecurity, a steep increase from 22.4% in 2021, and almost double the percentage of white Canadians. In 2024, Li, Fafard, and Tarasuk reviewed 2023 census data, reporting that 46.3% of Black Canadian youth were living in food insecure households, also the highest of any demographic group. 2024 statistics analyzed by PROOF (2025) show that 46.7% of Black Canadians live in food insecure households, but they do not provide specific breakdowns for youth by race. This issue is compounded by systemic barriers, historical inequities, and socio-economic challenges that undermine the ability of Black communities to create and sustain equitable solutions that advance food sovereignty—the right to “healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” (Black Food Sovereignty Alliance, 2024).

Food sovereignty has gained traction in marginalized communities as a way to decolonize food systems, regain cultural autonomy, and promote self-sufficiency. For urban Black communities, working towards food sovereignty can provide a sustainable framework for improving food security by allowing communities to take control of their food systems. This approach aligns with the significant advancements and support seen in the Indigenous food

sovereignty movement, which emphasizes the importance of cultural traditions and local knowledge in achieving food security. By focusing on food sovereignty, urban Black communities can address systemic barriers, reclaim their cultural heritage, and develop resilient, community-led solutions that ensure long-term access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food. This not only strengthens community bonds but also fosters economic opportunities and environmental stewardship within these communities.

Food insecurity in Black communities is a critical social justice and public health issue that affects physical health, mental well-being, educational outcomes, and overall quality of life. This challenge is particularly complex within Toronto's diverse Black diasporic communities, which encompass a wide range of cultural identities, dietary practices, and food preferences. While not all individuals within these communities share the same culturally determined dietary requirements, many face the shared challenge of relying on colonial food systems that do not adequately address their specific needs. “Colonial food systems” refers to the systems in which colonizing powers control and commodify food, undermining marginalized communities’ sovereignty over traditional diets and food practices, often leading to reliance on processed foods and conditions of food Apartheid. (The Decolonial Centre, 2024). A lack of community capacity to sustain and develop localized food system initiatives contributes to continued dependence on external systems that may not align with these diverse cultural values. This dependence ultimately undermines community resilience, self-determination, and the pursuit of sustainable food sovereignty within Black communities.

Issues at the core of this problem include systemic racism, barriers to education, economic inequality, and the lack of access to land and resources necessary for sustainable food production. These factors directly impact Black individuals, families, and communities. Indirectly, the problem also affects broader societal structures by perpetuating health disparities and social inequities. Unfortunately, there is a noticeable and significant gap in existing peer-reviewed literature and academic research on Black food security and sovereignty in Canada, further hindering efforts to investigate and address the issue effectively. La Via Campesina (2021), the world’s first international peasants’¹ organization, has long identified food sovereignty as a solution to food insecurity, and some peasant activists have noted that food

¹ “Peasant here is an all-encompassing term used to recognize the landless workers, the farmworkers, fishers, migrants, pastoralist, [and] food artisans” (La Via Campesina, 2021)

sovereignty “addresses the most urgent and pressing need of the people” (Kim & Pokharel, 2020). As such, it is critical for community development, policy, and research efforts to explore not only short-term food access and nutritional needs (i.e. through food banks or soup kitchens), but to ensure the implementation and long-term sustainability of community-led, culturally appropriate food systems that advance food sovereignty.

While there have been numerous initiatives aimed at improving individual and household food security, many have primarily focused on food distribution and basic food access rather than addressing the underlying issues of food security (Tarasuk et al, 2019). Some community-based organizations and grassroots movements have made strides towards promoting urban agriculture and food justice, but these efforts often lack the necessary support and resources to achieve sustainable impact. If this problem is not adequately addressed, it is likely to exacerbate existing disparities, leading to more complex long-term negative consequences for the health and well-being of Black communities.

The literature on food security and sovereignty highlights the importance of self-determination and local control over food systems (Pimbert, 2015; Wilson et al, 2020; Figueroa & Alkon, 2017). Food sovereignty is not just about access to food, but also about the power to shape food policies and practices. However, much of the existing research in this area focuses on Indigenous communities, the United States, or rural international contexts, with little attention to the specific needs and experiences of urban Black communities in Canada. This gap, and the alarming statistics about Black food insecurity shared above show the need for targeted research that can inform policies and programs tailored to the unique circumstances of urban Black communities.

The responsibility to address this problem lies with multiple actors, including municipal and provincial governments, community organizations, academic institutions, and charitable entities. These stakeholders have the ability to implement policies, allocate resources, and support initiatives that promote Black food sovereignty. Collaboration is also crucial to developing a comprehensive approach that addresses both immediate food insecurity and long-term sovereignty goals.

This research makes a foundational contribution to the academic field of community development by starting to fill the gap in the literature on Black food security and sovereignty in Canada through a case study of Toronto. Through exploring the unique capacity-building

challenges and opportunities within urban Black communities, this study provides valuable insights that can inform policymaking, program development, and further academic research. By focusing on capacity building, this study introduces a new perspective to the emerging field of Black food sovereignty and sustainable, community-driven solutions.

Purpose, Scope, and Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis is to identify the capacity-building needs of Black diasporic communities in Toronto that, when addressed, will contribute to reduced food insecurity and advance efforts towards food sovereignty. The case study for this research will include Toronto's diverse Black communities. This research seeks not to duplicate the quantitative data on food insecurity in Black communities, but provides, beyond this existing baseline, a deeper, more nuanced understanding of what capacities are needed to improve and sustain food security by advancing food sovereignty. The methodology does not include taking a tally of how many Black children go without meals, or how many Black mothers stop at the food bank between shifts. This research asks questions of the whole community (including farmers, policymakers, restaurant owners, provisioners, eaters, etc.) to determine what, if anything, can be done to ensure that initiatives are holistic and sustainable. By engaging a diverse range of stakeholders, this study uncovers the specific skills, resources, and leadership development supports required to build a robust food sovereignty framework. A collaborative approach ensures that solutions are tailored to the unique needs of urban Black diasporic communities, fostering resilience, self-sufficiency, and long-term food security. This research is essential to prevent a scenario where more than half of Black children live in food insecure households.

By focusing on Toronto's urban Black diaspora, this research provides a nuanced understanding of the unique challenges and strengths within these communities. This research does not address food insecurity in other demographic groups or geographical regions outside of Toronto. This study's scope includes conducting a thorough literature review, and qualitative interviews with members of Toronto's Black diasporic communities, as well as seeking feedback and input from relevant community organizations and stakeholders through a questionnaire.

Main Research Question:

What are the most important skills, resources, and supports that are needed to advance

food sovereignty efforts to reduce food insecurity for Toronto's Black communities?

Secondary Questions:

1. *Determinants of Food Security:* What are the factors influencing food security within urban Black diasporic communities? This question seeks to uncover the underlying determinants of food insecurity that will inform targeted interventions.
2. *Intervention Strategies:* What actionable steps and strategies can be recommended for community capacity building to improve food security outcomes? What interventions currently exist, and how effective are they? These questions aim to identify interventions that empower communities to address food insecurity, with a focus on community-led food sovereignty solutions.
3. *Capacity-Building Needs:* To what extent do Toronto's Black diasporic communities have specific capacity-building needs that, once addressed, can enhance their ability to improve food security and sovereignty at the community level? This question aims to identify unique challenges and opportunities for strengthening community capacity to implement and sustain solutions.

Structure of Thesis

In this thesis, chapter one introduces the research topic, presents the central research questions, and establishes the significance of the study. Chapter two provides essential background, contextualizing the research within Toronto's urban landscape and the broader conditions shaping food insecurity in Black communities. Chapter three reviews key literature on food sovereignty, Black people's experience, and how they intersect, outlining the foundations that inform the study. Chapter four details the methodology, methods, and data analysis strategies employed, explaining the rationale for a mixed-methods approach, and how data were collected and interpreted thematically. Chapter five presents the research findings, providing a descriptive summary of the responses collected through the questionnaire and interviews. Chapter six expands upon the findings into discussion and analysis, interpreting the findings through the lenses of Critical Race Theory and Community Development Theory, while situating the insights within larger systemic and structural contexts. Finally, chapter seven concludes the thesis with a summary of key takeaways.

Positionality Statement

I write from a unique vantage point, one firmly rooted in the intersection of diverse identities that have shaped not only who I am, but how I engage with the world around me. At the core of my Self, I am a Black Woman, and this identity carries with it a rich tapestry of experiences, challenges, and strengths. It is a lens through which I view the world, mindful of historical and ongoing struggles for racial equity and justice. In honour of my ancestors, I also identify as gender-queer, a designation that speaks to the fluidity and complexity of gender expression and identity, specifically outside of the Western understanding of the binary, and the limited ways in which the English language allows us to communicate our identities. This has allowed me to explore and appreciate the spectrum of human existence beyond colonized gender norms. As a first-generation 'Canadian,' I bring with me the unique perspective of someone who has straddled the distinct cultural worlds of the Caribbean-Afrikaan diaspora, navigating the delicate balance of heritage and assimilation in a colonized country.

I bring a unique blend of experiences as a farmer, academic, part-time tattoo artist, and community worker, all underpinned by a commitment to equity and social justice. My position is one that weaves together both my professional and personal identities. I approach my work from the perspective of a community development practitioner who has had both the opportunity to work with and learn from a variety of diverse communities, and the privilege of pursuing multiple post-secondary degrees. Personally, I am a testament to the resilience and strength that emerge from navigating generational trauma, oppression, and discrimination. These facets of my identity collectively shape how I perceive the world and my work, strengthening my commitment to fostering inclusive and just communities. I strive to shift the dialogue in both professional and academic spaces to include the nuances of how we each move through the world reflecting different identities and lived experiences.

I acknowledge the Land I am currently on is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, the Algonquin, and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. I also acknowledge that Tkaronto is covered by Treaty 13 and the “Dish with One Spoon” Wampum Belt Covenant, with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and I am grateful to have the opportunity to know this Land as a treaty person.

I acknowledge the land of what some call Turtle Island, that was never meant to be owned. I recognize that most of the land that Creator entrusted to Indigenous peoples, was in some cases shared by choice, but more often taken by force. I recognize the historical and ongoing colonialism that has led to the present-day situation, where land acknowledgements are offered in place of land. As a person of Afrikaan descent, I acknowledge that many of my kin have come to this continent and these Lands by choice, while many of us are here as a result of the historical and present force of colonization—the enslavement and forced displacement of our ancestors. I acknowledge the complexities of this settlement, where people of Afrikaan descent were promised land that was never given, by those whose it never was to give.

I apologize for the role that I and my people have played in the genocide, destruction, and industrialization of the people, traditions, and cultures of this land, as well as the water, animals, and land itself. I apologize for a history of participation in colonization, by force or otherwise, and I recognize the nuances of my position as an involuntary settler on this continent. I stand in grief with the Indigenous peoples of this land, as we continue to mourn and work to address the plight of Residential School victims, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit individuals. I reject all concepts used to assert and justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and people, specifically the Doctrine of Discovery², and *terra nullius*. I stand in solidarity with all oppressed and Indigenous communities, both in Canada, and internationally, from Turtle Island to Palestine, from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Tigray, Sudan, and beyond.

As I confront many of the challenges faced by black women and other women of color, it is not an academic exercise that I can simply leave behind when I turn off my computer... Thus, the lines between the personal and the intellectual pursuits are often blurred. Beyond the struggles of confronting difficulties when the personal becomes your research, I also confront the challenge of doing intersectionality. Particularly, I am challenged by how to honestly tell the story of marginalized black [people]. (Jordan-Zachery, 2007, p258)

² Starting in the 15th century, Papal declarations outlined The Doctrine of Discovery principle, allowing European colonizers to claim ‘vacant’ lands outside of Europe. Land not yet occupied by Christians was considered *terra nullius* (Assembly of First Nations, 2018; Tomchuk, 2023)

“Canada” and “Toronto”

Within this thesis, the terms “Canada” and “Toronto” are used widely. I want to acknowledge that I use these terms only for increased clarification and general recognition. This is not intended to ignore or negate the validity of historical and present-day Indigenous place-names.

“Canada” is generally accepted as being an Anglicized version of the Huron-Iroquois word for Stadacona (Québec City)—“kanata”—meaning “settlement” or “village” (Heritage, 2017). It is believed that in 1535, two Indigenous youth described a trade route to French Explorer Jacques Cartier, referring to the village of Stadacona. As a unilingual foreign colonizer, he assumed they were talking about the area controlled by Chief Donnacona. His incompetence and ego prevented him from asking for clarification or coming up with a different name (Heritage, 2017).

While “Toronto” has many possible origins, the corporation of the City of Toronto notes its origin as being from the Mohawk language’s “Tkarón:to” (tah-kah-ron-to / duh-gah-ron-do), meaning “tree in the water, the passing of knowledge there” (Brant-Birioukov et al., 2023).

On Blackness

Who is Black? What does it mean to be Black? Who has the right to claim “Blackness”? The term “Black” is complex and multi-dimensional, used to describe not only race but also a shared culture, heritage, language, and collective experience. For the purposes of this research, it is essential to clarify what is meant by “Black” and to distinguish it from broader terms like “African descent,” “Afro-Caribbean,” or “Caribbean,” which do not inherently create or indicate Black identity. Simply being “of African descent” does not automatically equate to Blackness, as Black identity is shaped by unique cultural experiences, historical realities, and shared struggles that go beyond genetic lineage.

As Black culture continues to be exploited for profit, there has been an increase in individuals who may not fully experience the lived realities of Blackness—whether due to mixed heritage, “white-passing” and white privilege, distant ancestry, or complete misrepresentation—claiming Black identity. This trend, which sometimes arises from a desire for social validation, clout, or access to Black cultural spaces, risks diluting the authenticity of Black identity and detaching it from the historical struggles of Black communities. It is relatively easy for someone to self-identify as “Black” in conceptual or performative terms, yet far more challenging to reconcile being called a “negro” or “nigger,” terms rooted in a painful legacy of oppression and dehumanization.

In some contexts, “Black” refers to individuals who are phenotypically Black—those whose appearance, particularly skin color, identifies them as Black in the eyes of society. Phenotypical Blackness carries with it a distinct set of social, economic, and cultural experiences that are often shaped by how individuals are perceived and treated based on their physical appearance. Phenotypically Black individuals are typically subject to the external biases, stereotypes, and structural barriers associated with Black identity, regardless of their cultural background or heritage. This is a fundamental aspect of Blackness in this research context: it is not merely an identity one can adopt or perform, but rather a lived experience shaped by visibility and societal perception.

However, acknowledging phenotypical Blackness does not disregard the fact that individuals who are not themselves “visibly Black” may still be deeply impacted by the same

issues systemic racism and economic oppression. For instance, individuals who are connected to Blackness through immediate family—such as having a Black parent or partner—may live in households where they witness and experience the impacts of anti-Black discrimination and systemic inequalities. Generational trauma stemming from histories of slavery, colonization, and racialized oppression can have profound psychological and social impacts on individuals of mixed or distant Black ancestry, influencing their identities and shaping their experiences within society.

This research also considers the concept of the "Black diaspora," recognizing the diversity within Black communities in Canada, specifically, Toronto. The term "Black diaspora" acknowledges the global dispersion of Black individuals who share historical and cultural ties, yet possess varied and rich experiences. Unlike the term "African diaspora," "Black diaspora" can be seen as more inclusive, recognizing that not all Black individuals identify with or want to claim an African identity. In Canada, the Black diaspora encompasses people of Caribbean, African, and other heritages, including immigrants, migrants, refugees, and those whose families were descendants of enslaved Africans who were forcibly brought to North America via the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This diversity within Canada's Black diaspora enriches the cultural landscape and brings a multitude of perspectives, experiences, and traditions that influence community identity, and resilience.

A nuanced understanding of Blackness ensures that this study remains attuned to the specific challenges faced by individuals who are both culturally and visibly Black, while recognizing the interconnectedness and collective resilience that individuals across the spectrum of Blackness bring to this work. This approach allows for an inclusive yet focused examination of food sovereignty that respects the diversity within Black communities and acknowledges the shared, multi-generational impacts of systemic oppression. By focusing on the capacity-building needs for advancing food sovereignty, this research aims to empower these communities in a manner that is reflective of their histories, identities, and unique socio-cultural contexts.

This research uses variations of Canada/Toronto's "Black diasporic community" in reference to the population of "Black" (as contextualized above) people residing within the city of Toronto, or the lands of Turtle Island, respectively.

Chapter 2: Background

Black Communities in Toronto

The city of Toronto is home to a notably diverse and vibrant tapestry of Black communities, accounting for approximately 36.9% of Canada’s total Black population (Statistics Canada, 2022). This diversity stems from multiple waves of immigration and migration, including descendants of enslaved Africans in Canada, Afro-Caribbean migrants arriving during the 1960s and 1970s, African refugees and immigrants from countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Ghana, and more recent newcomers from Latin America and the Middle East who also identify as Black. Toronto’s Black community is not a monolith. It encompasses a wide range of cultural identities, languages, and histories. This diversity brings strength and richness, but also presents challenges when designing and delivering supports and services that adequately reflect the unique experiences and needs of different groups.

Historically, Black communities in Toronto have faced systemic racism, including residential segregation, over-policing, underemployment, and underinvestment in public services (James, 2010; Maynard, 2017). These issues are particularly visible in key neighbourhoods such as Jane and Finch, Rexdale, Scarborough, and parts of North York and Etobicoke; areas that have historically been home to large Black populations and are often marked by higher levels of poverty, limited access to health and social services, and food insecurity.

According to the 2016 Census, the largest demographics within Toronto’s Black population are of Jamaican, Haitian, Somali, Nigerian, Ghanaian, and Ethiopian descent (Statistics Canada, 2017). These communities contribute significantly to the cultural fabric of the city, but continue to face disproportionate barriers in access to food, housing, education, and economic opportunities.

Food Justice

As a foundation for progressive food work, food justice is generally considered to be “a social concern, an economic matter, and a political problem” (Hayes & Carbone, 2015, p1), specifically addressing social, environmental, economic, nutrition, health, and community needs, as related to food systems. Closely aligned to social justice, food justice also encompasses human rights concerns, and has seen great advocacy advancements through the work of key

groups like La Via Campesina—detailed further in the literature review. Food justice recognizes the need for systemic change, and is inextricably tied to the liberation of marginalized groups through efforts like advancing migrant workers’ rights. Holt-Giménez (2011) describes the main orientation of food justice discourse as “Empowerment”, placing it within progressive politics. As seen in Table 1, he also outlines Food Enterprise, Security, and Sovereignty in a Food Regime—Food Movement Matrix (Holt-Giménez, 2011).

Table 1

Food Regime—Food Movement Matrix

	Corporate Food Regime		Food Movements	
Politics	Neoliberal	Reformist	Progressive	Radical
Discourse	Food Enterprise	Food Security	Food Justice	Food Sovereignty
Main Institutions	International Finance Corporation (World Bank); IMF, WTO; USDA (Vilsak); Global Food Security Bill; Green Revolution; Millennium Challenge; Heritage Foundation; Chicago Global Council; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Feed the Future (USAID)	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank); FAO; UN Commission on Sustainable Development; USDA (Merrigan); mainstream fair trade; some Slow Food Chapters; some Food Policy Councils; most food banks & food aid programs	Alternative fair trade and many Slow Food chapters; many organizations in the Community Food Security Movement; CSAs; many Food Policy Councils and youth food and justice movements; many farmworker and labor organizations	Via Campesina, International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty; Global March for Women; many food justice and rights-based movements
Orientation	Corporate	Development	Empowerment	Entitlement
Model	Overproduction; corporate concentration; unregulated markets and monopolies; monocultures (including organic); GMOs; agrofuels; mass global consumption of industrial food; phasing out of peasant and family agriculture and local retail	Mainstreaming/certification of niche markets (e.g. organic, fair, local, sustainable); maintaining northern agricultural subsidies; "sustainable" roundtables for agrofuels, soy, forest products, etc.; market-led land reform	Agroecologically produced local food; investment in underserved communities; new business models and community benefit packages for production, processing, and retail; better wages for agriculture workers; solidarity economies; land & food access	Dismantle corporate agrifoods monopoly power; parity; redistributive land reform; community rights to water and seed; regionally based food systems; democratization of food systems; sustainable livelihoods; protection from dumping/overproduction; revival of agroecologically managed peasant agriculture to distribute wealth and cool the planet; regulated markets and supply

Approach to the food crisis	Increased industrial production; unregulated corporate monopolies; land grabs; expansion of GMOs; public-private partnerships; liberal markets; international sourced food aid	Same as neoliberal but with increased medium farmer production and some locally sourced food aid; more agricultural aid but tied to GMOs and "bio-fortified/climate-resistant" crops	Right to food; better safety nets; sustainably produced, locally-sourced food; agroecologically based agricultural development	Human right to food sovereignty; locally sourced, sustainably produced, culturally appropriate, democratically controlled focus on UN/FAO negotiation
Guiding Document	World Bank 2009 Development Report; "Realizing a New Vision for Agriculture (World Economic Forum)"	World Bank 2009 Development Report; "Realizing a New Vision for Agriculture (World Economic Forum)"	International Assessment on Agriculture Science Technology and Development	Peoples' Comprehensive Framework for Action to Eradicate Hunger

Note. From "Food Security, Food Justice, or Food Sovereignty? Crises, Food Movements, and Regime Change," by E. Holt-Giménez, 2011, Institute for food and development policy.

Cadieux and Slocum (2015) further explain that both food justice and food sovereignty work towards institutionalizing equity and control in food systems, with a focus on people who have experience marginalization. In September of 2012, hundreds of food justice advocates attended the Food + Justice = Democracy conference in Minneapolis, USA (Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy, 2012). Through a People's Movement Assembly process, they drafted six principles around food justice:

- Historical Trauma
- Local Foods, Community Development and Public Investment
- Food Sovereignty
- Land
- Labor and Immigration
- Toxic-Free and Climate Just Food System

Within the Local Food System, Community Development, and Public Investment principle, they further described Food Justice as:

- Freedom from exploitation
- Ensures the rights of workers to fair labor practices
- Values-based: respect, empathy, pluralism, valuing knowledge
- Racial Justice: dismantling of racism and white privilege
- Gender equity

From this, it becomes clear that food sovereignty is deeply rooted in the Food Justice movement, building upon a focus of dismantling structural and systemic barriers to accessing nutritious, culturally appropriate food, and empowering communities to define their own food systems. While food justice brings attention to food system issues like food apartheid and racial inequities, food sovereignty offers and builds a systemic alternative, returning power and control to marginalized communities, reinforcing food as a right, instead of a capitalist commodity.

Black Food Sovereignty Movement

Since the 1990's, Toronto has been an innovative hub of Black food sovereignty work. 1995 saw the launch of Afri-Can FoodBasket, which, to this day, is a Black-led, Black-serving, and Black-mandated (B3) organization championing reducing hunger, enhancing access to cultural food, and promoting nutrition, health, and wellness through community initiatives across the Greater Toronto Area (Afri-Can FoodBasket, 2025). Its initiatives include a learning farm, cultural food box delivery, and policy advocacy rooted in Afrocentric principles.

Toronto is also home to the Black Food Sovereignty Alliance (BFSA), a collective of Black leaders, organizations, and advocates who work to promote food justice, land access, and sovereignty for Black communities. In 2021, The corporation of the City of Toronto's Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) Unit developed North America's first Black Food Sovereignty Plan, marking a historic municipal commitment to addressing systemic barriers to food access for Black Torontonians (Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit, 2021). Toronto Metropolitan University's Centre for Studies in Food Security, founded in 1994, has become a leading academic institution in Canada examining food systems and now includes some research focused on Black food sovereignty and racial justice in food policy (Toronto Metropolitan University, n.d.).

Importantly, the Black food sovereignty movement in Toronto is largely community-led, meaning initiatives are designed, governed, and implemented by Black communities themselves, based on lived experience, cultural knowledge, and grassroots organizing. This is in contrast to government- or institution-led approaches, which often lack cultural relevance or accountability to the populations they aim to serve. Outside of Toronto, the roots of Black food sovereignty stretch across Canada. In Nova Scotia, African Nova Scotian communities have long resisted

systemic discrimination while stewarding land and food traditions. Nationally, the experiences of migrant farm workers, many of whom are Black Caribbean men, highlight the racialized exploitation within Canadian agriculture (Mayell, 2024). Their exclusion from permanent residency pathways and basic labour protections connects the dots between immigration policy and food apartheid.

Across North America, the legacy of Black land loss, sharecropping, and exclusion from agricultural policy provides further context for the current resurgence of Black-led food justice work. Movements such as those led by Fannie Lou Hamer (Freedom Farm Cooperative), the Black Panther Party (Free Breakfast for School Children / People's Free Food Program), and contemporary efforts like Soul Fire Farm in New York State illustrate how food has been wielded as both a tool of oppression and liberation for Black communities.

Policy Landscape: Shaping Black Food Sovereignty

Public policy plays a pivotal role in shaping food systems—determining who has access to land, funding, infrastructure, and decision-making power. For Black communities, who have historically been excluded from these systems, policy can either reinforce structural inequities or serve as a lever for advancing food justice and sovereignty. In the context of Black food sovereignty, policy can support land access, culturally relevant food programs, economic development, training and education, and the preservation of cultural knowledge. However, historically, Black communities in Canada have been underrepresented in policy-making processes that impact their access to food, land, and agricultural supports.

In 2023, the City of Toronto declared a state of emergency on food insecurity, acknowledging that one in five Toronto households experience food insecurity, with even higher rates in Black and racialized communities (Sustain Ontario, 2025). This official declaration followed earlier, community-driven policy efforts, including the launch of Canada's first Black Food Sovereignty Plan in 2021. Developed by the City's Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit and community partners, the Plan seeks to address deep-rooted barriers by focusing on five key pillars: food access and infrastructure; land access and stewardship; economic development and entrepreneurship; education and training; and policy and governance (Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit, 2021). The Plan marks a crucial step in moving away from crisis-oriented, reactive

responses such as food banks, toward long-term solutions rooted in self-determination, sovereignty, and culturally relevant systems. However, its success depends heavily on sustained funding, policy alignment across municipal departments, and accountability mechanisms that center Black community leadership.

At the provincial and federal levels, no specific Black food sovereignty policies currently exist. Programs such as the Local Food Infrastructure Fund and the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership offer supports for food access and production, but they often lack equity-based frameworks or culturally relevant criteria that prioritize Black or racialized communities. Additionally, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP), which brings thousands of Black Caribbean workers to Canadian farms each year, has been widely criticized for exploitative labour practices and its failure to provide permanent pathways to residency (Murray, 2024). As food justice related tools, programs like TFWP further highlight the ways in which federal policies continue to reproduce racialized inequities in Canada's food system.

In contrast, international examples provide lessons and inspiration. In the United States, by the time of this writing, the Justice for Black Farmers Act of 2023 (the third iteration) has aimed to address historical discrimination by the USDA by providing land grants, support programs, and funding specifically for Black farmers and education (Browne, n.d.). International frameworks like the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) also support the rights of historically marginalized communities to land, food sovereignty, and participation in food systems governance (United Nations, 2019).

Canada's endorsement of the UN International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024) and its recent extension (2025-2034) offers a unique opportunity for national policy alignment with international racial justice frameworks. Yet, to date, there has been limited action by federal or provincial governments to integrate Black food sovereignty into these commitments. To fully support the advancement of Black food sovereignty, Canada's policy landscape must move beyond performative statements to tangible investments and reforms that prioritize land reparations, funding for Black-led organizations, culturally specific food programming, and equity-based metrics within all food policy frameworks.

Historical Antecedents of Food Security

After the Great Depression, food insecurity was not considered a significant concern in Canada until the economic recession of the early 1980s (Tarasuk & McIntyre, 2020). From the opening of the first food bank in 1981, to the National School Food Policy of 2024, Canada has a 40-year history of initiatives, policies, and funding to address food insecurity at large (Bechtel, 2013; Employment and Social Development Canada, 2024). Despite progress with national policies and municipal programs, Black communities in Canada have remained largely underserved, with rapidly increasing rates of food insecurity. It is evident that conventional, colonial solutions have not effectively addressed the unique challenges faced by Black communities. It is therefore imperative for Black communities to take ownership of developing and implementing solutions to food insecurity, embracing a self-sustaining approach towards food sovereignty.

Food security in Canada's urban Black communities is deeply intertwined with historical and contemporary socio-economic issues (Mori & Onyango, 2023). The legacy of colonization and slavery in Canada, although discussed with less rigor and remorse than in the United States, has had a profound impact on Black communities. Black communities have historically faced systemic barriers that have led to economic disenfranchisement, restricted access to quality housing and education, and limited opportunities for wealth accumulation. Such systemic racism has perpetuated disparities, creating a foundation of inequality that continues to affect Black Canadians today. Research from Crown Heights, Harlem, Rondo, and other areas in the United States has shown that gentrification contributes to food insecurity in Black communities (Binoy, 2023; Sullivan, 2023; Loewen, 2013). This is replicated in Canada, where gentrification in large urban centers like Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal has further displaced Black communities, disrupting local food networks and exacerbating food insecurity. Contemporary socio-economic challenges, including lower average incomes, higher unemployment rates, and inadequate social services, contribute to the ongoing struggle for food security within Black communities (Bowen et al., 2021). Existing food policies and programs often fail to address the unique needs of Black Canadians, reflecting a broader trend of systemic exclusion. Institutional and legislative frameworks in Canada have also not sufficiently addressed these disparities. While there are federal and provincial initiatives aimed at reducing food insecurity, and various municipal food

programs, these measures often lack a targeted approach to address the specific barriers faced by urban Black communities—the most food insecure demographic in the country.

To address these challenges comprehensively, there is a growing movement towards Black food sovereignty, which advocates for the right of Black communities to control their food systems, prioritize culturally relevant foods, and build local food economies (Black Food Sovereignty Alliance, 2024). This research aims to identify the capacity-building needs of Black diasporic communities in Toronto, empowering them to develop and implement sustainable, community-driven solutions. A focus on capacity building seeks to promote long-term food security, resilience, and self-reliance, contributing to broader social justice and equity within the Canadian food system.

Data collection for this study focused on Toronto’s Black diasporic communities—engaging individuals across multiple facets of the food system. This approach captured a broad range of insights on Black food sovereignty, including perspectives from those working to shape food access, policy, production, and community initiatives, as well as those involved in purchasing and consumption. By targeting key food system actors, this research identified the capacities and strategies necessary to drive sustainable change within urban Black diasporic communities. This approach acknowledges that comprehensive solutions to food insecurity require collective efforts, and that some contributors to this work may not themselves identify as Black, but nonetheless play meaningful roles in advancing food security and sovereignty in Black communities. Engaging these contributors helps to build a holistic understanding of the systemic changes needed to advance food sovereignty, ensuring that interventions are community-driven, culturally relevant, and sustainable. By empowering those who can effect change, the study creates a ripple effect that will ultimately benefit individuals and households experiencing food insecurity.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Introduction

Understanding the causes and implications of food insecurity within Black communities is vital for addressing systemic inequities and fostering community-led solutions to advance food sovereignty. This literature review provides a preliminary examination of food insecurity and food sovereignty in this context. By synthesizing findings from diverse scholarly sources, this review also identifies gaps in research and opportunities for intervention.

Mapping the Process

This review employed academic databases like the University of Victoria Libraries and Google Scholar, using keywords such as “Black food insecurity”, “community capacity building”, “Black food sovereignty”, “impacts of food insecurity”, “Canada food insecurity data”, “Toronto food insecurity data”, and Boolean operators such as "and" and "or". Criteria for selection included potential relevance to the Canadian context and publication date. Abstracts, introductions, and conclusions were screened to determine relevance, resulting in a collection of varied sources. In community-based research, the positionality of authors is crucial, as those closely linked to the community offer unique insights. However, traditional literature review processes often overlook this, unintentionally prioritizing literature authored by white men and institution-affiliated scholars, limiting diverse perspectives. Unfortunately, it is often impossible to determine or identify the positionality of authors, as many do not include a positionality statement to accompany their papers—many scholarly outlets continue to discourage this kind of positioning, often prioritizing traditional ideas of “objectivity” and “neutrality”. As such, this literature review focuses on culturally and contextually relevant research, prioritizing Black, Indigenous, and other authors of colour when possible.

Overview of Literature on Food Sovereignty

The literature overwhelmingly agrees that Black Canadians are experiencing higher-than-average rates of food insecurity (Bhawra et al., 2021; Tarasuk et al., 2019; Tarasuk et al., 2014). Food deserts, limited access to fresh produce, and lack of control over local food systems are some of the critical issues contributing to this problem. In 2024, Black Canadian households

experienced food insecurity at a staggering rate of 46.7% (PROOF, 2025), and in 2023³, 46.3% of Black youth were living in food insecure households (PROOF, 2024). Bowen, Elliott, and Hardison-Moody (2021) attribute food insecurity's structural roots to racism, underscoring its role independent of poverty.

Food insecurity profoundly impacts Black communities, worsening socio-economic disparities and affecting individuals' health and well-being (Dabone et al., 2021). Schanbacher et al identify that lack of food is not the cause of food insecurity, but rather how social and economic conditions impact one's "ability to make food choices and participate in their local food system" (Schanbacher et al., 2025, p. 373). Limited access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food contributes to adverse health outcomes, including higher rates of chronic diseases and malnutrition in Black communities. Food insecurity hinders education and economic productivity, as individuals facing scarcity struggle to focus on learning or maintain employment. It also leads to heightened stress and mental health challenges (Tarasuk, 2001). Food insecurity perpetuates historical inequities and hampers sustainable community-based solutions, exacerbating marginalization within Black communities. Addressing this issue is crucial for fostering social justice, health equity, and sustainable development.

Other studies have specifically noted the lack of research in food insecurity in Black Canadian communities, which emphasizes the urgency of this critical research (Jefferies et al., 2021). The reviewed materials provide a solid foundation for understanding the issues and emphasize the critical role of capacity-building supports in improving food security outcomes for Toronto's Black communities.

The concept of 'food security' originated from the development and policy discussions of international institutions in the 1970s (Maxwell, 1996). The term first appeared in a World Food Conference report in 1975, where it was defined as the "availability at all times of adequate world supplies of basic food-stuffs...to sustain steady expansion of food consumption...and to offset fluctuations in production and prices" (Maxwell, 2001, p. 14). Initially, the focus of food security was on government actions and international food supply, particularly in terms of stabilizing global prices.

³ 2024 data did not include an analysis of household food insecurity for youth, by race or otherwise.

At the World Food Summit in 1996, food security was further defined as having physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (The World Bank, 2024). Gundersen and Ziliak (2014; 2018) note that there is a large body of existing research that outlines the negative impacts of food insecurity, including lower nutrient intake, poor sleep, higher incidences of diabetes, and poorer overall health. Studies have identified food insecurity as a contributing factor to negative health, education, employment, and social outcomes. Even in infancy, household food insecurity is linked to a disruption in social-emotional development, including increased hyperactivity, and behavioural problems in kindergarten (Hines et al., 2021). Unsurprisingly, Black youth, who happen to experience the highest national rates of food insecurity, are targeted for disciplinary action more frequently, and are up to five times more likely to be suspended from school for ‘bad behaviour’ than their white peers, in the United States (Monroe, 2005). Unfortunately, Canada does not have clear statistics for these topics. There are also proven connections between food insecurity and issues like decreased emotional functioning (Stormer and Harrison, 2003), and clinical anxiety (Kleinman et al., 1998). Even after external risk factors are controlled, studies in the United States have found that children experiencing food insecurity are at least twice as likely to have fair or poor health, and around 1.4 times more likely to have asthma, which by no coincidence, is also more prevalent in Black children (Gundersen & Seligman, 2017; Carroll, 2013). The literature resoundingly shows that many health issues caused by food insecurity are more prevalent in Black youth, including conditions like childhood obesity, which present multiple comorbidities (Jefferies et al., 2021).

Exploring beyond childhood, the negative impacts of food security are amplified through adulthood. “In adults, food insecurity is positively associated with mental health concerns, stress, and risk of type 2 diabetes mellitus” (Yau et al., 2018; Ray et al., 2012). Cardiovascular diseases are also more prevalent in adults experiencing food insecurity, and high food insecurity has been associated with higher risk for cardiovascular disease mortality (Thomas et al., 2021). Several studies also show that food insecurity in adults is linked to an increased risk of developing stress, depression, anxiety, sleep disorders, and suicidal ideation. Again, it is no coincidence that many of these negative health outcomes are more prevalent in Black communities than among other racial demographics.

When examining food insecurity and its impact on Black communities, it is crucial to investigate how our communities have been systematically positioned in a way that largely prevents them from achieving food security. While previous research has had a stronger focus on characteristics of food insecure households, Bowen, Elliot, and Hardison-Moody (2021) argue that in order to fully address food insecurity, research must encompass how food insecurity is rooted in racism. Odoms-Young and Bruce (2018) highlight that even when social and economic factors are controlled for, Black individuals are at higher risk for food insecurity than majority of other demographics. On average, Black-led households have lower incomes than white-led households (Thomas et al, 2020) , and are less likely to own their homes (Unite States Census Bureau, 2020). Other research has identified that households with financial or physical assets, like a home, show more resilience to fluctuations in food security (Fitzpatrick, 2017; Gjertson, 2016; Gundersen & Ziliak, 2018; Guo, 2011). This is significant because racist policies and processes have led to severe racial disparities in home ownership (Korver-Glenn, 2018; Rothstein, 2017). While there is a connection between food insecurity and having fewer economic resources, many studies have identified other race-related contributing factors (Bowen et al, 2021; Myers & Painter, 2017).

Research from 2009-2015 has shown that racial discrimination has a negative impact on mental and physical health (Monk, 2015; Pascoe & Richman, 2009; Williams & Mohammed, 2009), and more recent literature by Burke et al. (2018) indicates that this carries over into how individuals are able to access food. Phojanakong et al. investigated this further in 2019, finding that, for example, mothers who reported experiencing discrimination from police or courts are more than twice as likely to have food insecure households. This was also found true for those experiencing discrimination in hiring and workplaces, with Phojanakong et al. (2019) further noting that Black mothers report experiencing the highest rates of discrimination.

A 2015 study proposed that food insecurity is also connected to exposure to adversity in one's lifetime, and even across generations; while noting that racism can increase this exposure (Chilton et al., 2015). Specifically, Black households are more likely to experience what Jackson and Vaughn refer to as “disruptive events”—job termination, school suspension or expulsion, criminal justice involvement, and mental health institutionalization—which are all associated with an increased risk of household food insecurity (2017). Unfortunately, as Golash-Boza

(2016) identifies, racial inequality is a foundational part of social structures and systems, which are often mutually reinforcing.

In order to understand why discourse in food security needs to make a critical pivot to food sovereignty, it is key to understand the history of both, and how they are connected. With global hunger becoming an increasingly pressing issue, in 2009, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) officially defined food security as the condition in which “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”.

Over time, the rise of mainstream neoliberalism tainted food security with developmentalism and a fixation on economic growth (Patel, 2009; Pimbert, 2009). By this time, food sovereignty was emerging to present “an alternative paradigm, and an antiglobalization stance to the corporatized, global, national, and regional food systems” (McDonald, 2010). In 1996, La Via Campesina defined food sovereignty as “the right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods respecting cultural and productive diversity”, elaborating that “food sovereignty is a precondition to genuine food security” (Via Campesina, 1996). Five years later, La Via Campesina published *Our World is Not For Sale*, a Declaration in which they revised their definition of food sovereignty to:

The right of peoples to define their own agriculture and food policies, to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives, to determine the extent to which they want to be self-reliant, and to restrict the dumping of products in their markets. Food sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy, and ecologically sustainable production. (La Via Campesina, 2001)

Our World is Not For Sale was signed by food and environmental activists, networks, and NGOs in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as grassroots groups in Southeast Asia, North America, and the European Union. It called upon international governments to create and implement progressive policies that:

...Promote sustainable, family-farm based production rather than industry-led, high-input and export-oriented production and names governments as responsible for promoting

market policies to meet these goals as well as food safety and quality criteria ‘appropriate to the preferences and needs of the people’. (La Via Campesina, 2001)

In 2007, the Declaration of Nyéléni, issued at the first International Food Sovereignty Forum hosted in Mali, included more than 500 representatives from 80 countries, and proposed a shift in the definition of food sovereignty to include consumption. This declaration defined food sovereignty as the “right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” (Forum for Food Sovereignty, 2007).

Achieving food sovereignty requires reorganizing and restructuring food systems to maintain democratic control, facilitate equitable access to resources, and sustain healthy, culturally appropriate food. Jarosz (2014) highlights the importance of cultural identity in food sovereignty, including practices for self-determination. They elaborate that “a uniform definition of food sovereignty should be resisted. Our understandings of its human geographies are just beginning” (Jarosz, 2014, p. 179).

In 2016, Wald and Hill made a bold contribution, stating that this area of research needed to move away from simply attempting to define ‘food security’, towards actually achieving it. They further emphasize that food security alone is an inadequate, and that food sovereignty is the best path to ensure a just and sustainable economy of food. Over the last three decades, literature has started to include the concept of alternative food networks. These alternatives pose a stark contrast to dominating industrial food systems, where financial efficiencies trump sustainability (Tregear, 2011). Alternative food networks are characterized by supporting a variety of activities within the food system, from production to retail, including community gardens, food cooperatives, and farmer’s markets (Harris, 2010).

Black Food Sovereignty

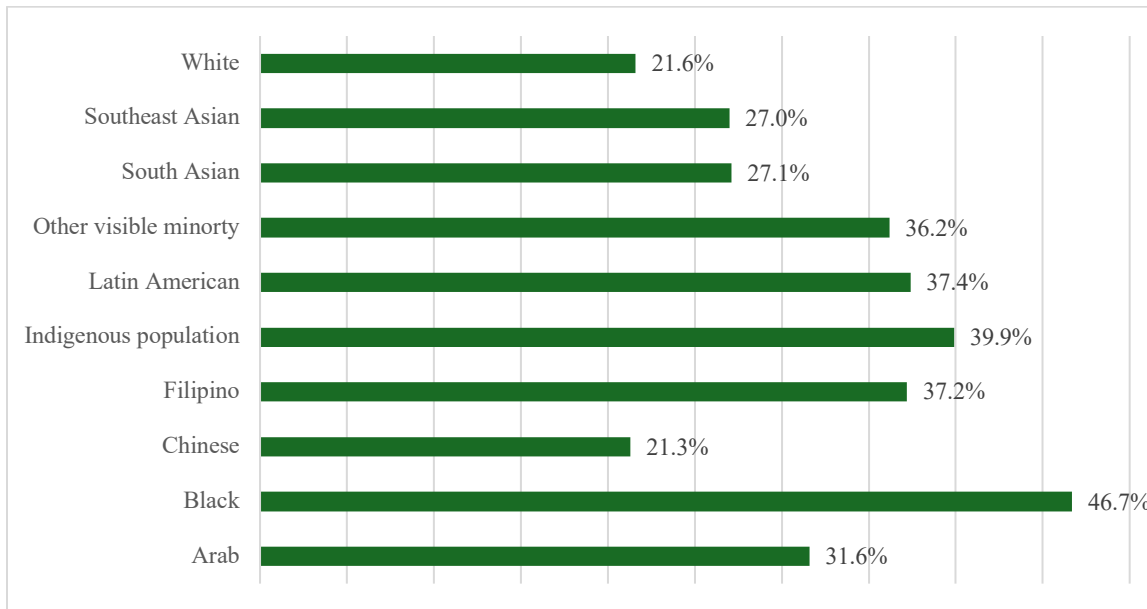
Maudrie et al expand upon moving past food security in 2023, noting that food security initiatives typically emphasize food access and nutrition, yet they frequently overlook cultural foods, the spiritual significance embedded in food, and the importance of whether food production practices promote well-being for humans, as well as plants, animals, land, and water. In the Black diaspora, grassroots organizations and community initiatives are starting to take hold of the concept of food sovereignty, with Toronto’s Black Food Sovereignty Alliance defining Black food sovereignty as:

The right of people of African descent to access healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. Food sovereignty is, therefore, a holistic, healthy and sustainable approach for communities to address chronic food insecurity. (Black Food Sovereignty Alliance, 2024)

As a reminder, shown in Figure 1, compared to Canada’s overall food insecurity rate of 25.5% (PROOF, 2025), Black Canadian households faced a disproportionately high rate of food insecurity at 46.7% in 2024 (PROOF, 2025), with an alarming 46.3% of Black Canadian youth living in food insecure households, as reported in 2023 (PROOF, 2024).

Figure 1

Percentage of people living in food-insecure households by racial/cultural identity & Indigenous status in the ten provinces, 2024



Note. Canadian Income Survey (CIS) 2023. Data on food insecurity for CIS are collected in the year following the survey reference year. We've chosen to label the data using the year of data collection to better reflect the timing of experiences captured. Statistics Canada publishes territorial statistics from CIS separately from provincial statistics. Some territorial statistics have been published in articles in Statistics Canada's The Daily, but the public data tables used for this graph currently does not include the territories.

White - Includes anyone not identified as a visible minority or Indigenous. Visible minority status is defined by the Employment Equity Act as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour".
South Asian - For example, East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan.
Southeast Asian - For example, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai.
Indigenous population - Includes persons who reported having an Indigenous identity, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit), or those who reported more than one identity. Excluded from the survey's coverage are persons living on reserves and other Indigenous settlements in the provinces.
Other visible minority - Includes visible minority groups not included elsewhere. These include West Asian, Korean, Japanese, persons with a write-in response such as Guyanese, West Indian, Tibetan, Polynesian, Pacific Islander, and persons who gave more than one visible minority group by checking two or more mark-in responses, for example, Black and South Asian.

Chart: PROOF. Source: Statistics Canada Table 13-10-0835-01

To put this into perspective, the 2022 moderate or severe food insecurity rates in several countries⁴ are as follows: Bangladesh at 30.5%, Nepal at 37%, Mali at 20%, Vietnam at 10.8%, Senegal at 29.4%, and South Africa at 19.4% (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2024 – with major processing by Our World in Data). While the Canadian national average of 8.5% in this data set⁵ suggests a higher standard of food security, the stark disparity experienced by Black communities reveals a significant issue that demands targeted strategies.

The negative impacts of food insecurity in Black communities, including poor health outcomes, heightened stress, and economic instability, highlight the urgent need for more research and work on Black food sovereignty as a possible solution. The high prevalence of food insecurity in Black communities, exacerbated by systemic racism and socio-economic disparities, underscores the inadequacy of current food security initiatives that, among other failings, often fail to address cultural dimensions of food. By focusing on food sovereignty, Black communities can be empowered to take control over their food systems, ensuring access to culturally relevant, nutritious foods, produced in ways that support overall well-being. This approach not only addresses immediate food needs but also fosters long-term resilience and self-sufficiency, making it a critical area for future research and intervention.

Capacity Building

Researchers present slight variations in defining capacity building, but there is consensus that it refers to the process through which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and societies enhance their ability to carry out essential functions, address challenges, define goals, and respond to development needs in a comprehensive and sustainable way - as defined by the UNDP (1997) and the OECD Development Assistance Committee. The World Health Organization elaborates, noting 3 main phases of capacity building – needs assessment, strategies and actions, and monitoring and evaluation (Milèn, 2001). In addition to addressing the importance of individual, organizational, and system capacity within capacity building

⁴ Food insecurity in relation to this data is defined by the Food Insecurity Experience Scale. Moderate food insecurity is linked to inconsistent access to healthy and nutritious foods, while severe food insecurity is associated with inadequate overall food and caloric intake (Ritchie, Rosado, & Roser, 2023).

⁵ Differences in definitions, measurement tools, and data collection methods between organizations such as FAO and national or community-based groups can lead to variations in reported food insecurity rates, particularly when comparing global estimates to more context-specific data.

frameworks, Babu and Blom (2020) present a variety of capacity-development approaches, specifically relating to building resilient food systems.

Babu and Blom's research on capacity-building strategies to improve food system resiliency in countries with similar or lower food insecurity rates (compared to Black Canadian households) offers valuable insights. They highlight the importance of three main subsystems: policy, markets and institutions, and production (Babu & Blom, 2014). These strategies emphasize the need for robust policies, efficient market mechanisms, and sustainable production practices to create resilient food systems that reduce food insecurity.

Applying Babu and Blom's framework to the context of Black communities in Toronto could be instrumental in addressing food insecurity concerns. By focusing on building capacity within these subsystems, Black communities can work towards achieving food sovereignty. A resilient food system that ensures food security is necessary for food sovereignty, as it empowers communities to control their food production, distribution, and consumption in a way that respects their cultural practices and promotes long-term sustainability. This approach can help mitigate the high rates of food insecurity in Black Canadian households, fostering self-sufficiency and resilience in these communities.

Leadership development and capacity building are crucial components in furthering food sovereignty in Black communities. Effective leadership within these communities can drive the vision, strategic direction, and mobilization required to create and sustain food systems that are equitable, culturally relevant, and self-sufficient. Developing the capacity of leaders who are deeply connected to their communities ensures that initiatives are led by individuals who understand the unique challenges and strengths of their communities, fostering trust and engagement. These leaders can advocate for policies, forge partnerships, and leverage resources to support community-led food sovereignty efforts.

Capacity building goes hand in hand with leadership development. It involves enhancing the skills, knowledge, and resources of individuals and organizations to effectively address food insecurity by working towards food sovereignty. This could include training in sustainable agricultural practices, food distribution, policy advocacy, fundraising, and organizational management. By investing in capacity building, community members and organizations are

better able to implement and sustain food sovereignty initiatives. This empowerment leads to more resilient communities that can adapt to challenges and capitalize on opportunities.

Further research efforts must, therefore, prioritize identifying the specific capacity-building needs of these communities and developing strategies to address them. By supporting the people who are already doing the work, impact can be amplified to ensure that food sovereignty efforts are community-owned and driven, leading to lasting change and resilience in Black communities. This research builds on this emerging concept by exploring the capacity-building needs of Toronto's Black community to address food insecurity within the urban Black diaspora, contributing to more equitable and sustainable solutions.

In a 2004 report, the USAID Office of Food for Peace makes it clear that while food security projects have typically included capacity-building activities, there is not nearly enough evaluation, monitoring, or documentation of these activities to generate lessons learned and best practices (USAID Office of Food for Peace, 2004). In 2020, Jideani published a relevant piece of literature, in which they explore development and capacity building for food security in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, this piece of literature focuses mainly on agricultural and science-based interventions, which are less relevant in Toronto's urban context.

Overall, there is a lack of research focusing on identifying, developing, and leveraging community assets and strengths to address capacity-building needs within urban Black communities, which could provide valuable insights into resilience and self-reliance. Closing these knowledge gaps through further research is essential for developing targeted and holistic approaches to address food insecurity within Toronto's Black diasporic communities, ultimately fostering food sovereignty, equitable, and sustainable solutions.

Theoretical, Conceptual, and Analytical Frameworks

This research provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting the advancement of food sovereignty efforts in Black communities in Toronto. It offers practical recommendations for enhancing community capacity and achieving sustainable, culturally relevant food systems. This approach ensures that the research is grounded in relevant theories and concepts while addressing the specific needs and context of Black communities. To support this analysis, this study draws on Critical Race Theory and Community Development Theory as key analytical

frameworks.

The theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT) is used to explore how systemic racism impacts food security and sovereignty within Black communities. CRT allows for an examination of the social and institutional dynamics that contribute to food insecurity among Black communities, focusing on how power structures, historical injustices, and policy decisions shape current realities (Daftary, 2018). By understanding these factors, this research can better address why food sovereignty is crucial for Black communities to improve food security, and how it might be advanced through capacity-building efforts.

Community Development Theory framework provides insights into how community-led initiatives can be structured to advance food sovereignty. Community Development Theory focuses on the processes and practices that enable communities to enhance their well-being and capacity (Robinson Jr. & Green, 2011). It guides the exploration of strategies for building capacity within Black communities to advance food sovereignty, emphasizing the importance of local knowledge, participation, and empowerment.

Many researchers agree that supporting sustainable food systems requires a different approach to framework consideration (McKenzie & Williams 2015; Rivera-Ferre et al. 2013; Ruiz-Almeida & Rivera-Ferre 2019). For example, Levkoe and Blay-Palmer propose food sovereignty as an appropriate framework to assess food security (2018). The emerging conceptual framework of Food Sovereignty as an evolving concept is based on the shift from food security to food sovereignty, emphasizing the importance of self-reliance, community control, ecological sustainability, and cultural relevance in food systems. This framework unpacks the various dimensions of food sovereignty, such as local food production, equitable food distribution, and the integration of cultural practices and knowledge.

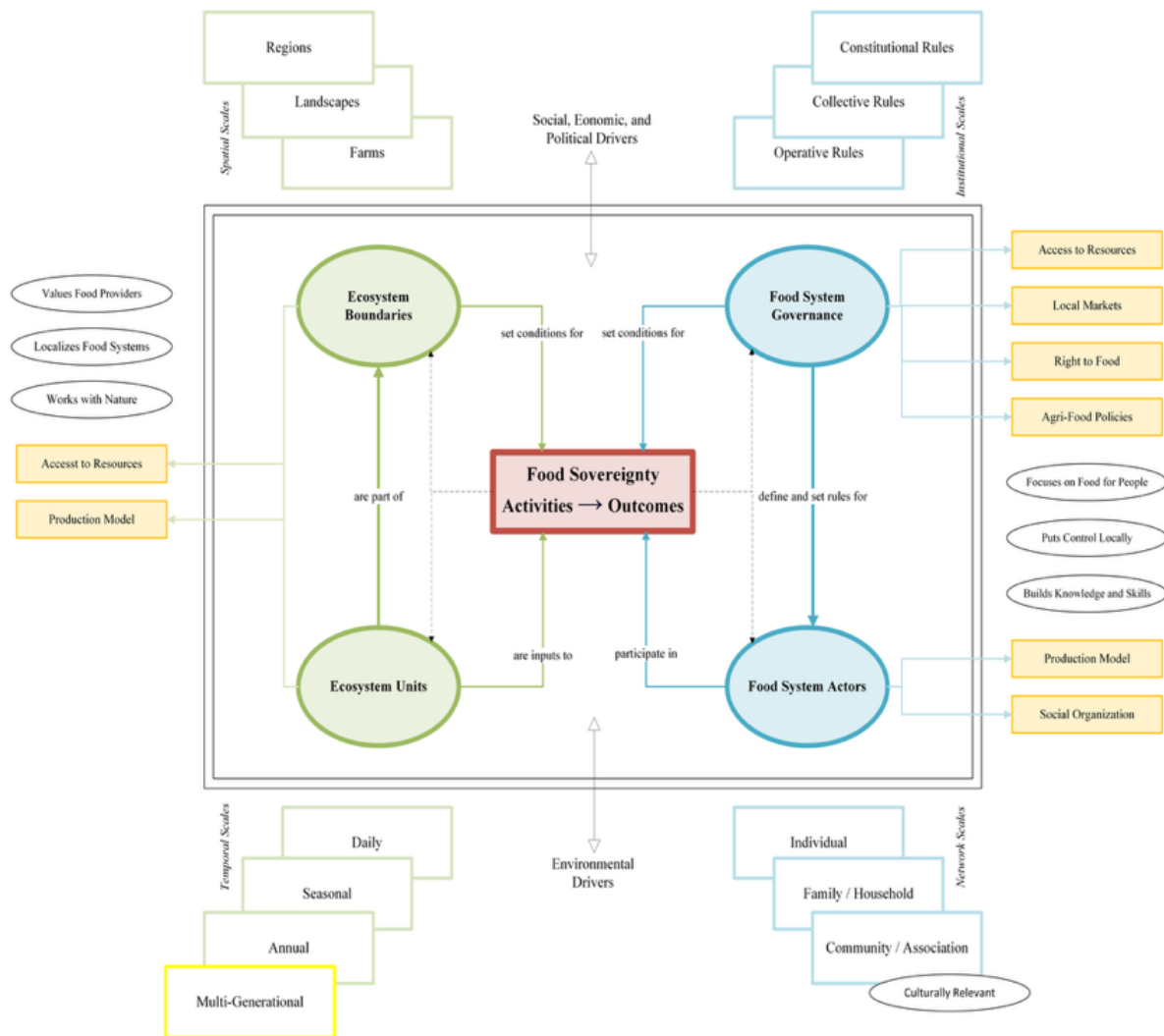
Food Sovereignty as a Conceptual Framework for Assessing Integrated Food Systems

The custom conceptual framework in Figure 2, adapted from Vallejo, Ravera, and Rivera-Ferre's integrated framework, and the Six Pillars of Food Sovereignty identified at the Nyéléni 2007 Forum for Food Sovereignty, details how food sovereignty connects the ecological, social, and political parts of a food system (Vallejo-Rojas et al., 2016; Nyéléni 2007). On the left, it

focuses on the ecosystem: regions, landscapes, and farms shape how food is produced, and they set the conditions not only for valuing food providers and localizing food systems, but for working with nature, rather than against it.

Figure 2

Food Sovereignty Conceptual Framework



Note. Adapted from Vallejo-Rojas, V., Ravera, F., & Rivera-Ferre, M. G. (2016). Developing an integrated framework to assess agri-food systems and its application in the Ecuadorian Andes.

On the right is governance, including the rules and policies that determine access to resources, local markets, and the right to food. These rules influence food system actors, from individuals and families to entire communities and associations, who define and participate in food system and sovereignty activities. At the center of this conceptual framework are the activities and outcomes of food sovereignty, showing how ecosystems, governance, and community actors are

all connected. This framework also emphasizes that broader drivers like social, economic, and political forces shape how food systems work overtime and across different scales.

For Black food sovereignty, this framework is especially helpful. It shows where systemic racism has created barriers—like limited access to land, funding, and decision-making power—and where opportunities for change exist. Supporting Black farmers and urban growers strengthens the ecosystem side, while policy advocacy connects to governance, ensuring Black communities can shape the rules around food access and equity. Using this framework guides this research beyond just food production or consumption. It shows that advancing Black food sovereignty also means transforming policies, strengthening community control, and creating culturally relevant food systems.

Largely influenced by systems mapping, and a desire to visualize the contributing and affected factors of food systems, this conceptual framework contributes to the research by offering a holistic lens through which to analyze the key dimensions of food insecurity and sovereignty in Toronto's Black communities. This framework connects directly to the study's main research question, identifying the most important skills, resources, and supports needed to advance food sovereignty, by recognizing that these needs operate across multiple, interconnected domains. The ecological dimension draws attention to land access, sustainable food production, and the relationships between people and the natural environment. In the context of Toronto's urban Black communities, this dimension highlights the importance of reclaiming land as a site of healing, empowerment, and self-determination, while addressing barriers such as urban development pressures, zoning restrictions, and environmental degradation. By situating land within the ecosystem pillar of food sovereignty, the framework helps illuminate how environmental and spatial justice are foundational to achieving food sovereignty.

The governance aspect of the framework directly informs the analysis of systemic and structural barriers explored in this research. It emphasizes how policies, institutions, and decision-making processes determine who has access to food-producing resources, who benefits from food systems, and who holds power in shaping them. For Black communities in Toronto, governance structures have historically reinforced exclusion through restrictive land-use policies, inequitable funding models, and limited representation in municipal food planning. This framework helps analyze how these power imbalances perpetuate racialized food insecurity and provides a roadmap

for identifying entry points for policy reform and community-led advocacy. The framework's focus on governance also aligns with the secondary research questions, which investigate effective intervention strategies and approaches to community capacity building. It helps connect the findings on funding inequities, land access, and decision-making power to broader systems-level change.

At the center of this framework are the activities and outcomes of food sovereignty, representing the intersection where community agency, ecological stewardship, and equitable governance meet. This intersection is critical for understanding how Black communities in Toronto are already practicing food sovereignty: through community gardens, food programs, youth-led education, and culturally rooted food enterprises. This framework allows the research to assess how these community-led initiatives operate within, and often against, systemic constraints. It also highlights how interventions aimed at improving food security must be evaluated not only in terms of physical access or affordability but in terms of empowerment, sustainability, and cultural relevance.

By integrating the ecological, governance, and community actor dimensions, this framework reinforces the assertion that advancing Black food sovereignty requires structural transformation rather than isolated interventions. It connects the local realities of Toronto's Black food ecosystem to global movements for food justice and decolonization, situating the community's struggles and solutions within a larger theoretical and political context. Ultimately, this framework provides both a conceptual and analytical scaffold for interpreting the study's data, ensuring that the findings are not only descriptive but also critical, relational, and transformative in addressing the root causes of food insecurity in Black urban communities.

Chapter 4: Methodology, Methods, and Data Analysis

Methodology

To explore the capacity-building needs for improving food security and advancing food sovereignty in Toronto's Black diaspora, this research employed a mixed methods approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data. Toronto served as an intrinsic case study for this thesis, given its significant Black population and diverse urban context. The case study method is ideal for this research because it allows for an in-depth exploration of complex social themes within real-life contexts (Yin, 2014). Case studies are also particularly useful in community development research where local dynamics, cultural specificity, and lived experiences are central to understanding systems-level challenges (Stake, 1995). This localized focus provided a unique opportunity for an in-depth examination of the specific challenges and opportunities related to advancing food sovereignty in Black communities. As someone who is personally rooted in Toronto's Black community and who has developed expertise in food security and sovereignty work over the past decade, I am well-positioned to conduct this research. My established connections with community members, organizational leaders, and advocates in this field enable me to approach the research with cultural sensitivity, respect, and an insider's perspective that helps to build trust and encourage open, authentic dialogue.

A questionnaire was selected as the primary research method to efficiently collect both quantitative data—like demographic details—and qualitative insights within a single participant engagement. Multiple-choice questions provided structure for comparison, while open-ended questions allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences. Semi-structured interviews supplemented this data by offering deeper, more contextualized perspectives.

Data collection focused on exploring the lived experiences, insights, and perspectives of key individuals engaged in the work of food sovereignty, aiming to uncover the specific capacities required for community-led food sovereignty initiatives. The research illuminates the existing knowledge, skills, and structures within this area of work, while also identifying gaps that need to be addressed to advance food sovereignty and reduce food insecurity. My connection to the community strengthens the research's potential impact, as I am able to approach these conversations not only as a researcher but as a trusted and committed advocate for the cause.

Methods and Tasks

This research employed an online questionnaire as the main data collection method, supplemented by semi-structured interviews with key participants. The purpose of the questionnaire was to elicit diverse insights on food security, food sovereignty, and capacity-building needs, while the follow-up interviews enabled a deeper exploration of key themes and emerging issues. This dual-method approach ensured both breadth and depth of data, offering a comprehensive understanding of the capacity-building needs within Toronto's Black communities.

The questionnaire consists of both quantitative and qualitative questions (see Appendix A), focusing on identifying needs, barriers, and opportunities for capacity building in food sovereignty efforts. Participants who completed the questionnaire were given the option to participate in a semi-structured interview to provide more detailed insights into the themes identified in the questionnaire. These interviews were voluntary, and conducted via video conferencing using Zoom. The interview questions focused on deepening understanding of the key themes identified in the questionnaire (see Appendix B).

The sample of participants consists of community leaders, policymakers, local food advocates, restaurant owners, chefs, members of grassroots food organizations, provisioners, consumers/eaters, and more, selected based on their involvement and influence in Toronto's Black food security and sovereignty initiatives. A total of 44 participants were recruited for the online questionnaire, with three of these participants completing follow-up interviews⁶ to ensure a diversity of perspectives across sectors and roles. The main recruitment materials included a digital invitation to participate, and a social media post (see Appendix C). It is important to note here that not all participants consented to being named, so there is variability in how direct quotes are attributed—by name, participant number, or organizational affiliation.

To access participants, I leveraged existing relationships with academic institutions (Toronto Metropolitan University and University of Toronto), food sovereignty organizations (Black Food Sovereignty Alliance, Network for the Advancement of Black Communities, Re-Seasoning Coalition, FoodPreneur Lab, FoodShare, etc.), and government/policy bodies (City of

⁶ Of the 44 questionnaire participants, 10 identified their interest in an interview, and 3 followed-up to schedule and complete the interview.

Toronto Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit, etc.).

The research tasks included:

1. Conducting a literature review on food sovereignty, food security, and capacity-building strategies
2. Developing and refining the online questionnaire and follow-up interview questions
3. Recruiting participants and distributing the questionnaire
4. Analyzing questionnaire responses to identify key themes
5. Scheduling and conducting follow-up semi-structured interviews
6. Analyzing interview data using thematic analysis
7. Compiling findings into a final report for dissemination

Data Analysis

Using an intersectional approach to analysis, the data collected through the online questionnaire was first analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to summarize participant demographics and identify patterns in responses. Quantitative data was summarized using descriptive statistics to highlight participant demographics and key patterns. This included analyzing frequencies and percentages related to income, education, food insecurity, and identified support needs. These findings provided needed context for the qualitative themes, and helped illustrate broader trends across the sample. Qualitative responses from the questionnaire were reviewed for emerging themes, which informed the semi-structured interviews. For the qualitative data from interviews, thematic analysis was applied to identify, analyze, and report patterns and themes within the data. This process highlighted recurring ideas related to capacity-building needs, community strengths, and barriers to achieving food sovereignty.

The study employed data triangulation by comparing findings across the questionnaire, interviews, and participant groups. Allowing participants to self-identify in this way—as members of various groups—ensures that the collected data represents a reasonable cross-section of the intersectionalities present in Toronto’s Black diaspora, while considering the nuanced ways in which intersectionality can impact food security. Participants were able to self-identify within one or more of the following groups:

- Farmer
- Community gardener

- Home gardener
- Food Bank (staff/volunteer)
- Nutritionist/Dietician
- Chef/Cook/Food Service
- Food policy advocate
- Government
- Student
- Activist
- Grassroots Organization (no official status)
- Registered Non-Profit
- Registered Charity
- Household Member - I buy the food
- Household Member - I cook the food
- Household member - I eat the food
- Other (please specify)

Additionally, the analysis incorporated an intersectional lens to examine how factors such as racial/ethnic/cultural background, gender, and socio-economic status shape experiences and challenges within Toronto's Black food sovereignty movement. By employing an in-depth questionnaire and interviews as the core methods of data collection, the research provides rich, detailed insights to inform actionable strategies to build capacity to advance food sovereignty in Toronto's Black communities.

Trustworthiness, Reliability, and Validity: Ensuring Data Quality

In the context of this thesis, it is essential to establish the trustworthiness, reliability, and validity of the collected data to produce credible and meaningful findings. Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research involves several strategic measures to enhance the study's credibility and provide a robust understanding of the research problem.

Through a questionnaire and interviews, this study presents a comprehensive and well-rounded understanding of food sovereignty within the community. This approach not only strengthens the reliability of the findings but also ensures that the insights gained are

multifaceted and deeply rooted in diverse perspectives. Another key component is providing detailed descriptions of the context, participants, and findings. This thoroughness allows readers to fully grasp the setting and the specifics of the research environment, making it easier for them to relate the findings to similar contexts. Such rich, contextual information helps in transferring the research outcomes to other settings, thereby enhancing the study's applicability and relevance. These measures collectively contributed to the overall reliability and validity of the research, producing credible and meaningful findings that can inform food sovereignty initiatives in Toronto's Black communities.

Validity refers to the degree to which the measures used in this research accurately reflect the concepts they are intended to assess. This study addresses multiple aspects of validity to ensure that the findings are both accurate and meaningful. Construct validity was a primary focus, ensuring that the research accurately measures the intended constructs (Grimm & Widaman, 2012). This involved carefully developing data collection methods that are grounded in existing literature and informed by community feedback to cover all relevant aspects of the constructs being examined.

Content validity is another critical aspect, ensuring that the measures comprehensively address all relevant components of the constructs under study. This was achieved by designing thorough and detailed data collection tools that capture the full scope of the concepts being researched. By integrating insights from both academic sources and community input, the study ensures that no significant aspects are overlooked.

External validity was also addressed, focusing on the extent to which the study's findings can be transferrable beyond the specific sample used. This involved considering how well the results can be applied to other settings, populations, and measures. By designing the study with generalizability in mind, the research has produced findings that are relevant and applicable in a broader context. Face validity, which assesses whether the research appears to be valid based on the appropriateness of the testing methods and tools used, was also be considered. Ensuring that the measures are relevant and appropriate at first glance helps to build initial trust and credibility in the research process.

Ethical and Research Review

Given the focus on Black communities and the sensitive nature of the research topic, it was imperative to adhere to strict ethical guidelines that respect the dignity, rights, and cultural values of these groups. This research has received ethics approval from the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) to ensure that all interviews were conducted ethically and respectfully. The HREB certificate number is 0001260473 and a copy has been included in Appendix D. All questionnaire and interview participants completed consent forms prior to engaging in the research (see Appendix E)

Strengths and Limitations

This section discusses the strengths and limitations of this research, highlighting the unique advantages and challenges that arose throughout the study. By examining these factors, the goal is to provide a balanced view of the research design, methodology, and overall approach, ensuring transparency and a comprehensive understanding of the study's scope and potential impact. Identifying these strengths and limitations helps in mitigating challenges and in leveraging the research's strong points to maximize its contribution to the field.

Strengths

One key strength of this research is its relational and participatory approach, prioritizing community engagement. By involving Toronto's Black diasporic communities in shaping the research questions, methodology, and outcomes, this research maintains cultural relevance and reflects community needs. Stakeholder interviews enriched findings with practical insights, enhancing relevance and applicability. This research provides valuable insights into addressing food security challenges within urban Black diasporic communities, advancing knowledge in community development and public health. Additionally, this thesis brings forth a unique approach to food security research.

The research surfaced deep interest and engagement in food sovereignty work, even among participants who were not formally connected to food-focused organizations. Many respondents demonstrated a clear understanding of the broader systemic forces contributing to food insecurity, as well as a commitment to building solutions that are culturally relevant, self-

determined, and sustainable. This widespread interest is itself a form of community capacity, a vital resource that should be nurtured through investment, trust-building, and accessible entry points for leadership development and organizing.

Limitations

While this study offers valuable insights, it is important to recognize its limitations. Sampling bias could have occurred, due to challenges in accessing certain segments of urban Black diasporic communities, affecting representativeness. Time and resource constraints limited the scope of research, potentially affecting depth and breadth. The dynamic nature of food security issues, the scope of the case study, and community contexts also limited the transferability of this research.

Further, the interview sample was smaller than expected, and is used to provide additional context, rather than representative data. Additionally, some ambiguity emerged around definitions used in the questionnaire—particularly the term *Black community*. One participant, Georgia Hanson, explicitly challenged the concept, suggesting that “there are no black communities per se in Toronto [...] Toronto has poor communities that black people happen to be living in” (2025). This points to the need for clarifying definitions, and accounting for the diversity of Black experiences in future research.

Chapter 5: Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the research, drawn from both the online questionnaire and follow up interviews conducted with members of Toronto’s Black food ecosystem. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the main themes that emerged in relation to the research questions, illustrating how participants understand food security and food sovereignty, and identifying the capacities, resources, and supports needed to advance Black food sovereignty in the city. The chapter begins with an overview of participant demographics to contextualize the responses (section one of the questionnaire). The quantitative findings outline numerical insights from multiple-choice and ranking questions, helping to illustrate trends and shared priorities across the participant groups. The qualitative findings include open-ended responses, based on lived experiences and community context. Together, these sections demonstrate how participants are understanding and addressing food insecurity, and how they are advancing food sovereignty through community-led strategies rooted in justice, resilience, and cultural relevance. The organization of this chapter is intended to guide the reader from descriptive context, through thematic interpretation, toward the broader implications that will be explored further in the Discussion and Analysis chapter.

Quantitative Findings: Participant demographics

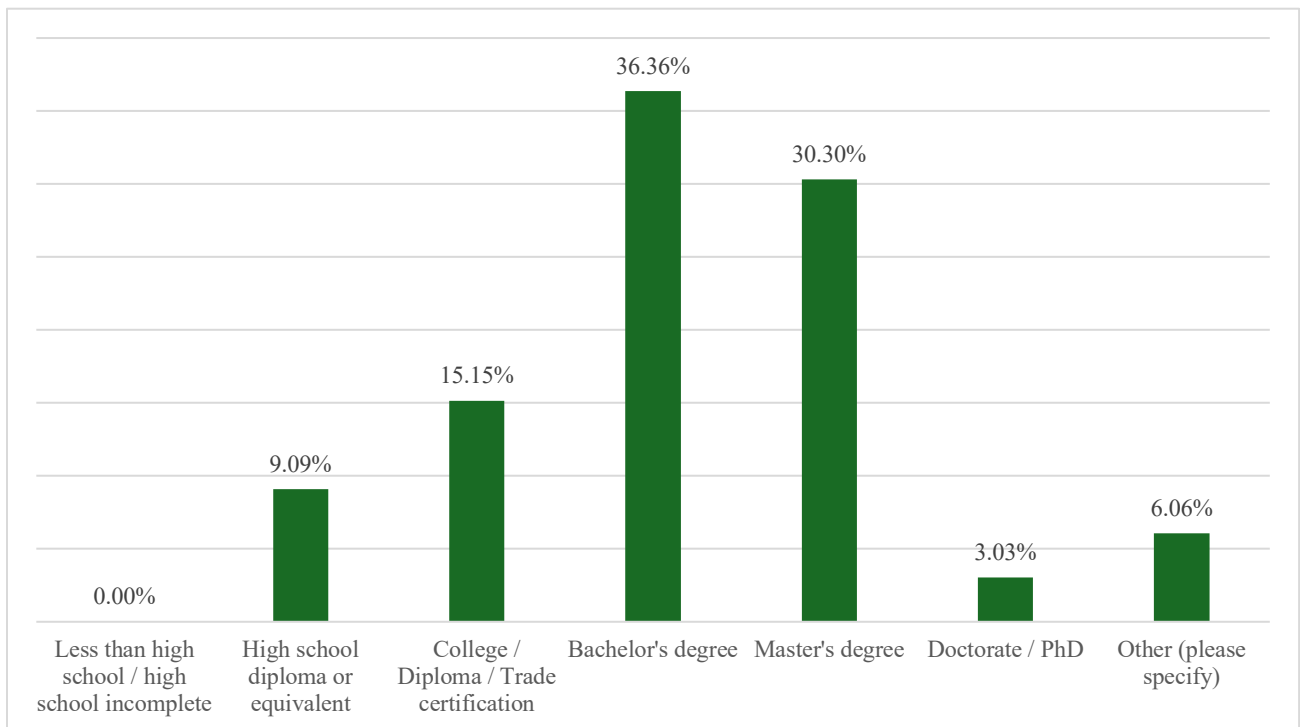
A total of 44 individuals from varied backgrounds participated in the questionnaire, contributing diverse thoughts and comments to this research. Across 23 questions, participants identified key barriers to advancing Black food sovereignty and reducing food insecurity for Toronto’s Black population. These understandings were shaped by the demographic diversity of respondents. Participants came from a range of professional, geographic, and cultural backgrounds. Out of 34 respondents, 33 identified themselves as “Black”, and there was meaningful variation in cultural heritage, including Caribbean, African, Afro-Latine, and multiracial identities. The only non-Black respondent identified as South Asian. Out of 30 respondents, 16 reported working in community organizations, grassroots collectives, and food justice networks, while others had experience as educators, health professionals, or independent entrepreneurs. Only 11 of the same 33 participants identified themselves as being directly

involved in food production—as a farmer, home gardener, or community gardener.

As seen in Figure 3, of the 33 participants who identified their highest obtained or in-progress level of “formal” education, 75.5% reported having attained or currently pursuing at least a Bachelor's degree, while 39.4% indicated they had either completed or were working toward a Master's degree or higher.

Figure 3

Highest level of formal education attained or in progress

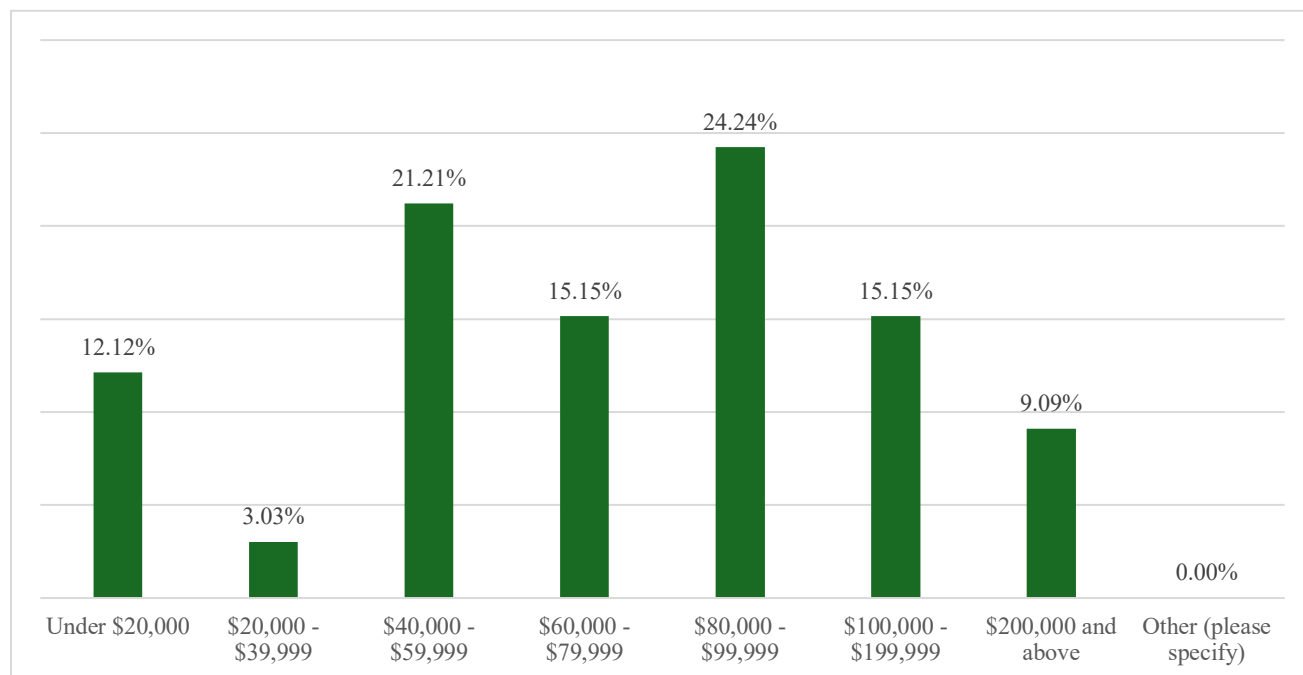


Of 33 participants who provided details on their source of income, 87.9% identified that they were earning salary from employment. In Toronto, it is estimated an average annual income of at least \$86,062 is needed to sustain a single person living in a one-bedroom apartment; this does not account for multi-person households, or individuals with additional expenses like medication, debt, or caregiving costs (Arsenych, 2025). Based on questionnaire responses, shown in Figure 4, participant income levels varied widely, but 51.51% of 33 participants reported household incomes below \$80,000. When asked about household food, 40% of 30 respondents indicated they live in a food insecure household—almost on par with national

statistics. It's important to note that several participants reported navigating multiple marginalizations, including gender, disability, queer identity, and immigrant status. These layers of identity shaped how they understood the urgency and complexity of food sovereignty.

Figure 4

Participant household income range



Quantitative Findings: Priority Areas for Advancing Black Food Sovereignty

Q16: What THREE resources or supports do you believe are most needed to improve food security/sovereignty in Black communities? (Select 3)

Analysis of responses, shown in Figure 5, indicates that the top three community-identified priorities for capacity building to advance Black food sovereignty are:

1. *Land Access*: Cited by 53.3% of respondents (16 out of 30 respondents), this was the most frequently selected support type. This underscores the structural challenge of securing stable, long-term access to land for urban agriculture and community-based growing spaces.
2. *Household Funding/Income*: With 50% of participants (15 out of 30 respondents) identifying this as a key support, financial security at the individual and household level

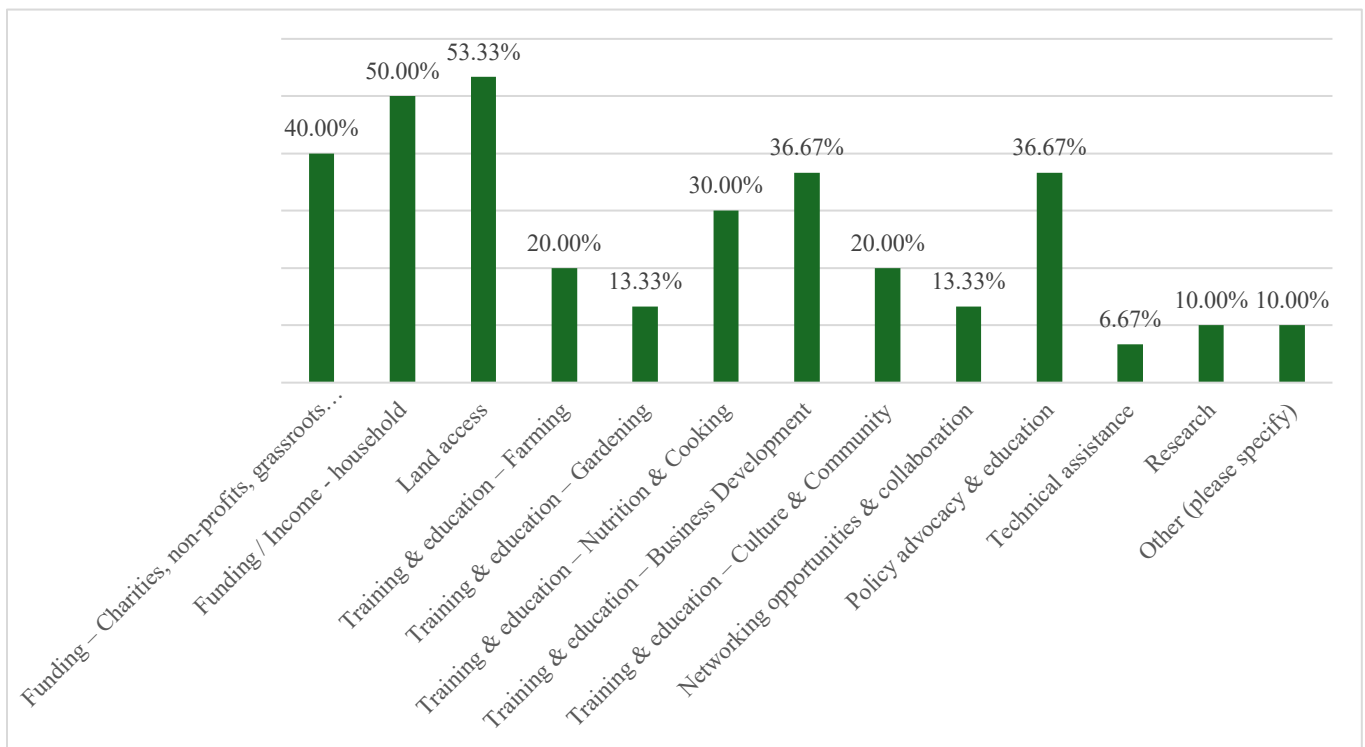
remains crucial to securing reliable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food.

3. *Funding for Charities, Non-Profits, and Grassroots Groups*: Selected by 40% (12 out of 30 respondents), this category reflects the importance of sustaining community-led organizations and initiatives. These groups often fill gaps left by formal institutions and are at the forefront of food sovereignty efforts.

Other support types such as farming education (20% of 30 respondents), gardening education (13.3% of 30 respondents), food business training, and infrastructure investment (e.g., greenhouses, kitchens) were also mentioned, though with lower frequency.

Figure 5

Resources or supports most needed to improve food security/sovereignty in Black communities



Qualitative Findings: Topical Insights

Q15: What specific challenges do Black communities in Toronto face in advancing food security/sovereignty? (Open-ended) – 27 responses

Q17: Are there any specific skills or knowledge areas that you believe are currently lacking within the community to support food security/sovereignty efforts? (Open-ended) – 24 responses

Q21: Please describe your vision of a healthy food future for Toronto's Black communities (Open-ended) – 27 responses

Q22: What does food sovereignty / security / justice mean to you? (Open-ended, in your own words) – 27 responses

Q23: Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences or views on food sovereignty and food security? (Open-ended)- 14 responses

Responses to the five above main qualitative questions provided insights into the determinants of food insecurity, the effectiveness of interventions, and community capacity-building needs.

Determinants of Food Security

Across participant responses, affordability emerged as a dominant concern. Of 27 responses to question 15, 51.9% described a sharp and sustained rise in the cost of food, with particular concern about the price of fresh, healthy options like produce and meat. Relating to unaffordability, respondents provided comments such as “financial barriers presenting obstacles to purchase healthy foods, especially vegetables and lean meat” (Participant # 110019781295, 2025). Another response noted:

Really extreme jump in prices & reduction in quantity for groceries post-2020. Also, I lived in Scarborough, and while I was interested in shopping more locally, it would be difficult to make multiple stops to local businesses vs. a big box grocery store.
(Participant #110019831647, 2025)

In addition to general affordability, two responses to Question 15 noted the inability to access culturally specific foods. In Question 15, the impact of structural and historical economic exclusion was cited eight times (of 27 narrative responses) as a root cause of food insecurity. One participant specifically identified:

...Systemic issues like racism and classism. Higher rates of poverty as a result of systemic issues, and lack of funds and resources to achieve their self determined goals. A system that was designed to keep Black people away from wealth and away from the tables at which important decisions are made around food and rights. A system that doesn't value Black input or wisdom as much as white. Black people face many many barriers and challenges to advancing food sovereignty. (Renée D'Souza, 2025)

In response to question 15, three of 27 participants noted that food insecurity was exacerbated by knowledge gaps, particularly among those who lack understanding of how local food systems operate or where food comes from. Latissah Alleyne of Archipel Research and Consulting (an Indigenous-owned and women-led firm) clearly articulated this, stating:

Lack of access to fresh organic produce, and cultural foods at a reasonable price in a close proximity to their homes. Also, a lack of sovereignty in terms of having the ability to grow food for themselves and their communities due to a variety of factors including cost, access to suitable outdoor space, knowledge and skillset, lack of access to Elders to pass on generational knowledge due to intergenerational trauma and the effects of Western individualism. (2025)

Intervention Strategies

With 24 responses to Question 17, participants proposed a wide range of strategies to address food insecurity through community capacity building, in response to Question 17. A recurring theme (noted in 12 of these responses) was the importance of education, particularly around nutrition, cooking, and healthy eating.

In response to question 15 which asked participants to identify challenges that Black communities in Toronto face in advancing food security/sovereignty, 10 of 27 participants highlighted the need to create and sustain culturally relevant food environments. The vision expressed in these responses included Afrocentric community gardens, markets, accessible grocery stores, and kitchens that prioritized Black foods, farmers, and traditions. A representative of Bethel Outreach Community Services (a non-profit organization providing services and programs for marginalized communities) described their vision for a healthy food future for

Toronto’s Black community as “equitable access to fresh, culturally relevant, and affordable food, rooted in dignity, sustainability, and community-led solutions” (2025).

Out of 27 responses to Question 15, four indicated that built environment and accessibility considerations were another critical area of focus, and highlighted the role of urban design, land use, and transportation in shaping food access. They described the need for more accessible community gardens, mobile markets, and neighborhood food hubs. When asked to describe their vision of a healthy food future (Question 21), one response detailed “I like the idea of having access to walkable sources of diverse food options. I like community gardens, and things that encourage people to share, barter, or swap to meet each other's needs” (Participant # 110019831647, 2025).

Question 21 had 27 responses, 10 of which elicited participants to describe their vision of a healthy Black food future. They saw it as including some sort of localized, culturally relevant food production, such as community gardens or Black-owned/operated farms. Regarding power and participation, 6 of the same 27 respondents specifically called for greater community control and agency over food systems. This included desires to have more say in how food is sourced, produced, and distributed, as well as in how food-related policies are developed and implemented. Across all questions, 5 responses also specifically mentioned a need for additional capacity-building supports for Black-owned businesses, with a representative of Toronto’s Black Food Sovereignty Alliance stating:

There is a need for more training in business management, grant writing, and scaling food enterprises, especially for culturally focused food businesses. Knowledge gaps also exist in sustainable farming techniques, cold chain logistics, and market access strategies that would allow Black food producers to compete in larger retail and institutional markets. (2025)

Defining Food Sovereignty

When asked to define food sovereignty in their own terms, 27 participants offered definitions grounded in lived experience, cultural identity, and values of self-reliance. Two of these participants pinpointed the concept of dignity—being able to access nutritious, culturally

appropriate food without reliance on charity or the stigma often associated with emergency food aid. A representative of Seniors Farm (agricultural company that imports Caribbean produce) defined food sovereignty as:

having control over our food systems, from how it's grown to how it's distributed, so our communities can feed themselves with dignity. It means not just having enough food, but having food that reflects our culture, nourishes our health, and supports economic independence. (Seniors Farm, 2025)

Similarly, another individual explained that food sovereignty:

means that people have agency in the decisions they make around food. They have the ability and resources required to choose how and what they eat, whether that's the skills and land to grow their own food, or the funds to purchase the food they want from the places they want, for example. Food security to me is having access to nutritious and culturally relevant foods, or in other words, having one's fundamental right to food realized. Food justice to me includes all of that, plus the reparations for Black and Indigenous folks and other people from marginalized communities who have not had equitable access to food, land, or money, among other things. (Renée D'Souza, 2025)

The link between food sovereignty and education was another strong theme, with 21 out of 44 participants able to identify skills or knowledge areas that they believe are lacking within the community to support food security/sovereignty efforts. Two narrative responses across all questions noted that they view teaching children how to grow food, cook traditional meals, and understand food systems as a way to preserve cultural knowledge, reduce dependency, and strengthen intergenerational ties.

Autonomy and self-reliance also featured heavily in participants' definitions of food sovereignty. Nine individuals described food sovereignty as an existence where Black communities can make decisions for themselves—about what to grow, where to grow it, and how to distribute it, mentioning key words like “control”, “agency”, and “active decision making”.

Summary

The findings from the questionnaire and interviews provide an overview of the experiences, priorities, and understandings of food security and sovereignty among Black communities in Toronto. Participants reported a range of socioeconomic conditions, with 40% indicating that they lived in food-insecure households and more than half reporting household incomes below \$80,000. Most respondents cited rising food prices, low wages, and systemic economic exclusion as central challenges affecting their ability to consistently access nutritious and culturally relevant food.

Responses also conveyed a broad understanding of food sovereignty that extended beyond access to include themes of culture, land, autonomy, and community well-being. Participants described food sovereignty as rooted in cultural identity and collective action, naming priorities such as land access, sustainable funding for Black-serving organizations, and increased household income. Youth engagement and intergenerational knowledge sharing also featured prominently, with respondents expressing the importance of mentorship and culturally grounded training in food-related skills.

Throughout the findings, participants identified a range of strategies to address food insecurity. These included improving access to culturally specific food, expanding land-based education and community gardening, and supporting grassroots infrastructure through sustained funding and resources. Education and awareness-building were also highlighted as key tools to build capacity within communities. These responses reflect a complex understanding of the systemic barriers facing Black communities in Toronto's food system and outline multiple community-defined approaches to addressing them. The following chapter provides a critical analysis of these themes, integrating theoretical frameworks and supporting literature.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Analysis

This chapter presents an analysis and discussion of the research findings through the lens of the conceptual frameworks guiding this research. Drawing from Critical Race Theory, Community Development Theory, and Food Sovereignty frameworks, the discussion examines how participants' perspectives and experiences reflect deeper structural dynamics and community capacity needs. By analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data collected through questionnaires and interviews, this chapter explores how intersecting factors influence food security for Toronto's Black communities, and considers the implications for advancing Black food sovereignty through community-led strategies.

Thematic Analysis

Structural Barriers and Systemic Racism

A dominant and recurring theme was the systemic nature of the barriers facing Toronto's Black communities in advancing food sovereignty. Structural racism, shaped by colonial legacies and present-day policies, was cited as a root cause of food insecurity. Participants described how interconnected systems—housing discrimination, employment (precarity, underemployment, unemployment), criminalization, and healthcare inequities—limit access to food, land, and opportunities for self-determination. These experiences reflect key tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which highlight how systemic power and racialized structures shape material conditions and marginalize racialized communities. In particular, the ignoring of Black food needs in mainstream food policy and supply chains was noted as a persistent challenge that undermines local sovereignty.

This theme was further evident in responses to Questions 15 and 17, where participants emphasized the prevalence of structural barriers, with one noting that:

Black communities in Toronto face challenges such as limited access to culturally appropriate foods, high costs for imported produce, and systemic barriers to owning land or running food businesses. Many Black farmers and food entrepreneurs also struggle to access funding, infrastructure, and distribution channels, making it harder to achieve true food sovereignty. Without targeted support, these communities often rely on supply

chains that don't reflect their cultural needs or provide economic opportunities within the community (Seniors Farm, 2025)

Insights like this suggest that food insecurity is not merely a result of poverty or insufficient supply, but of deliberate, ill-informed, and sustained policy decisions, reflecting epistemic blindness⁷. These types of decisions have historically excluded Black communities from land ownership, agricultural education, and food system governance. Several participants pointed to the underrepresentation of Black voices in municipal planning and funding decisions, reinforcing the need for targeted, equity-based policy interventions.

Access to Land and Infrastructure

Another key theme centered on land access and the urgent need for long-term, secure, and affordable growing spaces in Toronto. Participants expressed that land is not only a resource, but also a symbol of autonomy, cultural preservation, and healing. For many, the ability to grow culturally relevant food (such as callaloo, okra, cassava, or sorrel) represents a direct line to ancestral knowledge and diasporic identity. However, the urban context presents significant challenges: land is scarce, expensive, and often subject to bureaucratic processes that disadvantage community-led groups. This reality is not new, but it is not visible to all. Between 2004 and 2005, Block, Chavez, and Birgen (2008) conducted semi-structured group interviews in African-American communities for the Northeastern Illinois Community Food Security Assessment, similarly highlighting issues of lack of control over resources including land use. In an article about land ownership, Sierra-Gutierrez of Future Black Female (2025) states that “[for] Black and Black Indigenous communities in Canada, reclaiming land is vital for food sovereignty, as it allows them to reconnect with traditional farming practices, resist exploitation, and access culturally relevant food”.

Participants overwhelmingly identified land access as a missing but essential pillar of local food sovereignty. Community gardens were described as useful but insufficient, often characterized by short-term membership, gentrification, and restrictive regulations. The lack of secure growing space was seen as a barrier not only to food production, but to community

⁷ In this context, epistemic blindness refers to the failure of policymakers to recognize how their own assumption, priorities, dominant knowledge systems, and embedded power dynamics shape decisions about food systems.

cohesion, economic opportunity, and cultural resilience. This aligns with the conceptual framework of food sovereignty, particularly the pillars of valuing food providers, localizing food systems, and working with nature. A 2024 review of empirical cases agrees, “stressing the need for a sustainable care and use of land, water, and seeds, to preserve biodiversity and the ecosystems’ functions that allow the attainment of [food sovereignty]” (Benavides-Frias et al., 2024, p334).

Financial Resources and Economic Justice

Closely tied to the issue of land access was the theme of financial resources, both at the individual/household level, and the organizational level (in reference to charities, non-profits, and grassroots groups). Across the data set, respondents highlighted economic precarity as a key determinant of food insecurity. Some reported living below the poverty line, receiving government assistance, or juggling multiple jobs while trying to engage in food justice work.

At the organizational level, participants representing Black-serving initiatives described chronic underfunding and inequitable access to grants and donations. Many referenced the need for unrestricted, long-term operational funding to avoid burnout, scale programs, and retain staff. For example, a representative of Bethel Outreach Community Services (2025) noted that even when Black people are engaged in food systems work, they are often “not being paid the same salary as [their] counterparts”, while Lucy (2025), another questionnaire respondent, spoke to the cumulative burden of structural inequities, stating that “Black people already face more than enough oppression... unfortunately I’m not surprised”. Together, these perspectives illustrate how financial precarity in Black food sovereignty work is not only an organizational issue, but is shaped by wider patterns of inequity affecting Black workers and communities. This reinforces the literature review’s findings, that food sovereignty requires economic justice—not only the redistribution of food, but the redistribution of power and resources. Charities and grassroots groups need sustained investment to build infrastructure, expand training, and foster leadership. This theme is closely linked to Community Development Theory, emphasizing participatory governance, local capacity building, and empowerment as foundational to sustainable change. Similarly, Critical Race Theory (CRT) is highlighted here through the historical and ongoing racialized exclusion of Black communities from institutional funding and decision-making. CRT guides exploration of whose knowledge and leadership are valued, and how structural barriers

reproduce inequity in (seemingly) “race-neutral” systems like philanthropy or public funding. Advancing Black food sovereignty requires a shift of power to redesign the systems through which needed resources flow.

Education, Knowledge, and Capacity Building

Participants identified a strong desire for culturally rooted training and education across multiple areas: food production, business development, nutrition, cultural cooking, and land stewardship. In particular, there was an emphasis on intergenerational learning and Black-led knowledge exchange. Question 17 generated a wealth of insights around skills gaps in areas like grant writing, urban farming, cooperative governance, and climate resilience. Participants stressed that traditional forms of education often fail to meet the needs of Black food practitioners, and that community-based, peer-led training was both more relevant and more empowering.

Responses to Questions 18 and 19 revealed that while some participants had participated in capacity building or skills training, these efforts were often underfunded, short-lived, or inaccessible to those with multiple barriers (e.g., language, transportation, disability). This speaks directly to the Food Sovereignty conceptual framework’s emphasis on community control, culturally relevant knowledge, and ecological sustainability. Respondents emphasized that building capacity is not just about skill acquisition; it’s about building collective power and resilience in the face of systemic exclusion.

Mental Health, Burnout, and Sustainability

A less anticipated but crucial theme was the emotional and psychological toll of food justice and frontlines work, including advancing food sovereignty, in under-resourced environments. Participants spoke to the exhaustion of “doing more with less,” often without adequate support, compensation, recognition, or rest. Some described the emotional burden of seeing their communities experience preventable hunger and isolation, while others shared that the pressure to succeed with limited resources created stress and burnout. At the same time, these conditions have also prompted strategies of mutual support. One interviewee described the

creation of a “Circle of Gold”⁸ as a savings mechanism to circulate resources within community (Latissah Alleyne). These narratives reflect not only the broader challenges of sustaining grassroots movements under systemic strain, but the ways that Black communities come together in strength, mobilizing culturally rooted financial practices to mitigate burnout through collective care and reciprocity.

Participants expressed a desire for funding models and institutional partnerships that do not replicate harmful colonial dynamics or extractive practices. They called for deeper relationships, long-term collaboration, and space to heal and grow. This theme reinforces the findings of the literature review—the importance of holistic approaches to capacity building that go beyond technical skills, integrating mental health, collective care, and relational accountability into the food sovereignty movement.

Youth Engagement and Intergenerational Knowledge Sharing

Many respondents highlighted that their personal connection to food systems started in childhood, participating in food cultivation, harvesting, and cooking with older members of their family. This is not insignificant, as youth engagement was a main theme of the questionnaire responses. These early engagements were not only about nourishment but about care, skill-building, memory, and cultural continuity. This foundational connection to food systems suggests that youth experiences are pivotal in shaping long-term relationships with food sovereignty practices. Respondents also noted that while many Black elders hold deep knowledge about traditional foodways, growing practices, and land stewardship, these forms of expertise are not always being transferred to younger generations.

Participants also identified several barriers to youth engagement. One interviewee pointed to the enduring stigma associated with land-based work, particularly farming and food labour. They suggested that for some Black youth, agricultural work may evoke historical trauma related to enslavement and forced labour, particularly in contexts where manual labour is devalued and narratives of Black agrarian knowledge are erased. This trauma can contribute to a

⁸ A “Circle of Gold” refers to a community-based rotating savings systems, similar to a West African sou-sou, in which members regularly contribute funds to a shared pool that is then distributed among members in turn—supporting financial resilience and community accountability.

reluctance to engage in food systems work, especially when such work is generally poorly paid, invisible, or disrespected. Wallace Kirby, a founder of Hustlaz to Harvesters, has also emphasized that “[this] is the generation that only sees [agricultural work] as a part of plantation slavery”, and that “everyone wanted to disconnect with the Earth, with nature; they didn’t see the value” (Paynter, 2018). Without critical reframing, youth may see food and land work as regressive rather than liberatory.

Defining Black Food Sovereignty

Another key theme that emerged from participant responses was the concept of autonomy, both individual and collective. Food sovereignty was spoken about as the ability of Black community to control not only what they eat, but how their food is produced, distributed, and governed. The emphasis on autonomy reflects a broader desire for self-determination in the face of systems that have historically excluded Black people from land ownership, food policy decision-making, and economic opportunities. Participants expressed that food sovereignty is not merely about survival or subsistence, but about reclaiming the right to shape culturally relevant food systems on their own terms.

This understanding of autonomy aligns closely with Community Development Theory, which prioritizes local knowledge, self-reliance, and participatory governance. It also resonates with the governance dimension of the Food Sovereignty Conceptual Framework, where power over decision-making is central to equitable food systems. Their definitions provide insight into the values, histories, and lived experiences that shape how food sovereignty is envisioned in Toronto’s Black communities. Respondents expressed that food sovereignty should not be imposed from outside actors, but rather built from within.

Ultimately, the definitions offered by participants show a deep understanding of the complexities of food systems and how they are influenced by systemic and other factors. Questionnaire participants identified that food sovereignty is not just about food, it is about justice, culture, and control. It is both a response to systemic inequities and a vision for an alternative future. As such, any efforts to build food sovereignty in Black communities must take a holistic, culturally grounded, and community-led approach.

Answering the Research Questions

Main Research Question:

This study set out to explore the central question: *What are the most important skills, resources, and supports that are needed to advance food sovereignty efforts to reduce food insecurity for Toronto's Black communities?* Through participant responses gathered via questionnaire and interviews, several key themes emerged that help answer this question and illuminate broader patterns across Toronto's Black food ecosystem. The following section discusses the top three priorities identified by respondents and situates them within the broader literature and local context.

Land Access

Across both qualitative and quantitative responses, access to land emerged as the most frequently cited and passionately emphasized need for achieving Black food sovereignty in Toronto. Participants noted that urban land—especially public land—is often inaccessible, unaffordable, or zoned in ways that prevent meaningful long-term use for food production. Additionally, legacies of displacement, gentrification, and lack of generational land ownership among Black communities were cited as systemic barriers to cultivating self-sufficiency through growing food. Land access was also closely tied to broader notions of autonomy, stewardship, intergenerational healing, and cultural reconnection; demonstrating that land is not only a material resource, but also a social, spiritual, and political one. Borrás, Franco, and Suárez begin a 2015 article by explaining that “efforts to construct food sovereignty often involve struggles to (re)constitute democratic systems of land access and control” (pg. 1). In this context, land access is not simply a technical or logistical issue, it is central to rebuilding food systems grounded in justice, ownership, and Black self-determination.

Land access in Toronto is deeply complicated by the realities of settler colonialism. While Black communities face systemic barriers to land ownership and tenure, it is utterly essential to recognize that all land in Toronto is Indigenous land (including much unceded territory). This creates a paradox in food sovereignty efforts, for Black communities to seek land justice without simply reproducing colonial logics of entitlement and erasure. Land access and equitable land use for Black communities must be pursued alongside a commitment to and solidarity with Indigenous land rights and repatriation efforts. Any approach to Black food sovereignty must

ultimately be accountable to Indigenous sovereignty, and grounded in relationships of consent and shared struggle against colonial-capitalist systems that continue to deny both groups access to land, resources, and self-determination.

Funding and Household Income

Household income was another top concern raised by participants, particularly in how it directly shapes day-to-day food access and purchasing power. Several participants drew clear connections between low incomes, food insecurity, and chronic stress in Black households. Many discussed the limitations of relying on emergency food programs, which often fail to provide culturally appropriate or nutritionally adequate food. This finding reinforces existing research from the Canadian Poverty Institute (Cook & Yembilah, 2023) and the Aristotle Foundation for Public Policy (Lau & Hunt, 2024), that highlights the disproportionate rates of poverty and precarious employment among Black Canadians.

Funding for Organizations and Grassroots Groups

Respondents also stressed the urgent need for funding supports for Black-led and Black-serving charities, non-profits, and grassroots organizations. In my experience, these groups are often the ones leading food sovereignty efforts on the ground through gardens, markets, food education, and mutual aid. Unfortunately, they are also most likely to face chronic underfunding, unstable grant cycles, and institutional barriers to accessing public funds. Many expressed frustrations with “performative” funding announcements that do not translate into long-term, flexible support for community-led work. The research also illuminated a desire for funding models that support capacity building, infrastructure development, and community ownership, rather than short-term project deliverables.

Secondary Questions:

Determinants of Food Security: What are the factors influencing food security within urban Black diasporic communities? This question seeks to uncover the underlying determinants of food insecurity that will inform targeted interventions.

The findings of this research strongly suggest that the primary determinants of food insecurity among Toronto’s Black communities are systemic and structural in nature, rooted in long-standing patterns of economic exclusion and racial inequity. Participants repeatedly

emphasized the rising cost of food (particularly healthy and fresh items), as a major barrier to food security. This issue of affordability is especially critical in the context of widespread inflation and stagnant wages, conditions that disproportionately affect Black communities facing historic and ongoing economic marginalization. For many working-class Black households, the perception that nutritious food is becoming an unattainable luxury reinforces existing vulnerabilities and deepens the divide between those who can access healthy options and those who cannot. When describing their ideal food future, a representative of the Afro Caribbean Business Network stated, “healthy food and nutrition becoming a mainstay in Black communities”. The emphasis on food becoming a “mainstay” suggests that access to nutritious, culturally relevant food is not currently consistent or normalized, but is instead uncommon or aspirational—highlighting how healthy food, in many cases, can be more of a privilege than a reliable, everyday resource.

A second major determinant emerging from the data is the inaccessibility of culturally relevant foods. Participants discussed the difficulty in sourcing traditional African and Caribbean foods in mainstream grocery stores, and the premium prices often associated with these items when they are available. These challenges reflect both infrastructural gaps in food retail systems and a broader disconnection from culturally significant foodways. For many Black Torontonians, food insecurity is not just about hunger or nutrition, it is also about cultural alienation and the erosion of culinary traditions that are central to identity and community wellbeing. These findings affirm that food sovereignty must include access to culturally appropriate foods as a key pillar of equitable food systems.

The analysis also aligns with Critical Race Theory’s perspective on the cumulative impact of systemic racism, and the importance of experiential knowledge (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2019). Multiple participants noted that the economic vulnerability of Black communities is not accidental or recent, but rather the result of generations of exclusion from wealth-building opportunities such as land ownership, generational wealth, and fair employment. These structural dynamics form a critical backdrop for understanding the unique vulnerabilities Black communities face within the urban food landscape.

Another important factor highlighted in the data was the presence of knowledge gaps related to food systems. While many participants had strong memories of cooking or growing

food in their families, several also expressed a lack of understanding around local food supply chains, policy mechanisms, or how to access community-based food initiatives. This lack of knowledge was viewed not as an individual deficit, but as a systemic issue, reflecting a failure of public education systems and institutional outreach to engage Black communities meaningfully in food and land-based learning. Respondents suggested that improving food literacy and systems navigation could be powerful tools for reducing dependence on precarious food relief services.

Together, these findings point to the need for targeted interventions that address both immediate and root causes of food insecurity in Toronto's Black communities. The economic barriers to food access, combined with infrastructural limitations and gaps in culturally relevant supply chains, underscore the urgency of community-driven solutions that prioritize sovereignty and empowerment. In line with the frameworks of Critical Race Theory and Community Development Theory, the data make clear that any approach to food security that fails to engage with the racialized political economy of food will remain incomplete and ineffective. These determinants not only shape what food is available and affordable but also whose knowledge, preferences, and histories are valued in the making of Toronto's food system.

Intervention Strategies: What actionable steps and strategies can be recommended for community capacity building to improve food security outcomes? What interventions currently exist, and how effective are they? These questions aim to identify interventions that empower communities to address food insecurity, with a focus on community-led food sovereignty solutions.

Starting with the capacity-building priorities identified through the research (land access, funding for household income, and funding for Black-led organizations and grassroots groups), this section proposes a series of intervention strategies that can be implemented to improve food security outcomes and support Black food sovereignty efforts in Toronto. Each strategy aims to empower communities through community-led, culturally grounded, and sustainable approaches.

To address the need for land access, one effective intervention strategy is the establishment of secure land tenure agreements for Black-led growing initiatives. This could take the form of long-term leases on city-owned land, prioritizing Black growers and community

organizations. Participants noted the instability of temporary or precarious access, which impedes long-term planning and community investment. A second strategy is the development of a land trust model specifically for Black food sovereignty efforts. This model, inspired by the United States-based Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust, and proven to have significant impact for Black farmers, could allow community groups to collectively own or steward land, protecting valuable space from market pressures and enabling generational use (NEFOC, 2025). Both approaches require municipal collaboration and policy shifts that acknowledge land as a tool for racial equity.

In terms of funding and income at the household level, the findings lead to some clear interventions, that are further supported by the literature. The first is the expansion of basic income and other forms of direct financial support to low- and moderate-income Black households. While none of the questionnaire participants reported receiving Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario Works, or Employment Insurance (government income) supports, over 40% reported living in food-insecure households, indicating a gap in existing supports. Unconditional income supplements through municipal pilot projects or federal programs could directly increase the ability of individuals to afford food and meet their needs with dignity. This view is supported by research and policy recommendations from groups like Public Health Ontario (2025), Feed Ontario (2025), and Ontario Dietitians in Public Health (2020), that speak to the necessity of income-based solutions such as basic income or income supplements, alongside food system interventions. While many consider Universal Basic Income (UBI) to be a viable solution for food insecurity, Latissah Alleyne (2025) insightfully noted in her interview that while UBI might increase people's ability to afford and access food, it is “not the solution, it's not sovereignty”—highlighting the need for complementary investments in food systems education, cultural food knowledge, nutrition, and community capacity building. A food sovereignty approach suggests that improved financial access should also translate into healthier and more self-determined food outcomes.

A second strategy that flows from the identified priorities involves supporting Black food initiatives that generate income. Based on my own experience, informal and community-based food work (such as cooking, catering, or herbal product sales) are pathways that could be supported through access to capital, training, and infrastructure. These models offer both

economic and food access benefits while strengthening local food economies. FoodShare Toronto's Community Food Growing programs support community farmers with not only the space and resources to grow food, but also the infrastructure for sales through farmer's markets (FoodShare Toronto, 2024). This model could be more specifically applied to support Black farmers in the same way, providing an opportunity for income supplementation. Lowitt and Levkoe suggest "that a basic income guarantee could have a significant impact on the economic uncertainties faced by farmers" (2023). Black farmers come from Black households, and by ensuring adequate compensation, I agree that we are not only valuing their contributions as food producers, but also directly investing in the economic wellbeing of Black families and communities. Black farmers should not be viewed solely through the lens of production; they are also caregivers, community leaders, and cultural stewards, whose livelihoods impact broader household stability, generational wealth, and community resilience.

Based on my work experience in philanthropy and the charitable sector, increasing core, multi-year funding for Black-led and Black-serving food organizations is a strong intervention related to funding grassroots groups and non-profit work. Participants described the chronic underfunding of these groups, which limits their ability to plan, scale, or retain staff. Shifting funding models from short-term, project-based grants to long-term investment in organizational capacity would allow groups to deepen their impact and respond more flexibly to community needs. Integral to this intervention is targeted support for emerging or informal initiatives, including mentorship, administrative infrastructure, and flexible seed funding. Many promising ideas begin outside of traditional nonprofit structures; lowering barriers to entry and funding would help incubate new community-led responses to food insecurity. For example, FoodShare Toronto also operates a Supportive Partnership Platform, which provides charitable, operational, and administrative supports for often unincorporated grassroots groups, including trusteeing funds for non-qualified recipients.

Due to the impact of systemic forces, when addressing the issue of food insecurity at the household or individual level, I believe that it is imperative to also consider interventions that span various levels of engagement, from municipal and policy-level actions to grassroots and household strategies. While each operates within its own constraints and contexts, they collectively offer insights into the evolving landscape of Black food sovereignty efforts.

Municipal-level efforts have gained visibility in recent years, most notably through the City of Toronto's Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) Unit and its leadership in developing the Black Food Sovereignty Plan. These efforts mark a shift from one-time project funding toward systemic and sustained support for Black-led food initiatives. However, such plans remain under-implemented, with limited follow-through, accountability, and tangible impact. Several participants expressed frustrations with bureaucratic processes, inaccessible grant mechanisms, and a lack of meaningful engagement of Black communities in food policy decision-making, with one participant noting that "[the city] was designed to keep Black people away from wealth and away from the tables at which important decisions are made around food and rights" (Renée D'Souza, 2025). While the presence of these municipal efforts was acknowledged as a positive first step, participants called for deeper investment in long-term, community-governed solutions rather than symbolic gestures or short-term programming. Access to land through city-owned properties and community garden programs, more transparent funding processes, and recognition of culturally specific needs were common themes raised in connection to municipal intervention.

Education and training programs emerged as another vital pillar of food sovereignty work. Respondents highlighted the importance of learning opportunities that combine agricultural knowledge, entrepreneurship, and cultural history. For many, food is not only about nourishment but also about identity, healing, and intergenerational connection. Community-based training programs that centre Black knowledge systems (such as seed saving, Afro-Caribbean growing techniques, or nutrition practices rooted in diasporic cultures) are seen as essential to building resilient local food systems. These programs are most effective when they are designed and delivered by members of the community, creating safe and empowering spaces for skill-building. Participants noted that training opportunities are often underfunded, sporadic, or poorly advertised. General accessibility, transportation costs, and competing life demands also make participation difficult. There is a clear need for stable, paid training positions and greater investment in Black youth mentorship to develop the next generation of land stewards, organizers, and educators.

At the level of individual and household action, participants told stories of neighbours growing food in backyard gardens, parents leading informal meal-sharing networks, and elders

sharing traditional recipes as part of cultural preservation. While these initiatives are often invisible in formal systems, they represent an important foundation of food sovereignty work. Many participants emphasized the need to support individuals who act as informal food leaders in their communities. These are the people who cook at community events, translate wellness information, or offer produce to neighbours. In my community-based experience, despite their critical role, such individuals often receive little recognition or financial support. Small-scale grants, stipends, and access to shared infrastructure like kitchens and cold storage could support household and informal initiatives—this was affirmed by the findings.

Finally, much of the leadership in Black food sovereignty continues to come from grassroots organizations and Black-led/focused charities and non-profits. Participants referenced organizations like Afri-Can FoodBasket, Black Creek Community Farm, and the Black Food Sovereignty Alliance as pillars of the movement. These groups offer culturally appropriate programming, grow food, distribute produce, host workshops, and create space for advocacy. However, the precarity of funding and limited access to long-term resources were noted as major challenges. Several participants expressed concern that larger, white-led food charities continue to dominate the sector and attract the most funder interest. This imbalance not only marginalizes Black organizations but also perpetuates models of food charity that do not align with food sovereignty values. There was strong consensus that funding should prioritize Black-led organizations with long-standing community roots and an explicit commitment to self-determination and systems change.

Across all categories, participants underscored the importance of relationships, trust, and shared decision-making. Interventions that emerge organically from the community, are culturally grounded, and prioritize collective benefit were seen as more sustainable and impactful than top-down or extractive approaches. While each intervention type plays a role, it is the synergy between municipal policy shifts, robust training networks, household-level resilience, and the leadership of grassroots organizations that holds the most potential for transformative change.

Capacity-Building Needs: To what extent do Toronto’s Black diasporic communities have specific capacity-building needs that, once addressed, can enhance their ability to improve food

security and sovereignty at the community level? This question aims to identify unique challenges and opportunities for strengthening community capacity to implement and sustain solutions.

As detailed in the previous sections, the findings of this research make clear that Toronto's Black diasporic communities face distinct capacity-building needs that, if addressed, could significantly enhance their ability to advance food sovereignty and address food insecurity. These needs are shaped by structural inequities, systemic exclusion from resources, and a lack of meaningful inclusion in decision-making processes that shape the city's food systems. Across questionnaire and interview responses, participants identified material, social, and institutional gaps that hinder their ability to implement and sustain food justice efforts.

Revisiting the Conceptual/Analytical Framework

The food sovereignty conceptual framework used in this study—adapted from Vallejo et al.'s integrated food systems model and the Six Pillars of Food Sovereignty articulated at the 2007 Nyéléni Forum—has proven useful for interpreting the findings in relation to ecological, social, and political dynamics. By centering land access, governance, and community agency, the framework illuminated how structural determinants like systemic racism and economic exclusion intersect with local food practices and policy landscapes. It also helped identify the key actors: municipal governments, grassroots organizations, and individuals; and their roles in shaping food sovereignty outcomes. The research questions, focused on resources, interventions, and community capacity, align closely with the framework's emphasis on self-determination, cultural relevance, and democratized food systems. Revisiting this model underscores the need for multi-scalar strategies that address both material and relational dimensions of food insecurity, and reaffirms that pathways toward Black food sovereignty must be community-led, ecosystem-informed, and rooted in systemic change.

The findings from this research strongly reinforce the usefulness of this model. Participants' identification of land access as a top capacity-building priority speaks directly to the ecosystem dimension of the framework. Concerns about insecure or inaccessible growing space in Toronto reflect the structural exclusions embedded in urban planning and land governance. Similarly, the call for more inclusive and accountable policy frameworks, especially

those that support long-term investment in Black-led food work, highlights how the governance dimensions is central to realizing food sovereignty goals.

Perhaps most importantly, the framework helped to emphasize the central role of community actors in shaping and sustaining food systems. Responses emphasized the need for Black communities to have decision-making power, culturally relevant education opportunities, and intergenerational knowledge transfer. These insights align with the framework's inclusion of local agency and autonomy, echoing the Six Pillars' insistence that food sovereignty must be rooted in the self-determination and autonomy of communities.

New Themes and Ideas for Future Research

The findings of this research have also illuminated (in no particular order) three main areas for future research. First, there needs to be significant research into policy recommendations that will effectively support the advancement of Black food sovereignty in Toronto. Due the many structural and governance inputs of food insecurity, there must be a rigorous review and revision of existing policies that have an impact on food systems, as well as the development and implementation of new policies to better address the specific, nuanced needs of Black communities in Toronto and beyond.

Within the space of knowledge transfer, further research is needed in education and curriculum development. This should explore how required school curriculum, public education campaigns, and community-led programming can better incorporate not just culturally relevant lessons, but more food systems knowledge overall. This applies to education for youth, adults, and elders. Some key topics that should be considered are nutrition, financial literacy, food history, production/growing, cooking and preservation, and food business skills.

Lastly, specifically related to grassroots, non-profit, and charitable organizations, is the need for more research around program design and evaluation. This research should aim to determine what best practices exist in Black food sovereignty work, and what adjustments could/should be made to existing and future programming to better meet the needs of and reduce food insecurity in Toronto's Black communities.

Summary

The findings from this study reveal that advancing Black food sovereignty in Toronto requires addressing deep-rooted structural barriers related to land access, economic exclusion, and systemic underfunding of Black-led initiatives. Participants articulated food as more than a material need, highlighting its role in cultural identity, autonomy, healing, and community resilience. While Black communities are already leading innovative, grassroots interventions, the responsibility to advance food sovereignty cannot rest solely on their shoulders. Governments, institutions, funders, and allies must take active roles in dismantling the systemic inequities that perpetuate food insecurity. Collaborative, well-resourced, and justice-driven partnerships are essential to shifting the burden from survival to sovereignty, ensuring that Black communities are not just included in food systems, but are leading their transformation.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This research set out to explore the intersecting capacity-building challenges and opportunities shaping food insecurity and food sovereignty for Black urban communities in Toronto. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection, this study centered lived experiences, priorities, and wisdom to surface community-led strategies for advancing food justice. Findings indicate that while material barriers such as affordability, land access, and funding persist, so too does a strong and vibrant foundation of community knowledge, mutual aid, and cultural resilience. This conclusion draws together the strategic implications of the study, and offers final reflections for moving the work forward.

Strategic and Research Implications

This research affirms that advancing Black food sovereignty requires interventions at multiple levels: structural, organizational, and personal. Participants called for long-term access to land, sustainable funding models for grassroots organizations, and community-controlled education and training programs. These are not abstract aspirations; they are direct reflections of lived experience and grounded expertise. However, to scale these interventions effectively, support must go beyond community volunteerism. Governments, institutions, and philanthropic actors must shift from tokenistic engagement to genuine power-sharing and resource redistribution. Addressing food insecurity in Black communities must be treated not as an issue of charity, but one of justice, reparations, and collective responsibility.

Final Reflections

One recurring theme in the data was the call for more equitable partnerships. While the phrase “for us, by us” is a common cultural reference to affirm the importance of Black leadership in all work, this research has also shown a need for solidarity and support from non-Black collaborators—especially those who hold institutional power, wealth, and influence. Community capacity can only go so far without systemic change. Allies must be willing to step back, listen deeply, fund generously, and engage in ways that respect Black autonomy and vision. True progress will require that mainstream funders, governments, and white-led organizations not only “make space” but also transfer resources, decision-making power, and

long-term support to Black-led initiatives.

Importantly, while food sovereignty could be framed as a radical or fringe ideology, the recommendations offered by participants were consistently practical, grounded, and achievable. Calls for public land access, general operating funding, culturally specific food education, and youth mentorship are not extreme, they are essential. Participants were not demanding a futuristic utopia; they were demanding fairness, respect, and the means to care for their communities on their own terms. Recognizing this reframes Black food sovereignty not as an aspiration on the margins, but as a viable and necessary path to a more just food system.

Ultimately, this research reinforces that Black food sovereignty is already in motion. It lives in the gardens, kitchens, and community spaces of Toronto's diverse neighborhoods. It is carried forward by elders passing on seeds and stories, youth reimagining food systems, and organizers challenging the status quo. Yet it cannot and should not be the sole responsibility of Black communities to build this future alone. The work of food justice requires collective accountability and sustained solidarity. With the right resources, relationships, and recognition, the movement toward Black food sovereignty can flourish.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Questionnaire



BFS Research Questionnaire

Research Questionnaire

**Please allow yourself roughly 10-30mins to complete the questionnaire.
Please submit your responses before August 31, 2025.**

In Canada, about 46% of Black Canadians (provincially) live in food insecure households. This number has been increasing year after year, and Black Canadians are now the most food insecure demographic in Canadian provinces. Current solutions, like traditional food banks and hot meal programs, do not adequately capture the nuanced cultural needs of the Black diaspora, and thus far, have failed to reduce food insecurity within this population.

Through a Community Development lens, this research aims to identify the capacity building needs of Toronto's Black diaspora, in order to nurture community-led efforts to reduce food insecurity by advancing food sovereignty.

If you have any questions about this research, please reach out to bfs.researcher@gmail.com

* 1. Eligibility

- I am over the age of 18
- I live(d) and/or work(ed) in the City of Toronto (or have work with relevant impact in the City of Toronto)
- I am a member of the Black diaspora // OR // my career, volunteer, or other work is related to food security, sovereignty, or food systems.



BFS Research Questionnaire

Consent

Please review the [Questionnaire Participant Consent Form](#).

By completing and submitting the questionnaire, **YOUR FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT IS IMPLIED** and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.



BFS Research Questionnaire

Section 1: Demographic Information

2. Age

- 18 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 59
- 60+

3. Gender

- Cisgender Woman
- Transgender Woman
- Cisgender Man
- Transgender Man
- Non-binary
- Other Gender
- Prefer not to say
- Other (specify)

*** 4. How would you describe your ethnicity?** (Please select all that apply)

- Black African
- Black Caribbean
- Black American
- Black Canadian
- Other (please specify)

5. Would you like to share more about your ethnic background or heritage?

(i.e. My parents are immigrants to Canada, I am first-generation Black- Canadian)

6. Education Level (please indicate the highest level of "formal" education achieved, or level currently in progress)

- Less than high school / high school incomplete
- High school diploma or equivalent
- College / Diploma / Trade certification
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate / PhD
- Other (please specify)

7. Your Source of Income (Select all that apply)

- None
- Full-time Employment
- Part Time Employment / Contract / Freelance
- Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) / Ontario Works (OW) / Employment Insurance (EI)
- Retirement Savings
- Pension
- Inheritance / Generational Wealth
- Other (please specify)

8. Household Income

- Under \$20,000
- \$20,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$59,999
- \$60,000 - \$79,999
- \$80,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$199,999
- \$200,000 and above
- Other (please specify)



BFS Research Questionnaire

Section 2: Engagement in Food-Related Work

9. **In what capacity are you involved in food-related work?** *(This could be employment, volunteering, etc. Check all that apply)*

- Farmer
- Community gardener
- Home gardener
- Food Bank
- Nutritionist/Dietician
- Chef/Cook/Food Service
- Food policy advocate
- Government
- Student
- Activist
- Grassroots Organization (no official status)
- Registered Non-Profit
- Registered Charity
- Household Member - I buy the food
- Household Member - I cook the food
- Household member - I eat the food
- Other (please specify)

10. **How long have you been involved in food-related work?** (*other than as a household member*)

- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-10 years
- More than 10 years
- None of the above

11. **Please provide an example or description of your work/involvement in food-related work.**

(*i.e. "I am a Project manager at a food bank, and I volunteer on the weekends for meals on wheels."*)

12. **What motivated you to become involved in food-related work?** (*Open-ended*)



BFS Research Questionnaire

Section 3: Food Security & Food Sovereignty

While food security and food sovereignty are connected in many ways, food justice advocates and scholars have separated the definitions as follows:

Food Security

Having physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (The World Bank, 2024)

Food Sovereignty

The right of peoples to define their own agriculture and food policies, to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives, to determine the extent to which they want to be self-reliant, and to restrict the dumping of products in their markets. Food sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy, and ecologically sustainable production (La Via Campesina, 2001)

For the purposes of the following questions, the two will be used together.

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13. Based on the above definition, do you consider your household to be food insecure?

Yes

No

14. Do you think food security/sovereignty is important for Black communities in Toronto?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Neutral
- Somewhat unimportant
- Not important

15. What specific challenges do Black communities in Toronto face in advancing food security/sovereignty? (Open-ended)



BFS Research Questionnaire

Section 4: Capacity Building & Community Development

16. What THREE resources or supports do you believe are most needed to improve food security/sovereignty in Black communities? (Select 3)

- Funding - Charities, non-profits, grassroots groups
- Funding / Income - household
- Land access
- Training & education - Farming
- Training & education - Gardening
- Training & education - Nutrition & Cooking
- Training & education - Business Development
- Training & education - Culture & Community
- Networking opportunities & collaboration
- Policy advocacy & education
- Technical assistance
- Research
- Other (please specify)

17. Are there any specific skills or knowledge areas that you believe are currently lacking within the community to support food security/sovereignty efforts? (Open-ended)

18. **Have you been involved in any capacity-building programs related to food security or sovereignty?** (i.e. leadership development, grant writing courses, farmer training program, etc.)

- No
- Yes

19. **If yes, please describe the program(s) and your experience in the program. Do you consider it successful? In what ways?** (Open-ended)

20. **Do you agree that there are adequate opportunities for training and capacity building in advancing food security/sovereignty for Black communities in Toronto?**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



BFS Research Questionnaire

Section 5: Closing Thoughts

21. Please describe your vision of a healthy food future for Toronto's Black communities *(Open-ended)*

22. What does food sovereignty / security / justice mean to you? *(Open-ended, in your own words)*

23. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences or views on food sovereignty and food security? *(Open-ended)*



BFS Research Questionnaire

Section 6: Additional

24. In reviewing your above responses, I may find specific portions that would be valuable to quote directly in my final thesis.

- I consent to direct quotes being taken from my responses
- I consent to my responses being paraphrased

25. Do you consent to the quote/paraphrasing being attributed to you or your organization?

- No
- Yes (please provide the name, nickname, or organization name that you would like your responses to be attributed to)

****If you are providing organization details for the attribution of a quote, please ensure that you have obtained all required internal permissions and approvals to do so. If the workplace/organization/group/business/department you are representing has any questions about their inclusion in research results, please have them contact sharitahenry@uvic.ca.*



BFS Research Questionnaire

Interview

Optional

26. If you would like to participate in a follow-up interview, please provide the following details. *This will be a virtual semi-structured conversation, ~45min.*

Name

Organization Name

Email

Phone Number



BFS Research Questionnaire

Section 8: Future Use Consent

27. I consent to the use of my unidentifiable data in future research related to this topic.

- No
 Yes (Please provide your initials)

28. I consent to the use of my identifiable data in future research related to this topic.

- No
 Yes (Please provide your initials)

29. I consent to be contacted in the future if my data is requested for other research or purposes.

- No
 Yes (Please provide your email)



BFS Research Questionnaire

Thank you for your participation!

Questions? Email bfs.researcher@gmail.com

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Short-Form Interview Questions (Video)

Review Consent & Waived Confidentiality

Introduction

1. Can you please introduce yourself and tell us a bit about your role in food-related work within the Black community in Toronto?

Engagement and Motivation

2. What inspired you to get involved in food-related work, and what drives your passion in this area?

Understanding of Key Concepts

3. In your own words, how would you describe food security?
4. In your own words, how would you describe food sovereignty?
5. Why are these concepts important to you and the community?

Challenges and Opportunities

6. What are some of the biggest challenges you see Black communities in Toronto facing when it comes to achieving food sovereignty?
7. Can you share a story or example of a successful initiative or project related to food sovereignty that you've been a part of, or heard about?

Capacity Building and Community Development

8. What resources or support do you think are most needed to enhance food sovereignty efforts in the community?
9. Have you or your community benefited from any specific training or capacity-building

programs?

10. If so, could you share your experience and how it helped?

Closing Thoughts

11. Looking forward, what is your vision for the future of food sovereignty in Black communities in Toronto?

12. What changes or developments would you like to see in regards to food security and food sovereignty in Black communities?

13. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your journey or experiences in working towards food security and sovereignty?

**Note that there may be additional probing/follow-up questions associated with each section.*

Appendix C: Recruitment Materials

1) Social Media Post

RESEARCH SURVEY

Contribute to research about improving food security and advancing food sovereignty for Black communities

 [Online Questionnaire](#)

 [Interview](#)

This research is being completed to fulfill the thesis requirements for the University of Victoria MACD (Community Development) program.

bfs.researcher@gmail.com



2) *Email Recruitment*

Subject: Invitation to Participate in a Research Study on Black Food Sovereignty

Dear [Recipient's Name],

I hope this message finds you well. My name is Sharita Henry, and I am conducting a research study as part of my Master's thesis at the University of Victoria. The study explores capacity-building needs to advance food sovereignty and improve food security within urban Black communities in Canada, with Toronto as the primary case study.

As someone actively engaged in [field/role, e.g., community leadership, food sovereignty advocacy, policy work, etc.], your insights and experiences are invaluable to this research. Participation would involve a brief online questionnaire (approximately 5-20 minutes), with the optional opportunity to take part in a longer, semi-structured interview. I've attached a copy of the associated consent form, and a brief of my thesis research.

The research aims to identify community-driven solutions and strategies to strengthen food systems and reduce food insecurity. Your participation will contribute to this important work, ensuring it is informed by lived experiences and expert knowledge.

If you are interested or would like more information, please reply to this email, and I will provide further details. Participation is entirely voluntary! **If you are eligible**, and ready to jump in, you can find the questionnaire [HERE – link to online questionnaire].**

Thank you for considering this opportunity to contribute to meaningful research that aims to empower and uplift our communities. Please feel free to forward this email to others in your network who may have insights to contribute.

**** Eligibility**

- *I am over the age of 18*
- *I live(d) and/or work(ed) in the City of Toronto (or have work with relevant impact in the City of Toronto)*
- *I am a member of the Black diaspora*
 - *If "No" – My career, volunteer, or other work is related to food security, sovereignty, or food systems.*

Warm regards,

Sharita Henry, B.ES

University of Victoria

Appendix D: Ethics Certificate

**PANEL ON
RESEARCH ETHICS**
Navigating the ethics of human research

TCPS 2: CORE 2022



Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Sharita Henry

*successfully completed the Course on Research Ethics based on
the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research
Involving Humans (TCPS 2: CORE 2022)*

Certificate # 0001260473 **13 January, 2024**

Appendix E: Consent Forms

1) *Questionnaire Consent Form*

Questionnaire Research Consent Form



School of Public Administration

Participant Consent Form

Nourishing Roots: From Food Security Towards Food Sovereignty for Toronto's Black diaspora

Researcher: Sharita Henry, Graduate Student, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria, sharitahenry@uvic.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Astrid Pérez Piñán, Associate Professor, School of Public Administration, perezpin@uvic.ca

Purposes and Objectives of the Research:

Purposes:

- To identify the specific needs of Toronto's Black communities to improve food security and advance food sovereignty.
- To explore how food sovereignty initiatives can address systemic barriers and promote long-term, community-led solutions to food insecurity.
- To provide actionable strategies and recommendations for fostering resilient and sustainable food systems within Black communities in Toronto.
- To contribute to the growing body of research on Black food sovereignty and expand the understanding of culturally relevant approaches to food security.

Objectives:

- To assess the existing knowledge, skills, and resources available within Toronto's Black communities for advancing food sovereignty.
- To identify gaps and barriers in capacity-building efforts that hinder the realization of food sovereignty in urban Black communities.
- To collect insights from diverse stakeholders, including community leaders, farmers, policymakers, chefs, and organizational representatives, to gain a holistic understanding of the current food system challenges.
- To analyze how intersectional factors such as race, culture, socio-economic status, and gender shape food sovereignty efforts in Toronto's Black communities.
- To develop practical, community-driven recommendations for policy, advocacy, and organizational practices to support Black food sovereignty initiatives.

- To document and share findings with relevant stakeholders to inform future programs, policies, and capacity-building initiatives in the context of Black food sovereignty.

This Research is Important because:

- **Addressing Food Insecurity:** Over 46% of Black households in Canada experience food insecurity, with Black youth being the most affected. This research tackles a pressing public health and social justice issue.
- **Advancing Food Sovereignty:** Food sovereignty is an emerging and transformative approach to decolonizing food systems, fostering community self-reliance, and addressing systemic barriers.
- **Focusing on Capacity Building:** Identifying capacity-building needs can help strengthen the foundation for sustainable, community-led food sovereignty initiatives rather than relying on temporary solutions like food banks.
- **Highlighting Cultural Relevance:** The research prioritizes culturally relevant and inclusive solutions, recognizing that food sovereignty must align with the diverse cultural, spiritual, and dietary needs of Toronto's Black diaspora.
- **Filling Research Gaps:** Black food sovereignty is a vastly underexplored topic in Canada. This research contributes to the growing body of literature while providing actionable insights specific to urban Black communities.
- **Empowering Communities:** By identifying strategies and capacities needed, the research aims to empower Black communities to take ownership of food sovereignty initiatives and reduce reliance on external systems.
- **Informing Policy and Practice:** The findings will guide policymakers, organizations, and advocates in creating effective, community-driven policies and programs to support food sovereignty.
- **Toronto's Relevance:** Toronto has Canada's largest Black population and is home to the country's only municipal Black Food Sovereignty Plan, making it a vital and contextually rich case study.
- **Advancing Intersectionality:** The research examines how intersecting factors such as race, culture, socio-economic status, and gender influence food security, contributing to a nuanced and inclusive understanding of the issue.

Participation:

- You have been selected to participate because you are a member of the Black diaspora and/or you are involved in work/research/activities that are relevant to the scope of this research.
- Participation in this project is entirely voluntary.
- Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your position [e.g. employment, class standing] or how you will be treated.

Procedure:

Design and Content:

- The online questionnaire will include a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions designed to explore perceptions, barriers, and opportunities related to food security, food sovereignty, and capacity-building needs in Toronto's Black communities.
- Questions will gather information on participants' roles in food systems (e.g., community leader, farmer, policymaker), their experiences with food insecurity and sovereignty efforts, and their insights into skills, knowledge, and resources needed to improve these systems.

Distribution:

- The questionnaire will be hosted on University of Victoria Survey Monkey

Consent Process:

- Before beginning the questionnaire, participants will be presented with this consent form. This will explain the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw at any time. Participants must agree to the terms to proceed.

Time Commitment:

- Completing the questionnaire will take approximately **5 - 20 minutes**.

Anonymity:

- Participants' responses will remain anonymous unless they voluntarily provide their contact information for follow-up interviews or consent for their perspectives to be quoted and attributed.

Recruitment for Follow-Up Interviews:

- At the end of the questionnaire, participants will be asked if they are interested in participating in a voluntary follow-up interview. Those who express interest will be prompted to provide their contact details for further coordination.

Potential Inconveniences to Participants:

Time Commitment:

- Questionnaire Participation: Participants will need to dedicate time to complete the questionnaire (estimated at 5-20 minutes). This could be a potential inconvenience, especially for those with limited availability.

Scheduling Conflicts:

- Online Participation: Although online participation offers flexibility, it may still require participants to set aside specific times to complete the questionnaire, which could be inconvenient for those with fluctuating schedules or limited access to technology.

Cognitive and Emotional Demands:

- Reflection on Personal Experiences: Participants may find it emotionally taxing or uncomfortable to reflect on and discuss their experiences related to food security, food sovereignty, and community capacity-building. This could result in cognitive strain or emotional discomfort, particularly if the topics are closely tied to personal or community challenges.

Privacy Concerns:

- Sharing Personal Information: Although measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, participants may feel uneasy about sharing personal or sensitive information related to their experiences and perspectives. This concern could be heightened for participants who are wary of how their data will be used or who have had negative experiences with research in the past.

Potential Technical Issues:

- Online Participation: Participants may experience technical issues such as connectivity problems or difficulties navigating the online platforms. These issues could cause frustration or delay their participation.

Please be advised that information about you that is gathered for this research study including possibly identifiable information, uses an online program located in the U.S. or a program that can be accessed from the U.S. As such, there is a possibility that information about you may be accessed without your knowledge or consent by the US government in compliance with the US Freedom Act.

Benefits:

To Participants

- Participants have the opportunity to contribute directly to shaping initiatives and strategies that address food insecurity and food sovereignty within their communities.
- Their voices and lived experiences will be centered, ensuring that the research is reflective of their unique needs and perspectives.
- The findings may lead to tangible outcomes, such as capacity-building initiatives or policy recommendations, that could improve food access, sustainability, and resilience for the participants and their communities.

To Society

- This research promotes social justice by addressing systemic inequities in food systems, particularly those impacting urban Black diasporic communities.

- Advancing food sovereignty can contribute to healthier, more sustainable communities by emphasizing culturally relevant, community-led food solutions.
- The study raises awareness about the intersection of race, culture, and food systems, fostering greater inclusivity and equity in community development and policy-making.

To the State of Knowledge

- This research fills a significant gap in the literature by focusing on the capacity-building needs of Black communities in Canada, an area that has been largely overlooked in food security and sovereignty research.
- It builds on and adapts existing frameworks for food sovereignty to address the specific challenges and opportunities faced by Black communities in an urban, Canadian context.
- By highlighting the importance of cultural and community-led approaches to food systems, the research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on decolonizing food systems and advancing equity within food sovereignty movements.
- The findings can serve as a model for addressing food insecurity and promoting food sovereignty in other marginalized communities, both within Canada and globally.

Risks:

Cognitive and Emotional Demands:

- *Reflection on Personal Experiences:* you may find it emotionally taxing or uncomfortable to reflect on and discuss your experiences related to food security, food sovereignty, and community capacity-building. This could result in cognitive strain or emotional discomfort, particularly if the topics are closely tied to personal or community challenges.
- You will not be required to share personal experiences.

Privacy Concerns:

- *Sharing Personal Information:* Although measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, you may feel uneasy about sharing personal or sensitive information related to your experiences and perspectives. This concern could be heightened if you are wary of how your data will be used or if you have had negative experiences with research in the past.
- The questionnaire can be submitted anonymously
- If any you have hesitations, you do not have to participate

Risks Associated with Identifying Employer/Organization

- You may face risks (reputation, employment, etc.) if you choose to attribute your contributions or responses to your organization or workplace.
- The questionnaire includes instruction that you should seek and obtain necessary internal permissions and consent before attributing a quote to your organization or workplace.

Researcher's Relationship with Participants:

- **The researcher may have a relationship to you as:** a community advocate, colleague, or professional contact within the fields of food security and food sovereignty, or through shared networks such as community organizations or charitable sector initiatives.
- To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, the following steps to prevent coercion have been taken:
 - Participation is entirely voluntary, declining to participate will not impact any existing professional or personal relationships with the researcher.

- Recruitment materials emphasize the voluntary nature of participation and explicitly state that there is no obligation to participate based on any prior relationship with the researcher.
- Consent materials include clear language outlining participants' rights to withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions.
- The recruitment and consent processes allow for reflection time, ensuring participants have adequate time to make an informed and independent decision.
- The researcher will maintain professionalism and neutrality during all interactions to mitigate any perception of undue pressure or expectation to participate.

Withdrawal of Participation:

You may withdraw at any time without explanation or consequence.

How to Withdraw

- Participants can withdraw by contacting the primary researcher, **Sharita Henry**, via email sharitahenry@uvic.ca
- They can also indicate their withdrawal during the questionnaire (by stopping participation)

Timeline for Withdrawal

- Participants can request to withdraw their consent and data at any time during the data collection process or up to two weeks after completing the questionnaire. Note that after this point, their data may already be anonymized and included in the analysis, making it difficult or impossible to remove.

Data Withdrawal

- If a participant withdraws, any data they have contributed will be securely deleted from the research database unless it has already been anonymized and incorporated into aggregate results.
- For interviews, any audio recordings or transcripts associated with a participant who withdraws will also be deleted unless otherwise specified by the participant.

For Questionnaires

- Participants can stop completing the questionnaire at any time by simply exiting the digital platform without submitting responses
- Partially completed and submitted questionnaires will not be excluded from analysis.

Anonymity and Confidentiality:

- **Anonymity:** Anonymity will be ensured in the online questionnaire by not collecting any personally identifiable information unless participants choose to provide optional demographic details. Participants will be assigned pseudonyms, and any references that could indirectly reveal their identity (e.g., specific affiliations or roles) will be modified to protect anonymity, unless consent is given otherwise.
- **Limits to Anonymity:** Stringent measures will be taken to anonymize all data in the final reports and publications. This limitation will be explained to participants prior to obtaining consent.
- **Confidentiality:** Confidentiality will be maintained by securely storing all data collected during the research. Digital files, including questionnaire responses, will be stored on a password-

protected computer. Hard copies of any data will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's workspace.

- Access to **raw data** will be strictly limited to the researcher. Personal identifiers (if collected) will be stored separately from the research data and linked only via a unique code. At the conclusion of the study, all personal identifiers will be permanently deleted. Identified data may be used for future research only with explicit participant consent.
- **Limits to Confidentiality:** Participants will be informed that while every effort will be made to protect confidentiality, there is a small risk of indirect identification, particularly in cases where participants hold prominent roles in the community or are part of a small, tightly knit population.

By participating in this research, you may choose to **waive your right to confidentiality** in specific circumstances:

- If you indicate interest in participating in a follow-up interview, your identity will be known to the researcher for scheduling and communication purposes.
- If you provide explicit consent for a direct or paraphrased quote to be used and attributed to yourself or the organization you are representing, your identity or affiliation may be disclosed in the research findings.

Research Results may be Used/Disseminated in the Following Ways:

- Shared directly with participants upon request, through a summary of findings or an accessible report.
- Included as part of a Master's thesis/dissertation at the University of Victoria.
- Presented at academic and community-based conferences, including events such as the Black Food Sovereignty Conference and scholarly meetings on food security, community development, and Black studies.
- Published as articles in peer-reviewed journals related to food sovereignty, public health, or community development.
- Used in class presentations or workshops as part of broader academic or community engagement efforts.
- Provided as a detailed report to community organizations, and stakeholders such as the Network for the Advancement of Black Communities and other relevant partners.

Future Uses of Data

With your permission, as indicated in the questionnaire, the survey data collected as part of this research may be retained and used in future academic studies, community-based research, policy development, or program planning that relates to food security, food sovereignty, and community capacity building. This may include aggregated data, as well as any direct quotations and paraphrased content.

Data will be securely stored and may be accessed by the primary researcher. All future uses will maintain your confidentiality where possible, and identifying information will be removed or anonymized unless you have explicitly consented to be identified.

Participation in future research uses is entirely voluntary and not a condition of your participation in this current study.

Disposal of Data

To ensure confidentiality and compliance with ethical research standards, the following procedures will be used to either securely destroy research data:

- Digital Data: All digital files will be permanently deleted from devices using secure deletion software that ensures data cannot be recovered (e.g., software that overwrites files multiple times).
- Physical Data: Any physical documents, such as consent forms or paper notes, will be shredded using a cross-cut shredder to prevent reconstruction.
- Multimedia Data: Audio and video files will be securely deleted from recording devices and computers using permanent erasure tools.
- Data will be stored for a maximum of seven years.

These methods ensure that data is handled responsibly throughout the research process and is either destroyed or archived in a way that protects participants' confidentiality and privacy.

Questions or Concerns

- Contact the researcher(s) using the information at the top of page 1;
- Contact the Human Research Ethics Office, University of Victoria, (250) 472-4545 ethics@uvic.ca

Consent:

By completing and submitting the questionnaire, **YOUR FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT IS IMPLIED** and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Participation in the follow-up interview is **entirely voluntary**.

Prior to scheduling the follow-up interview, participants will be provided with a second consent form, reminded of the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any point without consequences.

Participants will receive a summary of any new or additional details relevant to the follow-up interview. This ensures they are fully informed before agreeing to proceed.

Throughout the study, participants will be given the opportunity to ask questions or seek clarification, ensuring they remain comfortable and informed about their participation at every stage.

2) Interview Consent Form

Interview Research Consent Form



School of Public Administration

Participant Consent Form

Nourishing Roots: From Food Security Towards Food Sovereignty for Toronto's Black diaspora

Researcher: Sharita Henry, Graduate Student, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria, sharitahenry@uvic.ca

Supervisor: [Dr. Astrid Pérez Piñán, Associate Professor, School of Public Administration, perezpin@uvic.ca]

Purposes and Objectives of the Research:

Purposes:

- To identify the specific needs of Toronto's Black communities to improve food security and advance food sovereignty.
- To explore how food sovereignty initiatives can address systemic barriers and promote long-term, community-led solutions to food insecurity.
- To provide actionable strategies and recommendations for fostering resilient and sustainable food systems within Black communities in Toronto.
- To contribute to the growing body of research on Black food sovereignty and expand the understanding of culturally relevant approaches to food security.

Objectives:

- To assess the existing knowledge, skills, and resources available within Toronto's Black communities for advancing food sovereignty.
- To identify gaps and barriers in capacity-building efforts that hinder the realization of food sovereignty in urban Black communities.
- To collect insights from diverse stakeholders, including community leaders, farmers, policymakers, chefs, and organizational representatives, to gain a holistic understanding of the current food system challenges.
- To analyze how intersectional factors such as race, culture, socio-economic status, and gender shape food sovereignty efforts in Toronto's Black communities.
- To develop practical, community-driven recommendations for policy, advocacy, and organizational practices to support Black food sovereignty initiatives.
- To document and share findings with relevant stakeholders to inform future programs, policies, and capacity-building initiatives in the context of Black food sovereignty.

This Research is Important because:

- **Addressing Food Insecurity:** Over 46% of Black households in Canada experience food insecurity, with Black youth being the most affected. This research tackles a pressing public health and social justice issue.
- **Advancing Food Sovereignty:** Food sovereignty is an emerging and transformative approach to decolonizing food systems, fostering community self-reliance, and addressing systemic barriers.
- **Focusing on Capacity Building:** Identifying capacity-building needs can help strengthen the foundation for sustainable, community-led food sovereignty initiatives rather than relying on temporary solutions like food banks.
- **Highlighting Cultural Relevance:** The research prioritizes culturally relevant and inclusive solutions, recognizing that food sovereignty must align with the diverse cultural, spiritual, and dietary needs of Toronto's Black diaspora.
- **Filling Research Gaps:** Black food sovereignty is a vastly underexplored topic in Canada. This research contributes to the growing body of literature while providing actionable insights specific to urban Black communities.
- **Empowering Communities:** By identifying strategies and capacities needed, the research aims to empower Black communities to take ownership of food sovereignty initiatives and reduce reliance on external systems.
- **Informing Policy and Practice:** The findings will guide policymakers, organizations, and advocates in creating effective, community-driven policies and programs to support food sovereignty.
- **Toronto's Relevance:** Toronto has Canada's largest Black population and is home to the country's only municipal Black Food Sovereignty Plan, making it a vital and contextually rich case study.
- **Advancing Intersectionality:** The research examines how intersecting factors such as race, culture, socio-economic status, and gender influence food security, contributing to a nuanced and inclusive understanding of the issue.

Participation:

- You have been selected to participate because you are a member of the Black diaspora and/or you are involved in work/research/activities that are relevant to the scope of this research.
- Participation in this project is entirely voluntary.
- Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your position [e.g. employment, class standing] or how you will be treated.

Procedures:

Follow-Up Semi-Structured Interviews

- **Purpose:**
 - The follow-up interviews aim to expand on the insights gathered in the questionnaire, allowing for a deeper exploration of participants' lived experiences, perspectives on food sovereignty, and ideas for capacity-building strategies.
- **Scheduling and Consent:**
 - Participants who express interest in a follow-up interview will be contacted by the researcher via email to schedule a mutually convenient time.

- **Format:**
 - Interviews will be conducted via video conferencing platforms (e.g., Zoom)
 - Each interview will last approximately **30-45 minutes**.
- **Structure:**
 - Interviews will be semi-structured, allowing for open-ended responses while covering key themes
- **Recording and Confidentiality:**
 - With participants' consent, interviews will be audio- or video-recorded to ensure accuracy during transcription.
 - All identifying information will be anonymized in the analysis unless explicit consent is provided to attribute specific quotes.

Duration: 5min – 65min

Location: Zoom

Potential Inconveniences to Participants:

- **Time Commitment:**
 - Interview Participation: Participants will need to dedicate time to participate in an interview (up to 45 minutes), which could be an inconvenience for individuals with busy schedules, particularly if they are balancing multiple responsibilities such as work, caregiving, and community involvement.
 - This could be a potential inconvenience, especially for those with limited availability.
- **Scheduling Conflicts:**
 - Online Participation: Although online participation offers flexibility, it may still require participants to set aside specific times to complete the questionnaire or engage in an interview, which could be inconvenient for those with fluctuating schedules or limited access to technology.
- **Cognitive and Emotional Demands:**
 - Reflection on Personal Experiences: Participants may find it emotionally taxing or uncomfortable to reflect on and discuss their experiences related to food security, food sovereignty, and community capacity-building. This could result in cognitive strain or emotional discomfort, particularly if the topics are closely tied to personal or community challenges.
- **Privacy Concerns:**
 - Sharing Personal Information: Although measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, participants may feel uneasy about sharing personal or sensitive information related to their experiences and perspectives. This concern could be heightened for participants who are wary of how their data will be used or who have had negative experiences with research in the past.
- **Potential Technical Issues:**
 - Online Participation: Participants engaging in the online components of the study (e.g., digital questionnaire, online interview) may experience technical issues such as connectivity problems or difficulties navigating the online platforms. These issues could cause frustration or delay their participation.

Please be advised that information about you that is gathered for this research study including possibly identifiable information, uses an online program located in the U.S. or a program that can be accessed from the U.S. As such, there is a possibility that information about you may be accessed without your knowledge or consent by the US government in compliance with the US Freedom Act.

Benefits:

To Participants

- Participants have the opportunity to contribute directly to shaping initiatives and strategies that address food insecurity and food sovereignty within their communities.
- Their voices and lived experiences will be centered, ensuring that the research is reflective of their unique needs and perspectives.
- The findings may lead to tangible outcomes, such as capacity-building initiatives or policy recommendations, that could improve food access, sustainability, and resilience for the participants and their communities.

To Society

- This research promotes social justice by addressing systemic inequities in food systems, particularly those impacting urban Black diasporic communities.
- Advancing food sovereignty can contribute to healthier, more sustainable communities by emphasizing culturally relevant, community-led food solutions.
- The study raises awareness about the intersection of race, culture, and food systems, fostering greater inclusivity and equity in community development and policy-making.

To the State of Knowledge

- This research fills a significant gap in the literature by focusing on the capacity-building needs of Black communities in Canada, an area that has been largely overlooked in food security and sovereignty research.
- It builds on and adapts existing frameworks for food sovereignty to address the specific challenges and opportunities faced by Black communities in an urban, Canadian context.
- By highlighting the importance of cultural and community-led approaches to food systems, the research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on decolonizing food systems and advancing equity within food sovereignty movements.
- The findings can serve as a model for addressing food insecurity and promoting food sovereignty in other marginalized communities, both within Canada and globally.

Risks:

Cognitive and Emotional Demands:

- *Reflection on Personal Experiences:* you may find it emotionally taxing or uncomfortable to reflect on and discuss your experiences related to food security, food sovereignty, and community capacity-building. This could result in cognitive strain or emotional discomfort, particularly if the topics are closely tied to personal or community challenges.
- You will not be required to share personal experiences.

Privacy Concerns:

- *Sharing Personal Information:* Although measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity where possible, you may feel uneasy about sharing personal or sensitive information

related to your experiences and perspectives. This concern could be heightened if you are wary of how your data will be used or if you have had negative experiences with research in the past.

- Interview responses be anonymized where possible
- If any you have hesitations, you do not have to participate

Risks Associated with Identifying Employer/Organization

- You may face risks (reputation, employment, etc.) if you choose to attribute your contributions or responses to your organization or workplace.
- The questionnaire includes instruction that you should seek and obtain necessary internal permissions and consent before attributing a quote to your organization or workplace.

Researcher's Relationship with Participants:

- **The researcher may have a relationship to you as:** a community advocate, colleague, or professional contact within the fields of food security and food sovereignty, or through shared networks such as community organizations or charitable sector initiatives.
- To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, the following steps to prevent coercion have been taken:
 - Participation is entirely voluntary, declining to participate will not impact any existing professional or personal relationships with the researcher.
 - Recruitment materials emphasize the voluntary nature of participation and explicitly state that there is no obligation to participate based on any prior relationship with the researcher.
 - Consent materials include clear language outlining participants' rights to withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions.
 - The recruitment and consent processes allow for reflection time, ensuring participants have adequate time to make an informed and independent decision.
 - The researcher will maintain professionalism and neutrality during all interactions to mitigate any perception of undue pressure or expectation to participate.

Withdrawal of Participation:

You may withdraw at any time without explanation or consequence.

How to Withdraw

- Participants can withdraw by contacting the primary researcher, **Sharita Henry**, via email sharitahenry@uvic.ca
- They can also indicate their withdrawal during an interview (by informing the researcher verbally).

Timeline for Withdrawal

- Participants can request to withdraw their consent and data at any time during the data collection process or up to two weeks after their interview date. Note that after this point, their data may already be anonymized and included in the analysis, making it difficult or impossible to remove.

Data Withdrawal

- If a participant withdraws, any data they have contributed will be securely deleted from the research database unless it has already been anonymized and incorporated into aggregate results.

- For interviews, any audio recordings or transcripts associated with a participant who withdraws will also be deleted unless otherwise specified by the participant.

For Interviews

- Participants will be reminded at the beginning of the interview that they can stop the interview at any time and withdraw their participation.
- They will also be told that they can decline to answer any specific question during the interview without withdrawing entirely.
- If a participant withdraws at the interview stage, they will be asked if their responses thus far can be used
 - If not, all recordings, notes, etc. will be deleted

Anonymity and Confidentiality:

- **Anonymity:** For follow-up interviews, complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed due to the nature of direct communication; however, all identifying details will be removed or anonymized during transcription and analysis. Participants will be assigned pseudonyms, and any references that could indirectly reveal their identity (e.g., specific affiliations or roles) will be modified to protect anonymity, unless consent is given otherwise.
- **Limits to Anonymity:** In the case of video interviews, absolute anonymity is not possible as the researcher will directly interact with participants. However, stringent measures will be taken to anonymize all data in the final reports and publications. This limitation will be explained to participants prior to obtaining consent.
- **Confidentiality:** Confidentiality will be maintained by securely storing all data collected during the research. Digital files, including recordings, and transcriptions will be stored on a password-protected computer. Hard copies of any data will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's workspace.
- Access to **raw data** will be strictly limited to the researcher. Personal identifiers (if collected) will be stored separately from the research data and linked only via a unique code. At the conclusion of the study, all personal identifiers will be permanently deleted. Identified data may be used for future research only with explicit participant consent.
- **Limits to Confidentiality:** Participants will be informed that while every effort will be made to protect confidentiality, there is a small risk of indirect identification, particularly in cases where participants hold prominent roles in the community or are part of a small, tightly knit population.

By participating in this research, you may choose to **waive your right to confidentiality** in specific circumstances:

- If you indicate interest in participating in a follow-up interview, your identity will be known to the researcher for scheduling and communication purposes.
- If you provide explicit consent for a direct or paraphrased quote to be used and attributed to yourself or the organization you are representing, your identity or affiliation may be disclosed in the research findings.

Research Results may be Used/Disseminated in the Following Ways:

- Shared directly with participants upon request, through a summary of findings or an accessible report.
- Included as part of a Master's thesis/dissertation at the University of Victoria.

- Presented at academic and community-based conferences, including events such as the Black Food Sovereignty Conference and scholarly meetings on food security, community development, and Black studies.
- Published as articles in peer-reviewed journals related to food sovereignty, public health, or community development.
- Used in class presentations or workshops as part of broader academic or community engagement efforts.
- Provided as a detailed report to community organizations, and stakeholders such as the Network for the Advancement of Black Communities and other relevant partners.

Future Uses of Data

With your permission, the interview data collected as part of this research may be retained and used in future academic studies, community-based research, policy development, or program planning that relates to food security, food sovereignty, and community capacity building. This may include aggregated data, as well as any direct quotations and paraphrased content.

Data will be securely stored and may be accessed by the primary researcher. All future uses will maintain your confidentiality where possible, and identifying information will be removed or anonymized unless you have explicitly consented to be identified.

Participation in future research uses is entirely voluntary and not a condition of your participation in this current study.

Disposal of Data

To ensure confidentiality and compliance with ethical research standards, the following procedures will be used to either securely destroy research data:

- **Digital Data:** All digital files will be permanently deleted from devices using secure deletion software that ensures data cannot be recovered (e.g., software that overwrites files multiple times).
- **Physical Data:** Any physical documents, such as consent forms or paper notes, will be shredded using a cross-cut shredder to prevent reconstruction.
- **Multimedia Data:** Audio and video files will be securely deleted from recording devices and computers using permanent erasure tools.
- Data will be stored for a maximum of seven years.

These methods ensure that data is handled responsibly throughout the research process and is either destroyed or archived in a way that protects participants' confidentiality and privacy.

Questions or Concerns

- Contact the researcher(s) using the information at the top of page 1;
- Contact the Human Research Ethics Office, University of Victoria, (250) 472-4545 ethics@uvic.ca

Consent:

By signing below, you are providing your FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT, indicating that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Participation in the follow-up interview is **entirely voluntary**.

Prior to scheduling the follow-up interview, participants will be reminded of the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any point without consequences.

Participants will receive a summary of the original consent terms and any new or additional details relevant to the follow-up interview. This ensures they are fully informed before agreeing to proceed.

Throughout the study, participants will be given the opportunity to ask questions or seek clarification, ensuring they remain comfortable and informed about their participation at every stage.

Name (written): _____

Date: _____ Signature: _____

Future Use Consent

I consent to the use of my unidentifiable data in future research related to this topic.
(Participant to provide initials): _____

I consent to the use of my identifiable data in future research related to this topic.
(Participant to provide initials): _____

I do not consent to the use of my data in future research.
(Participant to provide initials): _____

I consent to be contacted in the future if my data is requested for other research or purposes.
(Participant to provide initials): _____

Contact Email: _____