"No es facil” / It’s not easy: Neoliberalism, precarity, and food insecurity in Kingston, Ontario and Havana, Cuba

by

Susan Elizabeth Belyea

A thesis submitted to the School of Kinesiology and Health Studies
In conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
(January, 2018)

Copyright © Susan Belyea, 2018
Abstract

Food insecurity, the limited or uncertain ability to access sufficient and acceptable foods, remains a persistent problem. Societal responses have been based on partial understandings of the causes and dimensions of food insecurity. In this research I seek to examine how neoliberalism shapes individual and societal responses to food insecurity, to help to identify underlying causes that could guide effective policy.

This research begins with people’s lived experiences of and self-reported strategies for navigating among personal, private sector, charitable and state resources for managing food insecurity. Through an ethnographic approach that includes participant observation and 51 semi-structured interviews, I investigate how individuals at risk for food insecurity in Kingston, Ontario, Canada and Havana, Cuba manage the day-to-day work of putting food on the table. Using a Bourdieuan logic of practice framework, this research explores the strategies people use to avoid and to manage food insecurity in countries that sit in different relationships to global neoliberalism.

I advance several findings based on this research. First and foremost, the experience of food insecurity is inextricably linked to other aspects of poverty and deprivation. Second, precariousness appears to be a significant determinant and dimension of food insecurity. Finally, while socially networked strategies for managing food insecurity have some benefits, they do not provide sufficient protection against episodic food insecurity, and in fact may exacerbate unequal access to resources for managing and avoiding food insecurity.

This research supports existing recommendations that policy addressing food insecurity be a joined-up policy that combats multiple dimensions of poverty and inequality. This research also suggests that policy to address food insecurity must counter the effects of precariousness
that characterizes both the neoliberal state in Canada and the neoliberalizing state in Cuba. A guarantee of adequate income will be a fundamental step in addressing this. People at risk for food insecurity should be supported in continuing to exercise the effective skills they already use for avoiding food insecurity and managing the work of putting food on the table.

Further qualitative research is needed to understand the multiple dimensions of food insecurity and its specific manifestations in different countries.
Acknowledgements

Over the past several years numerous people and institutions have been vital to the research and writing of this doctoral dissertation. This project would not have been possible with the support, encouragement and contribution of countless people. First and foremost, my deepest gratitude and respect for the people in Havana, Cuba and Kingston, Ontario, Canada who opened up their hearts and often their homes, and willingly shared their stories with me. Their generosity, humour, and grace is humbling and I have tried to honour their contributions here in the best and most thoughtful way that I can.

I am incredibly grateful for the support of my supervisor, Dr. Elaine Power. I could not have chosen a better mentor with whom to brainstorm and argue and laugh and cry about large and small issues that inform this research. Her willingness to let me follow my head and my heart and her patience in helping me to finally winnow this monster project down to something more manageable allowed me to get more out of this experience than I ever thought possible.

I am grateful to the many other professors at Queen’s University whose teaching has guided the development of my thinking. Special thanks to Mary Louise Adams for sparking an interest in methodological issues and to Paritosh Kumar and Gary van Loon for stretching my thinking about food systems. Extra thanks is due to Gary van Loon and the School of Environmental studies for providing me the opportunity to teach a course on Global Food Security. Teaching forced me to push myself to learn about many issues food security and food insecurity into areas that were less familiar to me. Thanks also to the students of Environmental Studies 315 from 2014 – 2017 who kept me on my toes and reminded me that learning is always a two-way street.
I am grateful for the support I have received through the School of Kinesiology and Health studies at Queen’s University. The School provided me with an enriching and eclectic interdisciplinary environment in which to work.

Ban Righ Centre at queen’s university provided an oasis in which to do a good deal of this writing. My sincere thanks to Lisa Webb and the other staff and volunteers there who make that house a warm and welcoming place. With soup!

To all my Spanish teachers through the years - formal and informal - I could not have done this without your patience and support. Special thanks to Max Lizano for his infectious enthusiasm and conversation, and to Judit Luengo Martinelli for her grammar discipline. Spanish speaking friends in and outside of Cuba have been enthusiastic tutors over the years.

I am deeply grateful to funding I have received as a graduate student, particularly to the Social Science and Humanities Research Council, that has allowed me to pursue this project.

It really does take a village. I cannot adequately express my gratitude to my parents Paul and Elizabeth Belyea. Their unwavering love and faith in me over the years has been my rock. Thank you also to my siblings, Michael and Heather - my first debate partners. I am convinced that arguing with them made me into a critical thinker from an early age.

I have many wonderful friends who have supported and sustained me through these dissertation years. My “chosen family” with whom I celebrate everything – Susan Lord, Paul Kelley, and Kurt Lord Kelley; Scott Rutherford and Sayyida Jaffer; Mary Caesar and Fadzai Katsenga; Freddy Monasterio Barso, and Zaira Zarza – individually and collectively they have been consistent sources of unwavering love and support through these years.
My friends in music making, Georgette Fry, Mary McCollum, Karen Smith, Phileen Dickinson and Gisele Pharand always provided a warm and welcoming space away from academia.

I owe a debt also to my friends and colleagues in the food and social justice world in Kingston, Ontario and beyond. In particular, I want to thank the staff and volunteers at the St Vincent de Paul society in Kingston for their enthusiastic support for this project, and for modeling kindness and compassion in the most precarious of circumstances.

The Cuba portion of the research - both analytical and logistical - could not have happened without the loving help of Mirta, Vivian, Ines Rodriguez and Olguita, Lourdes and Dairon, and above all, Emilia Fernandez. I owe a special debt to Aldo and Vanessa who provided my family and I with a loving and secure home in Havana for many years, and particularly to Vanessa who first introduced me to Cuban cooking and guided me past my fears of the pressure cooker

And finally my deepest thanks to my partner Karen Dubinsky and my son, Jordi Arturo Belyea Dubinsky who have had more confidence in me than I have ever had. Karen’s unwavering faith in my intellect and abilities, and her emotional, material and intellectual support mean more to me than she can know. Jordi, the light of my life, left home begin college just as I began the final writing stage of this project. As crazy as it has been, it has been a delight to share these big moments with him. Last but not least, I want to thank my dog (Lola) and my cat (Mr. Cat) for keeping me grounded in the day-to-day and for being my constant companions throughout.
This research is dedicated to my mother, Elizabeth Belyea, who saw me start down this road, but passed away before I could finish. She never had any doubt that I could do whatever I put my mind to.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ ii
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................................... iv
List of Tables ................................................................................................................................... xii
List of Figures .................................................................................................................................. xiii
Chapter 1 Introduction .................................................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Setting the Scene in Canada and Cuba .................................................................................... 3
  1.2 Research Questions: ............................................................................................................... 6
  1.3 Conceptualizing food insecurity ............................................................................................. 9
  1.4 Theorizing food insecurity through neoliberalism ................................................................. 11
  1.5 Outline of dissertation .......................................................................................................... 13
  1.6 Conceptualizing food insecurity ............................................................................................. 16
  1.7 Food security and food insecurity: history and definitions .................................................... 17
  1.8 Measuring food insecurity ...................................................................................................... 25
  1.9 The dimension of stability in food insecurity measurement .................................................. 37
  1.10 Strategies for managing food insecurity .............................................................................. 40
  1.11 The dimension of ‘social acceptability’ in food insecurity research ...................................... 46
  1.12 Typification of the problem of food insecurity ..................................................................... 48
  1.13 My use of the term food insecurity ....................................................................................... 53
Chapter 2 Theoretical Orientation: Neoliberalism and the Social Theory of Pierre Bourdieu ...... 55
  2.1 Definitions and dimensions of neoliberalism ........................................................................... 57
    2.1.1 History of neoliberalism .................................................................................................. 59
    2.1.2 Neoliberalism, work, poverty, and precarity ................................................................. 63
    2.1.3 Governmentality and the neoliberalization of everyday life ........................................... 67
  2.2 Roll-back under neoliberalism ............................................................................................... 69
  2.3 Roll-out under neoliberalism .................................................................................................. 72
  2.4 The theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu ........................................................................ 80
    2.4.1 Habitus ........................................................................................................................... 80
    2.4.2 Field and forms of capital .............................................................................................. 82
    2.4.3 Symbolic violence ......................................................................................................... 86
Chapter 3 Methodology and Research Design ............................................................................. 87
  3.1 Ethnography .......................................................................................................................... 87
    3.1.1 Using an ethnographic approach in Canada and Cuba .................................................. 90
    3.1.2 Reflexive praxis ............................................................................................................ 93
  3.2 Research design and data collection ....................................................................................... 96
    3.2.1 Conducting fieldwork .................................................................................................. 97
    3.2.2 Sampling ..................................................................................................................... 98
    3.2.3 Mapping exercise ....................................................................................................... 108
    3.2.4 Managing and analyzing the data .............................................................................. 109
    3.2.5 Coding ....................................................................................................................... 110
  3.3 Challenges for researchers in Cuba ....................................................................................... 112
Chapter 4 Setting the Context: Cuba and Canada ....................................................................... 115
  4.1 Cuba: A brief history .............................................................................................................. 115
    4.1.1 Overview of Havana ................................................................................................... 117
    4.1.2 Poverty and social inequality in Cuba ........................................................................... 119
Chapter 8

8.1 Contributions and conclusions .......................................................... 343
8.2 Limitations and future research ......................................................... 346
8.3 Implications of the research .............................................................. 349
References ......................................................................................... 356
Appendix A Ethics Approval ................................................................. 407
Appendix B Ethics Approval Amendment ............................................... 408
Appendix C Letter of Information / Consent ........................................ 409
Appendix D Key Informant Letter of Consent ....................................... 411
Appendix E Interview Guide ................................................................ 412
Appendix F Rationed Products and Prices Havana September, 2017 .......... 415
Appendix G Sample Maps of Food Procurement in Havana ..................... 416
List of Tables

Table 1. Kingston Research Participants Profiles (Aliases) p. 193
Table 2. Havana Research Participants Profiles (Aliases) p. 234
List of Figures

Figure 1: Real Average Salary and Pensions, Cuba, 1989 – 2010  p. 129
Chapter 1 Introduction

Preface:

I had the opportunity to live in Havana twice for extended periods prior to doing my doctoral research. Both times I lived in an apartment with my family, and so shopping, cooking, and sharing meals with others was part of my day-to-day reality. One of the most difficult things for me was to learn how to navigate food procurement in Havana. The formal markets didn’t have everything we needed, and I lacked knowledge about how to engage in the informal market that is so essential to meeting everyday needs. I was ignorant about the complex web of rights and obligations in households and families, the subtleties of different forms of transactions: trading, giving, sharing, bartering - and their meanings: charity, solidarity, condescension, respect, gratitude, and so on. I was always aware of my position as a wealthy foreigner, and at the same time I knew I lacked the cultural knowledge and social network necessary to locate and purchase eggs or fish, for example.

Finding the process of day-to-day food procurement so difficult - something that I had never given much thought to as a middle class, white, educated woman in Canada - spurred me to talk about it with the Cubans I knew. Through these conversations I began to realize how central the problems of food access were for Cubans every day. It was these experiences that piqued my interest in food insecurity in Cuba.

In 2008 I took a job in Kingston in which I was charged with finding a way to integrate a perishable food reclamation for food assistance program with a coordinated
marketing and distribution system for local farmers. Ready for a challenge and naïve about both farm economies and food insecurity, I jumped in and gave it my best shot. It didn’t take long to realize that no matter how many community gardens and school gardens, how many food skills programs, and how many tonnes of fresh produce diverted from landfill into the food assistance stream, we weren’t any closer to resolving food insecurity (or farm-income insecurity either, for that matter) in Kingston. I settled, as most do in the not-for-profit food-access sector, into a ‘build a better band-aid’ approach. I recognized that my efforts couldn’t resolve food insecurity but was hopeful that the programs we developed were better (more dignified, more ‘empowering’, healthier) than the dominant Canadian model of dealing with food insecurity through food-banks.

Despite the limitations I encountered, this rapid immersion into the charitable food sector in Kingston led to my sustained interest in questions about who has access to food, how, and under what conditions.

I decided to return to graduate school in 2013 to pursue a deeper understanding of food insecurity, the underlying causes and potential solutions to it. My Kingston-based research is grounded in my experience working and volunteering in the not for profit emergency food sector in Kingston. My research in Havana builds on experience I had living there for 4 months in 2004, and for 5 months in 2012.
1.1 Setting the Scene in Canada and Cuba

Food insecurity, the “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways” (Anderson, 1990) remains a persistent problem around the world. Social and political responses to food insecurity in different countries range from state entitlements and programs, to market measures, to charitable/aid responses, however the problem of food insecurity seems intractable as rates of food insecurity remain steady or continue to rise in most countries in the world (Webb et al., 2013; FAO, 2016). While we know that food insecurity is inextricably linked to financial insecurity, there may also be other determinants at work in constructing the conditions that produce it. This project adds to the body of research exploring multiple determinants and dimensions of food insecurity.

Little comparative work has been done comparing food insecurity in higher income and lower income countries (although see Coates et al., 2006; FAO, 2016). There is a question as to whether we can compare the effects of neoliberalization on first and third world sites that have radically different histories, and contemporary geo-political contexts (Fainstein, 2011). On the other hand, neoliberal structures and subjectivities everywhere are shaped by the same ideologies - market liberalization, competition, and the focus on the individual. Geddes (2014) states, “While neoliberal tendencies are observable everywhere, actual practices are uneven and contingently produced in place-specific ways as they interact with ‘inherited landscapes’ of political, economic and social conditions” (p. 2). Comparing these uneven practices sheds light on the particular manifestations of neoliberalism in different sites.
Not only are Canada and Cuba representative of the first and third worlds, they are situated differently within global neoliberalism and employ different approaches to addressing food insecurity for their respective citizens. Following the revolution in 1959, the Cuban State put in place multiple universal entitlements to guarantee equitable food access to all Cubans. This has included subsidized food rations for every household, workplace and school meals, and price controls on some food-stuffs, even in the “free market”. This system of universal entitlements and state controls over food access is currently in decline as the Cuban state retracts from its responsibilities for full employment and social welfare, restructuring the economy through the development of a domestic private sector, inviting more foreign direct investment and by committing to an increased investment in and reliance on tourism.

In Canada, there has never been a national or provincial policy enacted to ensure equitable food access. Citizens rely on income from employment, pensions, or social assistance for purchasing food in the free market, primarily from grocery stores. When that fails, i.e. when people can’t afford to buy groceries, we expect them to turn to charitable food solutions such as food banks. Neither minimum wages nor social assistance rates are set at a level to ensure food security, and research shows that only somewhere between 20 - 35% of people who report food insecurity in Canada actually use food banks for emergency food assistance (Dietitians of Canada, 2015; Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2015).

I am often asked why I have chosen to look at Canada and Cuba for this research project. While the social, political and economic environments of Canada and Cuba are profoundly different as I discuss in detail in Chapters Four and Five, I was intrigued by
the similarities in how people talk about the experience of food insecurity in both sites. My preliminary observations in both sites convinced me that the lived experiences of food insecurity in these different environments overlap in many ways. In both sites, research participants report anxiety about being able to afford sufficient food and about having to compromise the quality and quantity of food consumed. In both sites, people emphasize the importance of prioritizing feeding children over adults, and believe that their and their families’ health status is affected by insecure or inadequate access to healthy and sufficient food. In both sites people have faith in their own inventiveness, and often show pride in their ability to overcome adversity, and to avoid and manage food insecurity. In each site, people emphasize the importance of formal and informal social networks for resolving the day-to-day work of providing food. My observations are supported by food insecurity research that demonstrates that the experience of food insecurity is similar across different countries, languages, and cultures even accounting for differences in systems of food procurement, languages, and available strategies (FAO, 2014; Coates et al., 2006).

While the way people experience food insecurity in each site is similar, there are also striking differences in the food access environments of Kingston, Canada and Havana, Cuba. This presents different options for managing household food insecurity, as well as different ways for people to understand the role of the state, the market and civil society in relation to food insecurity. Some differences I identify between the two sites are:

- Canadians rely on food charities and discount groceries in the free market for addressing food insecurity while Cubans rely on a broad but crumbling system of
state entitlements and a flourishing black-market economy to meet their food needs.

- Cuba’s lack of a civil society independent from the state means that when state entitlements fail, there are no alternative food provision mechanisms. Neither are there independent researchers or activist movements to advocate for changes to food policy. Canada has a large network of food charities and an emerging and vibrant, though disarticulated, food movement determined to promote food security. The efficacy of this advocacy is yet to be proven.

- The subjectivities of food insecure people in each site are shaped by different historical, social and political-economic forces. For example, Cuba’s outsider status in the global economy engenders a profound awareness among the population about how their system for food access is different than that which exists under capitalism. Canadians, on the whole, have little imagination for alternative systems for food procurement outside of those commonplace under contemporary neoliberal capitalism.

1.2 Research Questions:

My primary research goal is to expand the understanding of the intersection of multiple causes and different experiences of food insecurity in Canada and Cuba, and to shed light on the often unquestioned “common sense” of individual and societal responses to food insecurity. In order to address this, two research questions guide this project.

First, what can we learn from comparing people’s experiences of food insecurity in two countries with very different state approaches to food security? Second, how does
neoliberalism shape available individual, societal, and governmental responses to food insecurity?

My research began with a comparison of the experience of living with food insecurity in two sites with very different cultural and policy environments: Kingston, Ontario, Canada and Havana, Cuba. I conducted ethnographic field-work in Havana, Cuba and Kingston, Ontario, Canada, in 2015 and 2016. In both research sites I spoke with people who lived in poverty and were at risk for, or had recently experienced, food insecurity according to their own accounts of living in poverty and struggling to put food on the table. I used snow-ball sampling (Sadler et al., 2010), also known as chain-referral sampling, to selected research participants who were responsible for the food work (planning, procurement, and preparation) for their households. I contextualize the data from these interviews through participant observation, and by looking at state policies, market responses, and charitable services that enable better food access. I ask how individual and household strategies to avoid and manage food insecurity are shaped and mobilized within these contexts. I propose that by looking at these two sites - sites in which the state, the market, and civil society organizations play such different roles in relation to food security - I will be able to identify and unravel the unquestioned ‘common sense’ of the systems and structures that shape food insecurity in each location. For example, the role that charitable food services play in Canada, draws attention to the complete absence of this sector in Cuba; at the same time, the centrality of universal food and other entitlements in Cuba bring into sharp focus the comparative lack of universal entitlements in Canada.
Just as the problem of food insecurity is a complex problem, my findings from this research are similarly multi-dimensional. As a result of this research I put forward the following three sets of arguments to advance the understanding of food insecurity. First, precarity must be considered an important dimension of food insecurity. Not only is food insecurity produced by precarious contexts, it is inherently experienced as precariousness. Thus, precarity must be considered both as a determinant and a dynamic of the experience of food insecurity in the development of societal responses to it.

Second, this research reminds us that people manage food insecurity in combination with other needs and desires. This research adds ethnographic evidence to arguments that we should understand poverty and food insecurity as a function not only of income, but of other material and social deprivations. Policy to address food insecurity should be integrated with strategies for addressing multiple forms of deprivation including, but not limited to, income levels.

Third, this research theorizes distinct ways in which social capital is mobilized for managing food insecurity in Cuba and in Canada. In addition to discussing the importance of informal social networks of kin, friendships and neighbours, I describe two formations of social capital, particular to each research site. In Canada, a formation I am calling Formal Social Capital (FSC) is based on institutionalized or formalized relationships. These relationships facilitate and legitimate the use of emergency food assistance for some people, but not others. FSC relationships are part of uneven and unofficial shadow-state relationships between the state and emergency food providers in Kingston. In Cuba, a formation of social capital I am calling Reciprocal Social Capital (RSC) is employed within complex networks of informal reciprocal social relations key to
managing everyday life. RSC is used primarily in the informal economy and is mobilized to facilitate food access and to meet other needs. This form of social capital relies on a high level of community solidarity deriving from historical ideas of what it is to be Cuban.

1.3 Conceptualizing food insecurity

This research is situated within contemporary conceptualizations of food insecurity. The vulnerability of food insecure Canadians has been well documented through population health surveys and academic research. Despite nearly a decade of monitoring income-related household food insecurity in Canada through the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) however, the problem has not been explicitly addressed through provincial or federal policy. In 2012, according to the CCHS survey, approximately 12% of Canadians experienced income-based food insecurity (Tarasuk, Mitchell, & Dachner, 2014). Food insecurity is highest among people living in poverty. Social groups that are at high risk for income poverty in Canada such as lone parents (34.3%), people who rent as opposed to own their dwelling (26.1%), African Canadians (27.8%) and Aboriginal persons living off-reserve (28.2%) are at much higher risk for food insecurity than the average. The CCHS survey excludes Aboriginal Canadians who live on reserves, people residing in institutions, members of the armed forces, and homeless people. It is reasonable to believe, then, that the data collected through the CCHS is a very conservative measure of the extent of income related household food insecurity in Canada.

The vulnerability of food insecure Cubans is less well established. Cuba does not measure food insecurity at the population level. However, a small number of recent
qualitative studies into poverty and deprivation in Havana identify uncertain or inadequate access to food as key dimensions of poverty (Añé Aguiloche, 2005; Espina Prieto, 2008, 2011; Ferriol et al., 2004; Garcia & Cruz, 2007; Zabala Argüelles, 2010). The findings in these studies of relatively small samples are mirrored by ethnographic studies of Cuba that identify that, despite admirable health statistics in relation to the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, food insecurity is a primary preoccupation for most people living in Havana (Bastian, 2016; Garth, 2009, 2012, 2014; Padrón Hernández, 2012; Weinreb, 2009; Wilson, 2014, 2016).

We know that globally, as in Canada, food insecurity is highly correlated to low incomes. That makes sense, particularly in areas where purchasing food in the market is the primary means of food access. What is less clear is why the correlation with low incomes is not higher. While most (though not all) people experiencing food insecurity are also living on low incomes, not all people living in poverty report food insecurity. Data suggest that there are other determinants in addition to low income at work in producing the conditions that lead to food insecurity. Data from the 2012 Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM) of the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) indicates that 70% of Canadian households who relied on social assistance were food insecure meaning that an astonishing 30% were not. And 29% of people with incomes below the Low Income Measure (LIM) reported food insecurity, meaning that 71% of people with those low incomes did not (Tarasuk, Mitchell, & Dachner, 2014). What is going on in these low income households that do not report food insecurity? Food insecurity remains a serious problem, but it is one that food insecure people in both Canada and in Cuba work to avoid or manage everyday by using multiple, complex,
strategies under variable conditions. This research seeks to better understand those strategies and conditions.

1.4 Theorizing food insecurity through neoliberalism

In this thesis I explore how particular manifestations of neoliberalism create the conditions for food insecurity, and at the same time shapes and constrains available individual and societal responses to it in each site. I discuss how neoliberalism is played out in relation to food insecurity at the level of policy, the market, and civil society, using the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu to make sense of the logics of practice of people facing food insecurity. I draw attention to the creation of different subjectivities in relation to neoliberalism in each culture. These subjectivities shape how people living with food insecurity understand their own experiences of deprivation, coping, and resilience. A Bourdieuan analysis helps to make clear what’s going on between the lived experience of food insecurity without losing sight of the systems and structures at play in the spheres of the state, the market, and civil society.

Neoliberalism is an historically specific form of global capitalism guided by the argument that the market, left to its own devices, is the best way to advance human well-being (Peck, 2010). While the sphere and logic of neoliberalism is fundamentally economic in nature, it plays out and is constantly being reconstructed in the realms of everyday social relations, social and economic structures, and government policies. In this way, political, economic and social life have become increasingly subjected to the logic of free markets, competitive relations, and the minimal regulation of capital by the state (Purcell, 2008).
As a high-income capitalist democracy, Canada is firmly entrenched in and complicit with global neoliberalism. The consolidation of neoliberalism in Canada’s trade relations and business practices, government policies, (Carroll & Shaw, 2001) poverty reduction strategies (Smith-Carrier & Lawlor, 2016) and culture (Power, 2005) is well documented. Neoliberalism remains hegemonic in Canada, profoundly influencing the governmental and societal responses we can envision for addressing food insecurity.

Scholars have had a bigger challenge theorizing Cuba’s relationship to neoliberalism. For nearly 60 years, Cuba has held itself (and has been held, through severe trade embargos) outside the mainstream of neoliberal global capitalism. While the impact of neoliberalism on Cuba has been different than that which we see in Canada or in other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, the politics, economics and culture of neoliberalism have made themselves felt on the island, as an ideology and practices to be resisted, and as emblematic of individual freedoms and consumer culture to be desired” (Báez, 2004; Fernandez, 2005; Mesa-Lago, 1997). As the Cuban state retracts its central role in social welfare provision, the ideology of neoliberalism finds new footholds, and is increasingly embedded in the economic and social relations of “la nueva Cuba” (the new Cuba).

A key aspect of the neoliberalization of responses to food insecurity is in how, in rolling back state responsibility for public goods and services, space is created for civil society organizations to emerge and take up some of the work previously done by the state. At the same time, the neoliberal state rolls-out new mechanisms, often in concert with the private and/or not-for-profit sector in order to manage emergent problems. I use a neoliberalization analysis to frame “roll-back/roll-out” (Peck, 2010) processes in both
Canada and Cuba, looking at the different ways that neoliberalism has impacted food insecurity in both research sites. Shadow state formations exist in Canada, but Cuba's story is different. Cuban civil society does not exist independently from the state, but instead are constructed as on-the-ground agents of the Cuban government.¹ Within the private sector, the allowable businesses are virtually all in the small-scale production and sale of tangible goods such as food or crafts, entertainment, or repair services, and do not include any that would be able to take on social-welfare-related roles.

1.5 Outline of dissertation

In Chapter One of this dissertation I locate this research within existing food insecurity literature. I explore different ways that food security and food insecurity have been conceptualized and measured. I outline major themes in food insecurity research in Canada and elsewhere and clarify my own use of the term food insecurity in this research.

In Chapter Two, I introduce the theoretical framework for this thesis. First, I position my work in relation to the forces of global neoliberalism and outline how neoliberalism manifests differently in Canada and in Cuba in relation to food insecurity. Neoliberalization has had different impacts on each country’s political, economic and cultural spheres generally, and on the experience of and societal responses to food insecurity in particular. The second part of Chapter Two introduces the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu, particularly his conceptualization of logics of practice, habitus, and forms of capital. This theoretical approach offers tools for navigating between socially inscribed individual actions and agency on the one hand, and societal structures and

¹ The exception to this are churches and projects of international NGOs. In recent years, both have been permitted to operate, within strict limits, outside of official state-created structures.
forces on the other. Bourdieu’s social theory helps me to understand logics of practice of people working to avoid and/or manage food insecurity in different cultural and political environments informed by, though not necessarily wholly determined by, neoliberalism.

Chapter Three presents the methodological approach I used to address my research questions. I begin with a discussion of the value of a reflexive, ethnographic approach for this project. I discuss how my own habitus and the cultural capital I bring to fieldwork has an impact on the relationships I establish in the field, the data I collect, and the analysis I bring to it. Finally, I explain the various methods and data collection techniques used to address the research questions and discuss my coding and analysis processes.

Chapter Four portrays the settings in which this research is carried out. I outline historical, governmental, civil society and market structures that shape the experience of food insecurity for my research participants in Kingston, Ontario, Canada and in Havana, Cuba. This chapter also presents background about how poverty and food insecurity are measured and conceptualized in each site.

In Chapters Five and Six I present the findings of my fieldwork. I describe logics of practice for managing food insecurity as described to me by Canadian (Chapter Five) and Cuban (Chapter Six) research participants. I examine how food is acquired and managed within households, within informal social networks, in relation to food charities, and in relation to state entitlements. I also look at the societal forces and structures that shape the experience of and societal responses to food insecurity in each site.

In Chapter Seven I analyze key themes that emerged from the findings presented in the two previous chapters. First I look at precarity as a determinant and condition of
food insecurity. Second I look at social networks, and problematize the role of social capital and informal policy for managing food insecurity. I look also at the roles and limitations of food assistance charities in relation to food insecurity particularly in light of shadow-state formations. I explore how neoliberal forces and discourses shape the conditions of food insecurity as well as 'normal' individual, societal and governmental responses to food insecurity in each site.

In the concluding chapter I return to the fundamental research questions and arguments of the thesis and provide some final thoughts on food insecurity in Canada and Cuba. I address the limitations of this project and suggest further research questions that could elaborate an understanding of the determinants and dynamics of food insecurity, and consider some of the broader implications of this research for social policy.
1.6 Conceptualizing food insecurity

The objective of this chapter is to contextualize this research project within existing food insecurity research. One of the challenges of defining food security and insecurity is that the meanings of the terms have shifted over recent decades. Another is the different ways the concepts are used in different parts of the world. Still another difficulty lies in how the concepts are used discursively in the popular media and in grey literature relative to their shifting meanings in published academic works (Dietitians of Canada, 2016; Maxwell & Frankenberger, 1992; McIntyre, 2011). Confusion over definitions matters; as is pointed out in the Dietitians of Canada background paper on food insecurity (2016) “[A]ny misunderstanding of the underlying issues at different levels of food (in)security can lead to confusion or conflation in definition; this may further affect perceptions and can lead to different decisions regarding policy” (Dietitians of Canada, 2016, p. 4).

In this section I briefly outline the history of the conceptualization of food security and food insecurity, noting how each term is defined differently in different parts of the world. I look at how food insecurity is measured, and outline major areas of quantitative and qualitative food insecurity research in Canada and elsewhere that contextualize my research. Of particular interest are dimensions of precariousness, and coping and adaptive strategies in relation to food insecurity. I explore the relationship between how we conceptualize food insecurity and the development of policy and programs to address it. Finally, I justify how I am using the term food insecurity in this research project.
1.7 Food security and food insecurity: history and definitions

The evolution of the concept of *food security* from the 1970s until recently is well documented (see for example, Anderson & Cook, 1999; Barret, 2002; FAO, 2003; Coates, 2013; Maxwell & Frankenberger, 1992). The concept of food security first received international attention in the 1970s as a result of several high profile famines in the global south. In 1974, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) convened the World Food Conference to develop global and regional institutional measures to provide information and services to help prevent further food and famine crises (United Nations, 1975). Food Security was defined at the conference as “the availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices” (FAO, 2003).

Early definitions of food security focused on the availability and stability of national and global food supplies, reflecting international concerns about food shortages and famines during the 1970s global food crises. In the early 1980s global conceptualization about food security shifted in recognition that rates of hunger did not necessarily correlate to aggregate food supplies. Amartya Sen, evaluating the causes of famine in Bengal, the Sahel, Ethiopia, and Bangladesh argued that a lack of entitlements, rather than a lack of food, was the most significant contributor to deaths from famine (Sen, 1981). Entitlements are the bundle of assets that a person commands, including money, land, labour, and so on, that can be used to get gain access to food. The entitlement approach explains how people can be hungry in the midst of an ample supply of food (Sen, 1981; Yaro, 2004). While Sen’s theory of entitlements has been critiqued
for being apolitical and economically determinist (Baro & Deubel, 2006; Devereaux, 2007; de Waal 1990; Maxwell & Frankenberger, 1992), this reorientation of how hunger was understood shifted the analytical focus from food production (availability) towards a consideration of multiple dimensions of food distribution (access). This prompted a re-evaluation of how hunger and food insecurity are conceptualized.

Maxwell (1996) identified over 200 published definitions of food security, but today the most widely accepted definition is the one developed at the World Food Summit in 1996 describing food security as a “state 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” (World Food Summit, 1996). An adequate supply of food, while still recognized as one dimension of food security, is now understood as a necessary but not sufficient condition for achieving food security. Along with availability, the World Food Summit (1996) definition carries within it the acknowledgement that access, utilization, and stability are also fundamental dynamics of food security. These dimensions of food security are inherently hierarchical, with availability necessary but not sufficient to ensure access, which is in turn necessary but not sufficient for effective utilization, none of which ensure stability of food security over time (Webb et al., 2006). Influential international organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), The World Food Programme (WFP) the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the World Bank, typically use the term food insecurity to signify the opposite or absence of one or more dimensions of the 1974 definition of food security.

Food insecurity is defined differently in first and third world contexts. Among
North America researchers, a widely accepted definition of food insecurity is the “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.” (Anderson, 1990, p. 62). Conversely, then, at the household level, the operational definition of food security in North America research can be summarized as “the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially respectable ways” (Anderson, 1990).

In North American literature, the phrase household food insecurity (HFI) refers specifically to data and analysis derived from a measurement tool known as the Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM). Household food insecurity is sometimes referred to as “income-related household food insecurity” (Dieticians of Canada, 2016). Definitions of household food insecurity among North American researchers include “the inadequate or insecure access to adequate food due to financial constraints” (Tarasuk, Mitchell & Dachner, 2011; 2014) and “the uncertainty and insufficiency of food availability and access that are limited by resource constraints, and the worry or anxiety and hunger that may result from it” (Wunderlich & Norwood, 2006, p. 49). According to these definitions, the principle determinant of food insecurity is the lack of financial resources to afford a healthy diet (Carter, Dubois & Trembley 2012; Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2015).

Olabiyi and McIntyre (2014) note “One of the most perplexing issues related to household food insecurity is that not all poor households are food insecure, and not all food insecure households are poor” (p. 433). Limiting the food insecurity measurement framework to income-related food insecurity may not capture the whole picture of the
causes and experiences of food insecurity (Anderson & Cook, 1999; Green-LaPierre et al., 2012; Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2013; Nord & Brent, 2002; Power, 2005). In Canada in 2012, the last year for which we have nation-wide data on household food insecurity, approximately 15% of households reporting food insecurity did not live below half of the Low Income Measure (LIM), a standard definition of ‘living in poverty’ in Canada. At the same time, 54.7% of households living below the LIM, do not report food insecurity (Tarasuk, Mitchell & Dachner, 2014). We also know that while 69.5% of households relying on social assistance report food insecurity, 30.5% do not. The strong correlation between living on a low income and the experience of food insecurity is clear, however levels of income alone do not determine food insecurity status.

In the US, data also reflect a strong correlation between low income and food insecurity, although because classification schemes for analyzing the HFSSM in the US differ from those in Canada, we cannot directly compare the results. In 2012, according to US calculation, 40.9 percent of households with incomes below the official poverty line reported experiencing food insecurity, meaning that over 59 percent of US households below the poverty line did not report food insecurity. Similarly, 6.8 percent of those households with incomes above 185 percent of the poverty line, i.e., not living in poverty, reported experiencing food insecurity (Coleman-Jensen, Nord & Singh, 2013). Thus, data in both countries suggest that factors besides low levels of income act as determinants of food insecurity.

Food insecurity primarily addresses the access dimension of food security. While food insecurity research in North America sometimes also addresses dimensions of food

---

2 In Canada the Low Income Measure (LIM) is a commonly used measure of relative poverty, calculated at 50% of median household income, adjusted for household size. Measures of poverty are discussed in more detail below.
supply or availability in the market, (Bedore, 2010; Dachner et al., 2010; Kirkpatrick & Tarasuk, 2010) utilization/nutrition, (McIntyre et al., 2004; McLaughlin, Tarasuk & Krieger, 2003; Power, 2005) and stability (Ford & Beaumier, 2011; Olabiyi & McIntyre, 2014; Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2013), these dimensions are generally studied as correlates to the principle theme in the research literature of the adequacy of financial resources to provide food access.

Recent research suggests that alongside income, precariousness and forms of deprivation other than low income are important factors to consider when studying the underlying causes of food insecurity (Dietitians of Canada, 2016; Ford & Beaumier, 2011; Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2013; McIntyre, Bartoo & Emery, 2012; Nord & Brent, 2002; Notten & Mendelson, 2016). This dissertation uses an ethnographic approach to examine in detail the intersection of low incomes, precariousness, and material and social deprivation as determinants of food insecurity.

Conceptualizations of food insecurity are bound up in how we understand poverty. Defining poverty is a matter of ongoing debate among policy-makers and activists, inside and outside Canada. Poverty can be defined in absolute terms - inability to obtain the necessities of life - or in relative terms - being worse off than average. In Canada both types of measurements are commonly used to define poverty. None of the available measures are as straightforward as the idea of a “poverty line” would indicate.

The after-tax Low Income Cut Off (LICO) is the income level at which a family spends at least 63.6% of its income (20% more than the average household) on food, clothing and shelter. This measure is indexed to family size and community size. Based on spending patterns identified in 1992, the LICO is the oldest and probably most
commonly referenced measure of poverty in Canada (Scott, 2014) and because of its longevity, is useful for doing longitudinal comparisons. On the other hand, the LICO is criticized for not being sensitive to changing spending patterns since 1992.

The Low Income Measure (LIM) is defined as half the median family income adjusted for different household types (Statistics Canada, 2016a). LIM thresholds are updated each year so when incomes increase (or decrease), the thresholds shift along with it. The LIM compares the situation of those living on low incomes with those living on median incomes in the same year. One benefit to using LIM analysis is that it is most useful for international comparisons (Statistics Canada, 2011). While LICO has been the most commonly cited poverty measure among civil society organizations in Canada, recent years have seen more reports using data based on the LIM (CPJ, 2017). A drawback to using the LIM in Canada is that the survey from which it is derived excludes the territories, so data based on LIM isn’t relevant to the experience of poverty and food insecurity in many Northern communities in Canada (Tarasuk, Mitchell & Dachner, 2014). Both the LICO and the LIM are relative measures, meaning that as average or median incomes shift, so do the ‘lines’ generated by LIM or LICO calculations. They also rely on income as the measure of poverty, disregarding other dimensions of deprivation such as inability to afford adequate food, transportation costs, or access to dental care (Notten & Mendelson, 2016).

The Market Basket Measure (MBM) is another measure of poverty, used since 2002, that is based on the estimated cost of purchasing a “basket” of goods and services (Scott, 2014). It was developed in response to calls for an absolute measure - i.e. a way of measuring poverty against real costs of living rather than as an income level relative to
the median. The base threshold equals the estimated costs of adequate food, clothing, transportation, shelter and other expenses for a reference family of two adults and two children, and then adjusted for family composition and region. The MBM measure is the point at which a household income falls below the ability to purchase this basket of goods and services. The MBM is thus an absolute measure, i.e. it identifies poverty in relation to a pre-calculated cost of living, not in relation to the income levels of other households (Statistics Canada, 2016a; Scott, 2014). The MBM is sometimes criticized for not accurately reflecting the cost of living in some regions, and for missing dimensions of poverty that are not directly related to income, such as access to social services and social supports (Scott, 2014).

Data from these different measures cannot be combined or easily compared. For example, from 1996 to 2009, the poverty rate for all of Canada declined under LICO (and shortly thereafter, under MBM). However, the low income rate under LIM remained relatively constant (Scott, 2014). The Government of Canada does not recognize any one of these measures as defining an official poverty line. Internationally, the trend in poverty measurement is toward using a suite of indicators because any one measure offers, at best, an incomplete picture of poverty (Scott, 2014; Radoki, 2002; Zhang, 2015).

Low income and poverty are not equivalent concepts (Davis & Tarasuk, 1994; Notten & Mendelson, 2016). Depending on their circumstances, people may live on a low income and be able to afford an adequate standard of living, as indicated by some of the household food insecurity data mentioned above. Some households below income-defined poverty lines may have personal assets (owning a home, for example), undeclared income, social networks, or access to public services that allow them to have
a decent standard of living despite income poverty. At the same time, people in Canada who live above the LIM or the LICO are sometimes unable to afford the basic necessities including sufficient food. Some households with incomes above an income-defined poverty line may have heavy debts or special family health needs, and face especially high living costs. They may experience other factors that aren’t visible in income-based poverty measurements. Using additional measures of social and material deprivation can be helpful in determining the extent and character of poverty and food insecurity in a community, region or country (Coates et al., 2006; Notten & Mendelson, 2016b; Radoki, 2002).

A deprivation approach to measuring poverty can encompass food insecurity and underscores dimensions of poverty not captured by either income measures such as LIM or LICO, or consumption measures, such as MBM. Deprivation indices go beyond measuring income to incorporate data on material and/or social deprivation. They can include indicators of material deprivation such as access to adequate housing, transportation, or social services, as well as indicators of social deprivation, such as proximity to community facilities or opportunities to participate in social or leisure activities. The Ontario Deprivation Index (ODI) was developed by researchers working with civil society organizations in Ontario, and in 2009 was adopted by the province of Ontario as an ancillary means of tracking poverty as part of the provincial poverty reduction strategy (Matern, Mendelson & Oliphant, 2009a). The ODI is based on a list of items or activities considered necessary for an adequate standard of living, and is considered by many to be an important complement to, though not necessarily a substitute for, income-based measures of poverty (Notten & Mendelson, 2016). The ODI
is not intended to be a comprehensive list of basic needs, but helps to distinguish between people who experience a low standard of living, and those who do not by asking questions about consumption of fresh and healthy food, access to dental care, access to transportation, social integration, participation in leisure activities, and more. The results from the ODI survey have been tested across 6 variables: income, education, employment status, immigration, family type and housing tenure (Matern, Mendelson & Oliphant, 2009) and baseline levels have been established.

From my interviews, it was evident that people experience food insecurity as one concern among many forms of insecurity including income, housing, health, social, and others. My research thus supports the suggestion that food insecurity status could be used as an indicator along with income-based and other measures to develop a better picture of the experience of poverty. Likewise, using other poverty-correlated measures along with food insecurity measurement could provide a more complete picture of how people experience and manage food insecurity.

1.8 Measuring food insecurity

There is an international trend towards conceptualizing food insecurity using survey tools similar to those used in North America as more countries recognize the importance of measuring the access dimension of food insecurity separately from incidence of malnutrition, stunting, and wasting (Coates, 2013; FAO, 2016). Despite an expanding body of international literature about food insecurity and an emerging consensus about how to measure it (FAO, 2016), the term food insecurity is still often used by influential organizations to mean the absence of any or all dimensions of food security. Most FAO publications, for example, do not define food insecurity, though they use the term
frequently and interchangeably with the terms *hunger* and *malnutrition*. Even the FAO Voice of the Hungry (2016) report that looks in detail at experience-based measures of food insecurity does not actually define food insecurity.

Because of the inconsistencies in definitions of food insecurity, and in order to highlight certain dimensions over others, some researchers use alternate terms such as “food hardship” (Gundersen, 2008, p. 192), “food poverty” (Christiaensen & Boisvert, 2000; Dowler, Turner & Dobson, 2001; Graham, Stolte et al., 2016, p. 2; Riches, 2002, p. 653) or “food insufficiency” (Alhuwalia et al., 1998; Gundersen & Gruber, 2001). Each of these terms means something slightly different. Food insufficiency, for example, while sometimes used as a general descriptor of the lack of food (Ahluwalia, 1998), in other research is precisely conceptualized and measured (Alaimo et al., 2001; Gundersen & Gruber, 2001; Rose, Gundersen & Oliveira, 1998).

As the incidence of hunger, measured by anthropometric assessments of malnutrition, waned in the US in the 1960s and 70s, the concept of food insecurity was developed as a way of conceptualizing the growing number of people seeking food bank assistance in the 1980s, and sparked researchers in the US to seek new ways to understand food access (Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2015). Despite the near-elimination of severe malnutrition in most First World countries, the word “hunger” is still popularly used as shorthand for food insecurity in Canada and the United States, particularly by civil society organizations such as food banks. More precisely used, the word hunger refers to the physical discomfort caused by a lack of food (Barrett & Lentz, 2013). “Hunger is embraced by the concept of food insecurity…. but is not synonymous with it” (Davis & Tarasuk, 1994, p. 51). Severe levels of food insecurity may include hunger, but
not all who report food insecurity experience hunger. Still, around the world, reports produced by food banks and food bank networks, such as the Global Food Bank Network, Food Bank Canada, and Feeding America continue to use the word hunger for its evocative power, using it interchangeably with the term food insecurity (Food Banks Canada, 2016; Feeding America, 2017; Global Food Bank Network, 2017).

Because food insecurity has historically been difficult to define, there has been a struggle to develop and agree on appropriate and valid measures. Qualitative ethnographic research carried out in the late 1980s in the United States formed the basis for the development of tools to measure food insecurity (Radimer, Olson & Campbell, 1992). This research demonstrated that household food insecurity occurs as a predictable sequence of experiences, initially characterized by worry about having enough food, followed by changes to the types of food consumed, and finally, decreased consumption of food. A review of research conducted in countries around the world concluded that that these dimensions of the experience of food insecurity appear to be common across cultures (Coates et al., 2006; for examples of this research see also Coates et al., 2007; Crush & Frayne, 2011; Frongillo & Nanama, 2006; and Rafiei et al., 2009).

While numerous measures have been advanced for measuring the access component of food insecurity around the world, the United States-developed Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM) forms the foundation for a standardized approach to food insecurity (access) measurement (FAO, 2016). The HFSSM and its derivatives is an experiential measure, administered as a multi-item survey tool that records concerns about and responses to food sufficiency in the household over a continuous period of time. The method is based on the idea that the experience of food
insecurity (access) causes predictable reactions, that these reactions range through degrees of severity, and that responses that can be captured and quantified through a survey and summarized in a scale ranging from food secure, through to mildly, moderately, and severely food insecure. All questions on the survey are linked causally to lack of income, i.e. specifying that reported experiences of food insecurity were due to a lack of finances, and not due to other food-limiting factors such as dieting, time constraints, transportation, and so on (Radimer, Olson & Campbell, 1992; Coleman-Jensen, 2012; Health Canada, 2012).

In Canada, the Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM) uses the same 18 item survey instrument as the US HFSSM. The questions ask about worries and behaviours in relation to food quantity and quality and link all responses to income security. The Canadian HFSSM has been administered nationally since 2005 as part of the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), a cross-sectional survey that collects information from a nationally representative sample of the Canadian population about health determinants, sociodemographic characteristics, and health status. Provincial and Territorial participation in this survey is not mandatory every year. In the 2013-2015 cycle, for example, The Yukon and Newfoundland and Labrador opted out of administering the survey. For the 2015-2016 cycle, Ontario, Newfoundland & Labrador, and the Yukon have opted out. The last year for which food insecurity monitoring was mandatory across Canada was 2012. The next mandatory cycle will be in 2017 (PROOF, 2017).

The FAO proposes a standardized survey tool for measuring and comparing food insecurity across countries. The 8 item Food Insecurity Experience Scale Survey Module
(FIES -SM) is based on the HFSSM and the Escala Latinoamericana y Caribena de Seguridad Alimentaria (ELCSA), a similarly conceptualized survey tool developed and used extensively in Latin America (FAO, 2016). The FIES-SM builds heavily on HFSSM and ELCSA models, and provides an analytic framework to improve comparability across countries, including first and third world countries. The FAO Voices of the Hungry project calculates food insecurity differently than Canadian researchers do in order to facilitate comparisons between countries. For example, while the FAO estimates of Canadian food insecurity rates appear similar to the numbers presented in the Statistics Canada webpage, they are actually calculated based on survey data drawn from the 8 item Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES), a survey included on the 2014 Gallup World Poll and not from the Canadian HFSSM. The FIES survey scale only enquires about adult experiences, and analysts use a different method to calculate food insecurity than do researchers in Canada looking at data from the HFSSM (PROOF, 2016).

The Standardized FIES-SM tool for international use has resulted in being able to compare results of food insecurity research across borders, however in the first world we cling to our domestically developed measurement tools, definitions, and thresholds even when using similarly constructed survey tools. This makes it difficult to compare the results of food insecurity research between countries, even as similar as Canada and the United States, which use the same HFSSM questionnaire but interpret it differently (Dietitians of Canada, 2016; Loopstra, 2014; Tarasuk, Mitchell & Dachner, 2014).

These recent efforts to develop internationally applicable measures of food insecurity raise the question of whether or not it is important to be able to compare the prevalence of food insecurity across first and third world countries. It is taken for granted
in the global food insecurity literature that international comparison of the prevalence of food insecurity is desirable, even across first and third world contexts (FAO, 2016). To my knowledge, this assumption is not interrogated in the literature. While international development and aid programs may use comparative food insecurity rates to allocate resources and evaluate the efficacy of programs in different countries, policy and programming to address food insecurity in first world countries is typically developed and delivered at the national or sub-national (provincial, territorial) level. Thus, it could be argued that internationally comparative measures are of less value than meaningfully constructed, targeted, local systems of measurement. Thus, while there may be value in a standardized tool that enables inter-country comparison of food insecurity status, some countries express concerns that a standardized measurement tool may miss important regional and local factors in the experience of food insecurity, and may, therefore, be of marginal use in developing effective policy (Coates, 2013). Consensus has been reached about the validity of HFSSM-derived measurements but nonetheless they recommend that the FEIS should be implemented as part of a more comprehensive set of measurement tools that can capture localized dimensions of food insecurity (access) (see also Coates, 2006; FAO, 2016; Leroy et al., 2015). The FAO is careful to point out that “FIES-based indicators should be seen as a key addition to a suite of complementary measures” (FAO, 2016, p. 5).

It is instructive to see that in all countries in which the FIES-SM measure has been validated, moderate and severe food insecurity show “significant and high correlation in the expected direction with most accepted indicators of development” (FAO, 2016, p. 29). Similarly, in Canada and the United States food insecurity shows
'significant and high correlation in the expected direction with indicators such as income level, income source, single parent status, and lower levels of education, each of which also correlate with accepted measures of poverty. In the context of my research, it is also interesting to learn that, according to the FAO (2016), analysis of food insecurity across countries suggests that

“experience-based food insecurity measures capture aspects related to difficulties in access to food beyond what can be explained in terms of monetary poverty, evidence that income alone is insufficient to capture many factors that determine food security, and in particular food access, at the household level” (p. 31).

National and local policies to address food insecurity and other deprivations take place within the context of global neoliberal economic and ideological forces, and understanding these forces as global may be important in understanding the limits of national and local policies to address food insecurity in any country, within the context of global neoliberalism.

The HFSSM currently provides the ‘gold-standard’ model for food insecurity (access) research around the world, however, several other measures have also been developed that aim to capture various elements of the access dimension of food security. Most measures fall into one of two categories; experiential measures, and dietary diversity measures. Experiential measures including the HFSSM and the FEIS-SM, focus on whether the household has enough food (or money for food) to meet its basic food needs, and on the behavioral and subjective responses to those conditions (Leroy et al., 2015). The Coping Strategies Index (CSI) falls into this category as well. It addresses household responses to food shortages, ordering them based on a set of established behaviours regarding how households cope with food insufficiency. The methodology for
CSI research is based on collecting data on a single question: What do you do when you do not have enough food, and do not have enough money to buy food? (Maxwell & Caldwell, 2008). Dietary diversity measures, such as the Household Dietary Diversity Scale (HDDS), and the Food Consumption Score (FCS), measure the self-reported number and quantity of different foods or food groups consumed over a specific reference period in relation to optimal nutrition intake (Leroy et al., 2015).

Food bank umbrella organizations, such as Food Banks Canada and similar organizations in other countries produce reports about food bank usage which are often used in the media and in fundraising campaigns for demonstrating the problem of ‘hunger’. In Canada, the data in these reports have been shown not to be a sensitive indicator of food insecurity, drastically under-representing the prevalence of food insecurity (Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2015). (For more exhaustive reviews of food insecurity measures around the world, see Jones et al., 2013; or Leroy et al., 2015).

Even within Canada, comparing different ways of analyzing food insecurity can be complicated. There is a debate in Canada about whether or not to include marginal rates of food insecurity, along with moderate and severe rates in reporting the prevalence of food insecurity (PROOF, 2016). Statistics Canada does not report marginal food insecurity, evidenced by “worry about running out of food or limiting food selection because of lack of money for food” (Tarasuk, Mitchell & Dachner, 2014), instead limiting its reporting to moderate and severe levels of food insecurity. Moderate food insecurity occurs when people compromise the quality and/or quantity of food due to a lack of money, and severe food insecurity includes the components of marginal and moderate food insecurity plus missing meals, reducing food intake and at the most
extreme going day(s) without food (Tarasuk, Mitchell & Dachner, 2014). The Statistics Canada webpage on food insecurity includes only moderate and severe levels of food insecurity, and, from the data for 2011-12, reports a prevalence of household food insecurity of 8.6% (Statistics Canada, 2017b). Research presented by PROOF (Research to Identify Policy Options to Address Food Insecurity)\(^3\) does include marginal food insecurity in its analysis, along with moderate and severe food insecurity. PROOF researchers conclude that in 2012, the last year for which we have country-wide data, the prevalence of all household food insecurity in Canada was 12.6% and note the importance of consistent and fulsome measures of household food insecurity in Canada (Tarasuk, Mitchell & Dachner, 2014; Tarasuk, Li, Mitchell & Dachner, nd).

The experience-based indicators used in these HFSSM-based measures demonstrate “analytic soundness, ease of administration, and comparatively low cost and timeliness of reporting” (FAO, 2016, p. 5). These measures have been tested rigorously over time and among varies populations and have been found to be reliable indicators of income-related household food insecurity. Indicators derived from the FIES-SM in particular have the distinctive advantage of being comparable across countries.

Loopstra and Tarasuk (2015) note that there are differences between what the HFSSM actually measures and the broader concept of food insecurity defined as the “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.” (Anderson,

---

\(^3\) PROOF - Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity - is an interdisciplinary, internationally-based group of researchers working with practitioners in the public sector and non-governmental organizations, in a research program funded by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research. Led by Dr. Valerie Tarasuk at the University of Toronto, the work of PROOF, including annual reports on Household Food Insecurity in Canada and numerous research publications, can be found on the website http://nutritionalsciences.lamp.utoronto.ca/
Our understanding of the multiple dimensions of food insecurity in Canada and elsewhere is expanded by examining other indicators alongside those identified through the HFSSM. The PROOF website provides a comprehensive list of research about different dimensions of household food insecurity in Canada that complements and builds on research that analyses HFSSM data (http://proof.utoronto.ca/). Data on indicators such as health, home ownership, employment, dietary intake, level of education, and so on are often analyzed alongside income-based household food insecurity data to expand on our knowledge about the multiple causes and effects of food insecurity.

Even with these expanded sets of data for comparison and analysis, the narrow focus of HFSSM measurement and reliance on quantitative analysis of the data excludes some dimensions of food insecurity. HSSFM-based measures do not address the nutritional quality or safety of food and they do not measure the social acceptability of coping strategies for managing food needs. HFSSM measures are unable to tell us much about individual (rather than household) food insecurity. Food insecurity is measured at the household level, and only one adult in the household is surveyed. Dietary intakes are measured at the individual level and research indicates that within households reporting the experience of food insecurity, dietary intake may be different for different individuals. Children, for example, are often protected from the worst effects of food insecurity (Fram et al., 2011; Kaiser & Hermson, 2015; McIntyre et al., 2004). Food insecurity is also often experienced differently by women than by men in the same household where in some cases a woman may experience food insecurity while her male partner remains food secure (Power, 2006). Other research shows that household food
insecurity coping measures, household food acquisition decisions, and intra-household food allocation behaviours means that the measure of household food security does not paint the whole picture as an indicator of individual food security (Campbell & Desjardin, 1989; Hamelin, Habicht & Beaudry, 1999; McIntyre et al., 2002; 2003; Radimer et al., 1992; Rose, 1999; Travers, 1996).

In Canada, we also have to ask who is missed when we measure food insecurity. While the HSSFM administered through the CCHS is designed to represent 98% of Canadians, it excludes important vulnerable groups such as Aboriginal Canadians living on First Nations reserves or on Crown lands, people living in institutions, people who do not have a legal address, residents of some remote regions, and full-time members of the Canadian Forces (Statistics Canada, 2011). Many members of these groups can be reasonably considered at high risk of food insecurity. If we rely only on the data produced by HFSSM measurement tools for our understanding and analysis, we run the risk of making policy recommendations that do not fully recognize the complexity of food insecurity, or that miss very vulnerable groups or subsets of groups.

Each question on the HSFFM survey is framed in terms of inadequate financial resources, and so other dimensions of food insecurity become invisible. Janet Page-Reeves (2014) reminds us that subtle dimensions of the causes and experiences of food insecurity are missed when we rely solely on household surveys and statistical analysis. Qualitative studies of the lived experience of food insecurity bring deeper understandings of the complex causes and experiences of food insecurity, and enrich the findings and correlations drawn from statistical analysis. Qualitative research may reveal aspects of food insecurity that are not otherwise evident through HSSFM-based statistical analysis,
contributing to the development of alternative analyses and new avenues of investigation (see for example, Green-LaPierre et al., 2012; Rose, 1999; Swanson, Olson & Miller, 2008; Travers, 1996; Voices for Food Security in Nova Scotia, 2017).

The search for appropriate measurement tools for food insecurity in North America began with ethnographic research, and qualitative research remains fundamental to our understanding of the experience of food insecurity. Studies conducted with low income families in the 1980s were among the first to bring to attention the multiple dimensions of ‘hunger’ in the United States (Radimer, Olson & Campbell, 1990). These studies formed the basis for the development of the HFSSM and were followed up by further interview-based studies that further validated the measure (e.g. Kendall et al., 1995). Research has been carried out in other highly industrialized first world contexts such as Canada (Health Canada, 2007) and other countries (Coates, 2006; Chatterjee et al., 2012; FAO, 2016; Salarkia et al., 2014; Hackett et al., 2008) to validate the application of HFSSM-based survey tools.

Qualitative research on food insecurity continues to be carried out in the United States and Canada to address aspects of food insecurity that are not captured through the HSSFM (see for example, Beagan, Chapman & Power, 2017; Bird et al., 2008; Chan et al., 2006; Dickinson, 2014; Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2012, 2013; Page Reeves et al., 2014; Power, 2002; 2005; Lambden et al., 2007; Pierre, Receveur, Macauley, & Montour, 2007; Williams et al., 2012). A range of qualitative methods have been used in these studies, from interview, to focus groups, to participant observation, to participatory research. Target populations vary widely (e.g. women, single mothers, cultural and ethnic groups, clients of food banks or other food programs, and so on). Findings from
qualitative research have contributed significantly to our understanding of the psychosocial and cultural aspects of food insecurity and have important implications for policy recommendations.

1.9 The dimension of stability in food insecurity measurement

Stability was recognized as a fundamental dimension of food security when it was conceptualized in 1974. Stability as a dimension of food security crosses all other dimensions, since “food security can only exist when there is protection against chronic, temporal, and cyclic food insecurity across the other dimensions of availability (supply), access, and utilization” (Christiaensen & Boisvert, 2000). The issue of stability or precariousness has been identified by many researchers as a key dimension of food insecurity that warrants further investigation (Anderson et al., 1999; Webb et al., 2006). Including the stability dimension in studies of food insecurity recognizes that food security cannot be regarded as fixed condition, and can only exist when there is sufficient protection against chronic, temporal, and cyclic food insecurity via the availability, access, and utilization dimensions.

Within early definitions of food security, the stability dimension referred to the importance of a stable national or regional food supply in the face of conflict, drought, or other environmental disaster (World Bank, 1986). In more recent analysis the stability element of the definition has been taken up by researchers looking at short term, cyclical or chronic shocks that may occur and be experienced at, the household or individual level (Gundersen, Kreider & Pepper, 2011; McIntyre, Bartoo & Emery, 2012). Economic, health, environmental and other shocks may affect a household's approach to managing food needs and may influence food production and consumption decisions that impact
current and future food security (Barrett, 2002).

As I discussed previously, food insecurity research has identified various factors that correlate with income-based food insecurity including source of income (Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2013; Rainville & Brink, 2001; Vozoris et al., 2002); low level of education (McIntyre, Bartoo & Emery, 2012; Ribar & Hamrick, 2003; Loopstra, 2014), health status (Barrett, 2010; Mark et al., 2012; Tarasuk et al., 2013) renting rather than owning a house (Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2013) along with other factors. A further dimension of food insecurity that arises in many studies is vulnerability to income and other shocks, or precarity.

Nord and Brent (2002) hypothesize that unanticipated shocks to household circumstances including fluctuations in household income, fluctuations in expenses, changes in household composition, and events such as increases in housing costs, job loss, and chronic health conditions contribute to food insecurity regardless of income level. Loopstra and Tarasuk (2013) also draw attention to the importance of gleaning “the unmeasured characteristics that make households more susceptible to food insecurity and financial vulnerability” (p. 1317).

Research increasingly identifies stability/precarity as an important dimension of food insecurity, suggesting the need for more investigation about the relationship between stability/precarity, income shocks, and food insecurity. Researchers have looked at food insecurity and precarity in relation to employment and other income sources (Leete & Bania, 2010; Lewchuk et al., 2014; Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2013; McIntyre, Bartoo & Emery, 2012; Nord & Brent, 2002; Tarasuk & Vogt, 2009), health issues (Nord & Brent, 2002; Tarasuk, Mitchell, McLaren & McIntyre, 2013; Olabiyi & McIntyre,
2013) and housing (Nord & Brent, 2002; Kirkpatrick & Tarasuk, 2011). The
stability/precarity dimension is also recognized in this definition of food insecurity in
which it is described as “a condition in which a household’s access to food is inadequate
or precarious because of insufficient income or inconsistent financial resources”
(Dietitians of Canada, 2016b, p. 2, italics mine). While North American definitions of
food insecurity foreground the role of income for food access, research about domestic
food insecurity in in Canada and the US has begun to incorporate consideration of the
effect of precariousness and stability on food insecurity. This concern among North
American food insecurity researchers echoes that of international researchers such as
Chambers (1988), Maxwell (1990), and Coates (2013), each of whom have noted that the
stability dimension of food security has not been taken up sufficiently in international
research, either in the development of food insecurity measurement tools, or in the
development of policy to address food insecurity.

Many studies note that food security is only one element of a broader livelihood
security (Chambers, 1988; Davies, 1993; Frankenberger & Coyle, 1993; Gross &
Rosenberger 2005; Maxwell, 1996; Maxwell & Smith, 1992). Frankenberger and Coyle
(1993) note that "poor people balance competing needs for asset preservation, income
generation, and present and future food supplies in complex ways... [and] may go hungry
up to a point to meet other objectives" (p. 36). HSSFM-based measures tend to isolate
income-related food insecurity from other livelihood concerns, although as mentioned
above, many researchers combine data, both qualitative and quantitative, to analyze
correlations among factors other than income such as employment status, housing,
geography, health status, and so on. Research points to the links between food insecurity
and other deprivations. Thus, in order to develop robust effective policy, food insecurity must be considered among a host of other livelihood concerns (Chambers, 1988; Davies, 1993; Frankenberger & Coyle, 1993; Gross & Rosenberg, 2005; Hamelin et al., 2002; Hamelin et al., 2010; Maxwell & Smith, 1992; Maxwell & Frankenberger, 1992; Tarasuk, 2001b).

1.10 Strategies for managing food insecurity

Much of the qualitative research on food insecurity in Canada and the United States explores the multiple strategies that people use to manage and avoid household food insecurity. People living on limited incomes use a range of strategies to acquire and manage food in order to maintain an adequate food supply for their households. Responses to food insecurity must be understood in terms of the rationality and logic of the individuals and households involved. As Pierre Bourdieu states, “Practice has a logic which is not that of the logician” (1990, p 86). Logics of practice are not always logical to the observer, but rather are common-sensical (to the actor) ways of responding to situations. We can understand the complex set of food management strategies people use as logics of practice. When people are confronting food insecurity their logic of practice may be complicated as they are typically managing competing material, and psychological needs, some of which are unconscious.

People mobilize different strategies for managing or avoiding food insecurity when dealing with the market (budgeting, choosing generic brands), or when navigating the charitable food sector (choosing how and when to use some services and not others), or when engaging with state entitlements (re-allocating social assistance benefits for other needs, or hiding under-the-table work activities from one’s case worker). Jarrett et
al. (2014) and Kempson et al. (2003) found that people typically use multiple strategies concurrently to both prevent and manage food insecurity.

The literature on food insecurity presents different ways of conceptualizing the strategies people use for managing household food insecurity. Some Canadian researchers divide strategies into income-managing strategies, and food-managing strategies (see for examples Dietitians of Canada, 2016 or Rainville & Brink 2001), however, the line between the two quickly blurs. Rainville and Brink note that regardless of the strategy an individual or household may use - eating cheaper foods, skipping meals, using coupons, selling possessions, juggling bill payments, borrowing money or food, using food charity or participating in community kitchens or gardens, - these strategies for managing food insecurity are all ultimately aimed at stretching income available for food. Food insecurity management strategies can also be divided into those that take place within the household -compromising quantity and quality of food or budgeting and planning -and those that take place outside the home such as relying on family or friends, or using food banks or other food assistance programs (McIntyre, Bardoo, et al., 2012).

In a comprehensive coding of food insecurity strategies, Kempson et al. conducted research with 62 low income residents in New Jersey (2003). The research team divided strategies into 4 categories: rely on resources offered in the community; interact with informal support systems; supplement financial resources; and lower food costs by using shopping strategies. Not surprisingly, these categories intersect with one another. For example, in borrowing money for food from a friend, relying on an 'informal support system' provides a source for 'supplementing financial resources'.
Canadian food insecurity research identifies many of these same strategies. For example, Rainville and Brink (2001) summarize strategies from identified in the Canadian National Population Health Survey and the Food Insecurity Supplement of 1998-1999 (NPHS) and other researchers have since expanded this research. Strategies identified in the SPHS include compromising the quality and/or quantity of food consumed (see also Tarasuk 2001; Tarasuk, Mitchell, & Dachner 2014), delaying paying bills (see also Tarasuk 2001), careful budgeting and planning (see also Beagan, Chapman & Power 2017; Sim, Glanville & McIntyre 2011), using coupons, shopping sales, or returning bottles (see also Beagan, Chapman & Power 2017) borrowing money (see also Hamelin et al., 1999), selling possessions (see also Hamelin et al., 1999) gardening (see also Huisken, Orr & Tarasuk, 2016; Sim, Glanville & McIntyre 2011), using food banks (see also Michalsky 2003; Loopstra & Tarasuk 2015; Tarasuk & Beaton, 1999), or using other community food programs such as community kitchens (Tarasuk 2001; Engler-Stringer & Berenbaum 2005, 2007).

Jarrett (2014) identifies four broad categories of food insecurity management strategies in her research on African American caregivers of preschoolers in Washington, DC. She classifies strategies as those related to food provisioning, (i.e., how food is procured); those related to food consumption, (i.e. how food is managed and rationed within the household); strategies related to social networks; and finally, institutional strategies including state entitlements and charitable services. Food-provisioning strategies take place primarily in the market. They include shopping strategies such as seeking out low prices, purchasing cheap brands, purchasing in bulk and stockpiling, using coupons, shopping at discount stores, and shopping at multiple stores to secure the
Food-consumption strategies generally take place in the home, and include careful utilization of leftovers, using a freezer to store extra food, serving smaller amounts of food, and preparing meals that allowed households to stretch low-cost ingredients. Household members ate what was available, ate smaller meal portions or leftovers from others, and skipped meals (Hoisington et al., 2002; Jarrett, 2014; Sim et al., 2011).

Social-network strategies take place in a sphere of informal relations extending outside the home. They include relying on family, neighbours and other social connections. Socially networked food assistance may involve financial help for food purchases, purchasing groceries for a household or meal sharing. Reliance on social supports for food and income assistance is sometimes discussed as a food insecurity management strategy in Canadian food insecurity literature (see for example Beagan, Chapman & Power, 2017; Dachner, et al., 2010; MacIntyre et al., 2003). While there is little research in Canada detailing how social networks are used for managing food insecurity, some US research that explores in greater detail the role of social family and non-family supports for managing food insecurity (Gross & Rosenberger, 2005; Kaiser & Hermansen, 2015; Jarrett, 2014; Rose, 2011; Swanson, Olson, Miller, & Lawrence, 2008). Kempson et al.’s (2003) study gave details of how socially networked strategies including cooking with others, obtaining food from coworkers, participating in events like church potlucks, and other community meals, and borrowing food and/or money from family or friends, are commonly used strategies for managing food insecurity.
Just as social networks may be a source of support that people draw on to manage food insecurity, social isolation is noted as a correlate of food insecurity in some Canadian research (Bisset & Potvin, 2014; McIntyre et al., 2012; Tarasuk, 2001). Qualitative research done in the UK suggests that social capital does have some capacity to buffer the most drastic effects of food insecurity, and that social isolation reduces the ability to access social capital, resulting in poorer health outcomes (Cattell, 2001). The role of social networks has not been well theorized in Canadian food insecurity research, and there is little discussion about what those social relations look like or exactly how they help in managing food insecurity (Sim, Glanville & McIntyre, 2011).

Finally, in Jarrett’s conceptualization, institutional strategies consist of both government programs and civil society organizations. In the United States government programs like the Special Supplementary Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) were widely used by food-insecure households (Jarrett, 2014; Swanson et al., 2008). Institutional strategies also include programs run through day cares and schools, as well as food pantries, churches, and food banks (Jarrett, 2014). In Canada, we lack government programs targeting food insecurity, and so institutional strategies are largely limited to relying on charitable responses to food insecurity.

Participatory community food security programs such as community kitchens and community gardens are included in the institutional strategies. Some researchers hypothesize that community food programs such as community kitchens and community gardens, while not shown to influence income-based household food insecurity as it is measured in the CCHS, may have other significance for participants beyond that of food
provision, such as improving social connection and mitigating the experience of social isolation (Cattell, 2001; Engler-Stringer & Berenbaum, 2005, 2007; Huisken, Orr, & Tarasuk, 2016). It is unknown what long-term effect these programs may have on food insecurity and other dimensions of health and well-being. The role of food banks and other kinds of food assistance and community food programming for addressing food insecurity constitutes a distinct theme within food insecurity research in Canada. While food bank data are often used in news media as proxy measures of food insecurity in Canada, by and large, research reflects that emergency food services such as food banks and meal programs are used by a relatively small portion of people living with food insecurity in Canada, and have no discernable impact on overall rates of household food insecurity (Tarasuk et al., 2014). Collins, Power and Little (2014) have begun research to examine some of the subtler differences among various models of food assistance programs in Canada.

Another way of conceptualizing food insecurity management strategies is in whether they are reactive or proactive (Jarrett, 2014). Examples of crisis oriented, or reactive strategies include rationing and using institutional resources such as food banks. Examples of proactive strategies include many food provisioning behaviours such as shopping in bulk, seeking sales, and adhering to a budget. Reactive or ‘crisis oriented’ strategies are used to cope with food shortages, while ‘proactive strategies are used to prevent food shortages from happening. Most people use more than one strategy for avoiding and managing food insecurity. Managing food insecurity is further complicated when using multiple, complementary strategies from across these categories. Using combinations of strategies for managing food insecurity requires what Beagan, Chapman
and Power (2017) call “employing complex knowledges” (p. 5). Rainville and Brink (2001) note that 83% of food insecure households in Canada used at least one strategy, and that the number of strategies used increase with the level of food insecurity (see also Jarrett, 2014; Tarasuk, 2001).

1.11 The dimension of ‘social acceptability’ in food insecurity research

The final dimension of food insecurity that I address in this section is that of the ‘social acceptability’ of strategies used to manage food insecurity. While Anderson’s (1990) oft-quoted definition of food insecurity includes “the inability to acquire food in socially acceptable ways”, the social acceptability dimension of food insecurity is not captured in HFSSM-based food insecurity measurement. Questions related to specific social and cultural practices that mapped onto issues of social acceptability were tested in early validation research on the US Household Food Security Survey, but the concept was found to be difficult to define and measure (Coates et al., 2007; Wunderlich & Norwood, 2006). Specific coping strategies that may imply social acceptability or unacceptability, such as using food banks, relying on family, or borrowing or stealing food, are not included in the survey.

While the dimension of social acceptability is not measured through HFSSM-derived tools, issues of social stigma arise often in qualitative studies of food insecurity. Often the theme arises in studies looking at the use of food banks (see for example, Riches, 2002; Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2012), food stamps (Dickinson, 2013; Power, Little & Collins, 2015), school feeding programs (Poppendieck, 2010), and other social and cultural aspects of food insecurity and poverty (Hamelin et al., 2002, 2010) in Canada and the United States.
Reviewing ethnographic research to validate HFSSM measures of food insecurity in 15 countries, Coates et al. (2006) found that concerns about social unacceptability dimension of food insecurity arose in all research sites, though this dimension had a wide range of culturally specific expressions that ranged from having to eat socially unacceptable food to using socially unacceptable coping strategies to procure sufficient food. Coates et al. note, for example, that

the concept of social unacceptability is implicit in many of the scale items pertaining to specific management strategies that are outside of culturally normative patterns of behavior. In fact, this context-specific concept of “unacceptability” influences the likelihood of a strategy being adopted in different cultures. At this item level, there are significant differences in what is considered “culturally unacceptable” in different societies. In the United States, for instance, such unacceptable practices included visiting food pantries or borrowing from neighbors, whereas in Bangladesh accepting food aid or borrowing were typical. Unacceptable strategies in Bangladesh included women “working alongside men in the fields,” “working in the houses of wealthier neighbors,” or begging and stealing (p. 1445s).

The cultural specificity of the dimension of socially unacceptable behavior indicates that while HSFFM measures may be useful in identifying many key dimensions of food insecurity, it is not sufficient for appreciating the full complexity of the experience of food insecurity. It also raises the question about the dimension of socially acceptable and unacceptable strategies among different populations, even within one country. Research suggests that in some places in North America, food banks, food stamps, and other programs have been normalized as permanent measures, and that using these strategies may or may not be socially unacceptable in all situations (Hamelin et al., 2002; Kaiser & Hermsen, 2015; Nooney et al., 2013; Tarasuk & Beaton, 1999). This normalization of the use of food-based charitable and entitlement programs among some populations makes it
difficult to assess the social acceptability dimension of food insecurity without conducting targeted, localized, qualitative research.

1.12 Typification of the problem of food insecurity

“When claimmakers typify a social problem, they are setting the stage for societies eventual responses to that problem” (Poppendieck, 1999, p. 11).

The problem of food insecurity is recognized as a serious determinant of health and an important dimension of poverty, challenging earlier understandings of food security as primarily a function of food availability (PROOF, 2017; Dietitians of Canada, 2016; FAO 2016). Globally, this is evidenced by increasing buy-in to the FEIS-SM initiative being advanced by the FAO. In Canada, a decade of household food insecurity monitoring, coupled with tireless research and advocacy by organizations such as PROOF and other food insecurity scholars, is adding needed complexity to the conceptualization of food insecurity. This affects how we understand appropriate responses to food insecurity.

The oft-stated purpose of food insecurity research in Canada and elsewhere is to shape effective policy (Barrett, 2010; PROOF, 2017; Dietitians of Canada, 2016; FAO 2016). As Christopher Barrett (2010) succinctly remarks, "measurement drives diagnosis and response." (2010, p. 827). Analyzing the circular relationship among measurement, definition, and policy has been a persistent theme within food insecurity scholarship (see for example, Barrett, 2010; Carson, 2013; Dietitians of Canada, 2016; Poppendieck, 1999; Power et al., 1998; McIntyre, 2011; McIntyre et al., 2015; Tarasuk & Davis, 1996).

How we define food security and insecurity has an effect on the direction that policy takes in Canada and elsewhere. As Poppendieck explains “Even when
[claimsmakers] do not overtly advocate policies or responses, by emphasizing some aspects or images of the problem and ignoring others, they are helping to shape the content of eventual societal responses” (1995, p. 12). Lynn McIntyre (2011) notes that

…food insecurity policy - ‘policy initiatives directed at supporting individuals and families who lack access to food because of financial constraints’ - is not the flip side of food security policy - ‘policy that aims at providing healthy and safe food for all’. At best, food security policy is unrelated to food insecurity, and at worst, it renders food insecurity invisible (p. 6).

Food insecurity policy is shaped by research, but, as the above and other scholars note, the reverse relationship is also true. Available solutions, typically policy and programs already in existence, shape the way that food insecurity continues to be defined, understood, and researched. Further, existing solutions to food insecurity tend to be durable, obscuring competing conceptualizations of the problem that may lead to other responses (Carson, 2014; Poppendieck, 1999; Tarasuk & Davis, 1996).

This dynamic is easily illustrated by looking at the different responses to food insecurity in Canada, the US, and Cuba. In the United States, food insecurity policy is tied closely to the history of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) distribution of food and nutrition assistance through 15 programs including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), (previously known as Food Stamps), the National School Lunch Program, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Programs for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) (Coleman-Jensen, Nord & Singh, 2013). The USDA has measured household food insecurity annually since 1995, and analysis of the data is linked directly to these federally supported food-redistribution programs. Food insecurity research, as well as policy response, falls under the purview of the USDA, so it is not surprising that US food insecurity solutions are primarily food-
distributing solutions, reflecting the historical concerns of that government department, i.e. the twinning of the disposal of food surpluses with management of the problem of domestic hunger (Poppendieck 1986; 1995; Power, 2017). While aspects of these programs have changed significantly since their inception (Poppendieck, 1986; 2010), the persistence of the ‘common sense’ of food-based solutions for food-based problems in the US is notable, particularly as research since the 1990s has consistently demonstrated that household food insecurity as it is currently measured is first and foremost a problem of inadequate income in the US, as it is in Canada (Gundersen, Krieder & Pepper, 2011; Heflin, Corcoran & Siefert, 2007; Leete & Bania, 2010).

Since the year 2000, food insecurity measurement in Canada has fallen under the umbrella of the much broader Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), and is joint project of Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Statistics Canada, and the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI). The main goal of the survey is to provide population-level information on determinants of health, health status, and engagement with the health system (Statistics Canada, 2016 CCHS).

Canada has no comprehensive national framework designed to address food insecurity. Provincial poverty reduction strategies have not so far focused explicitly on food insecurity, and nor have the impacts of these strategies been evaluated in relation to food insecurity. Unlike the US, Canada has never implemented a food-based, targeted approach to addressing food insecurity. Instead, we rely on income-based approaches to poverty reduction on the understanding that they will be adequate to address poverty-related issues including food insecurity. There have been some studies hypothesizing the effect of food-based state entitlements in Canada including school meals (Gundersen et
al., 2017; Roustit et al., 2010), and food-stamps similar to the US SNAP program (Gundersen et al., 2017). These studies suggest that implementing food-based entitlement programs could have a positive effect in alleviating food insecurity. It is unknown, however, whether they would be more effective than allocating resources towards implementing better income support programs. Researchers have also raised concerns about the stigma attached to a food-stamps style program (Power, Little & Collins, 2015).

There is evidence that raising income supports can help address food insecurity status in Canada. Studies have looked at the positive effects on the prevalence of food insecurity of the Canadian seniors guaranteed annual pension (McIntyre et al., 2016) of child-benefit payments, (Ionescu-Ittu, Glymore, & Kaufman, 2015), and of raising social assistance rates within a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy in Newfoundland (Loopstra, Dachner & Tarasuk, 2015).

These differences between US and Canadian policy approaches to food insecurity demonstrate the relationship between how food insecurity is conceptualized and policy responses to it. A further example of the relationship between the conceptualization of food insecurity and policy to address it is found in Cuba. Framed as a fundamental entitlement of all Cuban citizens shortly after the revolution, the right to food in Cuba is tied up with ideals of the eradication of inequality under socialism and so is heavily managed by the state. Universal food rations, workplace meals, school meals, price controls, labour force structures, and rural and urban agriculture have all been federally mandated and managed since the early 1960s. Tensions between historic idealism, the unravelling of the ability of the state to provide entitlements, evidence of growing inequality, the carefully managed emergence of the private sector, and a lack of clarity
about the role (or even the existence) of civil society for addressing issues of inequality and deprivation, make new policy solutions for food insecurity nearly inconceivable.

Jennifer Coates (2013) provides a compelling analysis of the relationship between problem definition, available measurement tools, and policy development for food insecurity on a global level. The very complexity of the FAO 1996 definition of food security has generated multiple measurement tools, each of which only addresses a distinct aspect of food insecurity (Barrett, 2010; Maxwell, Coates et al., 2012). Policy makers often rely on single, specific measures to generate food security policy. For example, in many regions of the world, food insecurity policies are based on historical biases generated from and reflected in first-generation food insecurity measurement tools of malnutrition, stunting, wasting, and aggregate national or regional food supplies. Because the tools to measure those dimensions of food insecurity are readily available, and because solutions based on this typification are already known and available, available measurement and analytic tools shape how food insecurity continues to be measured and the policy directions based on these measurements. In order to create effective solutions to food insecurity, Coates (2013) recommends that a ‘suite’ of indicators should be used for measuring and understanding food insecurity. Food sufficiency, nutrient adequacy, cultural acceptability, food safety and stability are interwoven as determinants of food insecurity, and should be understood as such. She argues that this complexity should be reflected in policy and programming solutions.

We continue to suffer from the effects of unclear definitions for food security and food insecurity, and from measurements that incompletely capture the multiple dimensions of food insecurity. Kimberlé Crenshaw reminds us that
People can only demand change in ways that reflect the logic of the institution they are challenging. Demands for change that do not reflect the institutional logic - that is demands that do not engage and subsequently reinforce the dominant ideology - will probably be ineffective (1988, pg. 1367).

The development of policy to address food insecurity in Canada and elsewhere has been encumbered by the hegemony of existing approaches, and a lack of clarity about the lived experience of food insecurity and thus, the kinds of interventions that are appropriate to prevent and mitigate it.

1.13 My use of the term food insecurity

Throughout this dissertation I use the term food insecurity rather than the more precisely defined (in Canadian research) term Household Food Insecurity to describe the experiences related to me by my research participants. I do this for two main reasons. First, I did not measure the household food insecurity status of my research participants according to validated HFSSM methods. I did incorporate elements of the questions used in the HFSSM in my interviews. However, I was cautious about foregrounding limited financial resources as the a priori cause of food insecurity as I wanted to elicit stories about other determinants and dimensions of food insecurity.

I was struck by two observations that led me to focus in on determinants of food access beyond inadequate income. First, multiple stories of precarity - of income, health, etc. - emerged in relation to stories about the work of putting food on the table; second, my interviewees consistently integrated their description of their food work into considerations of broader concerns about deprivation, such as housing, access to social services, and social isolation/connectedness. Thus, I use the term food insecurity in a
literal way, reflecting the feelings and experiences of insecurity that were related to me as we discussed the everyday work of planning, shopping for, and preparing food for a household. By this definition, all of my research participants were food insecure.
Chapter 2

Theoretical Orientation: Neoliberalism and the Social Theory of Pierre Bourdieu

A goal of this research is to shed light on relationships between the lived experience of food insecurity, and the policies and structures operating at the levels of the state, the market, and civil society organizations that have an effect on access to food. Two sets of ideas inform the theoretical approach to this research. First, I position this work in relation to global neoliberalism and how it shapes the experience of food insecurity. Canada and Cuba sit in very different relations to neoliberal capitalism. Canada is a first world democracy that has followed a largely uncritical turn towards neoliberalism over the past decades. Successive governments in Canada have embraced the ideology of neoliberalism as common-sensical, and it has increasingly shaped policies, social structures and cultural norms in this country. Cuba is a country in transition from a command-control political and economic structure based on socialist ideals, to one that incorporates at least some elements of capitalism while officially maintaining an ideological opposition to neoliberalism. Thus, the ideology of neoliberalism has had different impacts on each country’s political, economic and cultural spheres generally, and on the experience of and societal responses to food insecurity in particular.

In order to situate lived experiences of food insecurity in relation to the effects of neoliberalism, the second set of ideas I use can be found in the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu’s conceptualization of logics of practice, and particularly his
concepts of habitus and forms of capital, offers tools for navigating between socially inscribed individual actions and agency on the one hand, and societal structures and forces on the other. Bourdieu’s social theory helps us to understand how actions of individuals and groups are shaped by historical and social forces and structures without being determined by them. In the case of this research project, a Bourdieu-inspired approach allows me to make sense of the particular logics of practice of people working to avoid and/or manage food insecurity in different cultural and political environments.

The discourse of food security and food insecurity evolved within and alongside the evolution of neoliberal capitalism and thus neoliberalism produces conditions that shape and define contemporary food insecurity. This is not to say that neoliberalism is the cause of food insecurity per se, but that the structures and cultures fostered through neoliberalism shape the particular experiences of and responses to food insecurity that are the subject of this research.

In this section I provide an overview of how neoliberalism shapes experiences of food insecurity and at the same time shapes and constrains individual and social responses to it. I begin by looking at the ascendency of global neoliberalism as an economic, political and cultural project and identify its different manifestations in Canada and Cuba. I describe some of the key characteristics of neoliberalism, particularly as they affect poverty, food insecurity, and state and civil society societal responses to these issues. I pay particular attention to the institutionalization of precarity as a dimension of neoliberalism and look at how that shapes conditions giving rise to food insecurity. While neoliberalism gives rise to particular social structures and systems, it also shapes individual subjectivities. I look at how the neoliberalization of everyday life demands
adherence to principles of self-sufficiency, competition, and consumerism. This creates dissonance for economically marginalized people who fail to engage as good neoliberal subjects. Finally, a key dimension of neoliberalization is the ‘roll-back’ of state responsibility for social services and the subsequent ‘roll-out’ of neoliberalized mechanisms to address issues such as food insecurity and poverty. I look at the particular way in which private sector and civil society organizations are commissioned to assist in the neoliberal project and the deleterious effects of the neoliberalization of social services and public policy.

2.1 Definitions and dimensions of neoliberalism

Since the early 1980s, global neoliberal capitalism has been the hegemonic force defining economic, political, and cultural systems around the world. It is built on the classical liberal economic ideal of the self-regulating market, and manifests differently over time and in different places (Steger & Roy, 2010). Neoliberalism is described variously as an economic system, a political ideology, and a socio-cultural logic (Song, 2006). Neoliberalism cannot be understood as solely any one of these things, and must be recognized as a “sprawling family of related policies” (Connell, 2010, p. 32) that share logical principles and are put forth and implemented through various institutional and cultural mechanisms.

Steger and Roy suggest that neoliberalism can be conceptualized as “three intertwined manifestations” (2010, p.11). First and foremost, it is an ideology; second, a mode of governance; and finally, it is a prescriptive package of economic and social policies. These three manifestations of neoliberalism are woven together and are mutually reinforcing. As an ideology, neoliberalism offers a coherent view of free market
capitalism as the logical, fair and moral system for distributing wealth and providing opportunities to pursue our desires (Braedley and Luxton, 2010 p 7). It holds up values such as freedom, competition, fairness, individualism, and choice, and is constantly constructing and reconstructing these values and how they are manifest in an ever-evolving process of neoliberalization (Gledhill, 2004; Peck & Tickell, 2002).

Neoliberalism is intertwined with social conservatism, particularly around acceptable formations and roles of ‘the family’ (Harvey, 2005; Luxton, 2010). As Margaret Thatcher famously said “… you know, there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families.” (Keay, 1987). The task of the social reproduction of neoliberal workers is vital to the project of neoliberalism and the heterosexual, two parent family is understood as the ideal formation for the advancement of neoliberal ideology.

First, the family - generally women - must take on the care-taking responsibilities that the state resigns from, ensuring that individuals do not rely too heavily on the state. Second, ‘traditional’ formations of the family, i.e. heteronormative, dual parent, is tasked with socialization into the neoliberal regime, instilling the moral values that underlie neoliberal ideology.

As a mode of governance, neoliberal governmentality shapes “the conduct of conduct” of actors within the neoliberal regime (Foucault, quoted in Burchell, 1999, p. 2). Governmentality refers to how governance is based on particular logics and premises that become common-sensical, and so operate within and outside the formal structures of government. Under neoliberal regimes, these logics are rooted in neoliberal ideology described above, and so valorizes such values as competition, self-discipline, entrepreneurialism, and individualism. Neoliberal governance calls for the application of
neoliberal logic borrowed from business and trade to all facets of society and culture. It rejects the interference of state power over market forces, advancing the un-restricted free market as the primary logic which extends into all spheres.

As a prescriptive package of policies, neoliberalism demands several things of the state. Based on the market principles at the foundation of neoliberal ideology, it requires the deregulation of economic practices, and trade liberalization, and favours privatization of public services. These policies and practices differ over time and across different contexts, but typically result in tax cuts, particularly for businesses and the wealthy, a reduction of social services, the downsizing of governments, incentives for rapid market growth, the loosening of restrictions on trade, and other movements that align with the ideology of neoliberalism. These policies tend to work hand-in-hand with conservative values such as tough law-enforcement, ‘bootstrap’ economics, and valorization of traditional ideas of family and community (Stegar & Roy, 2010).

The implementation of neoliberal governance relies on hegemony, the combination of coercive (formal) and internalized rule (Gramsci, 1971). Hegemony functions so that “ruling ideas may dominate other conceptions of the social world by setting the limit to what will appear as rational, reasonable, credible, indeed sayable or thinkable, within the given vocabularies of motive and action available to us” (Hall, 1988, p. 44). Hegemonic governance is internalized as common sense; “In a quite literal sense, hegemony is habit forming” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991, p. 23).

2.1.1 History of neoliberalism
Neoliberalism arose as an explicitly anti-socialist project, positing that socialism promised an inevitable descent into totalitarianism and that adopting a neoliberal agenda
that was anti-collectivist was the logical protection against this (Braedley & Luxton, 2010; Hayek, 1944). Because of this assertion, the ideology and rhetoric of neoliberalism has long been particularly objectionable to the Cuban socialist leadership through clearly articulated critiques of neoliberalism in political speeches, news media and policy documents (Castro, 2002; Chaguaceda, 2015; PCC, 2011, 2017).

The ideas of neoliberalism emerged in the 1940s as ideology advanced by economists Friedrich Hayek in Austria and Milton Friedman in the US. Informed by cold-war logic opposing collectivist economic and social models, core elements of neoliberalism were formed around opposition to Keynesian welfare state policies and programs. Austrian philosopher and economist F. A. Hayek’s seminal work, *The Road to Serfdom* was based on the notion that classical liberal economics had been ‘polluted’ by Keynesian tendencies towards too much government interference in economic and private matters. Hayek, often called the grandfather of neoliberalism, asserted that only by embracing free-market capitalism can we ‘restore’ national and global economies to a state where everyone can benefit. Unlike a classic Marxist analysis of base (economy) and superstructure (ideology), early ideation advancing neoliberalism demonstrates that the ideologies of neoliberalism, such as competition and individual responsibility, are not mere byproducts of an economic model that privileges the free market, but that these logics were built in from the start (Braedley & Luxton, 2010; Hayek, 1944).

The ideation of neoliberalism began in the 40s, and remained peripheral through post war expansion. It wasn’t until the crisis of the welfare state in the 1970s, with a rise in unemployment, growing inflation and slowing economic growth, that the ideas of neoliberalism found fertile ground for adoption and expansion on a global scale (Brenner
By the mid 1970s, corporate and public support for a Keynesian welfare state was faltering around the world. The many reasons for this - growing inflation and a slowing of economic growth, rising unemployment, global fuel and food crises - are well documented. For many theorists, the election of Margaret Thatcher in the UK (1979) and Ronald Reagan in the USA (1980) marked the end of the first world commitment to social safety nets and the role of the state in managing economies and the beginning of the rapid turn towards a global neoliberal economic, political and social mode (Harvey, 2005; Steger & Roy, 2010).

By the 1980s, the principles of neoliberalism were well advanced in western democracies, and had been taken up by the Conservative party in Britain and the Republican Party in the US. Neoliberal policies were implemented with enthusiasm in domestic and international matters. In Canada, by the mid 1970s the corporate sector was making a concerted effort to create a business environment more conducive to its interests (Carroll & Shaw, 2001). Political and corporate interests re-shaped the Canadian ‘common sense’ discourse for business in Canada so that free trade, low inflation, tax cuts, and the diminishment of the public sector were understood as reasonable goals. Right wing lobby groups and think tanks were central to the promotion of neoliberal ideology in Canada, and the position papers and research they conducted were legitimized, presented as expert sources in the mainstream media. Carroll & Shaw (2001) characterize these policy groups as “sites for the construction of political discourses which circulate in the form of various texts, having influence not only in business and government circles but in news media and popular culture” (p. 196).
Canadian corporate-sector lobby groups and right-wing think tanks emerged to play an important role by the 1980s, legitimizing the neoliberal agenda through research and commentary that backed up the arguments of the corporate sector. The C.D. Howe Institute, historically a ‘centrist’ research organization, jettisoned its prior pro-Keynesian bent and adopted a neoliberal agenda (Abelson & Carberry, 1998; Carroll & Shaw, 2001). The Fraser Institute, Canada’s pre-eminent neoliberal think tank, often quoted in mainstream media, was founded in 1974 as an “independent international research and educational organization” and continues to envision "a free and prosperous world where individuals benefit from greater choice, competitive markets, and personal responsibility” (https://www.fraserinstitute.org/about, 2017). The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), a progressive, left-leaning think tank was established in 1980 to counter what it considered to be the “mounting and pernicious influence of the Fraser Institute” (Abelson & Carberry, 1998).

As neoliberalism advanced in the global north, it made even faster headway in the global south. This was thanks, in large part, to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank’s eager adoption of neoliberal ideology and the implementation of the widespread Structural Adjustment Program regime mandating the adoption of neoliberal economic and social policies throughout the third world. The fall of the Soviet Bloc in 1991 provided the necessary proof of the primacy of the free market over collectivist political-economic models and cemented neoliberal hegemony. The anti-communist foundations of neoliberalism found new life as countries tried to figure out the project of radical transformation in matters of economy, employment, society, infrastructure, health and welfare while adhering to neoliberal principles (Jessop, 2002).
Today, China, Cuba, North Korea, and Vietnam, the remaining self-proclaimed communist countries, are each forging distinct paths in a post-soviet world, with different approaches to domestic and international social and economic policy.

2.1.2 Neoliberalism, work, poverty, and precarity
Neoliberal ideology and policies that privilege the rights of corporations to make profit over social protections for people result in new labour sector norms of flexibility, mobility and efficiency at the expense of the rights of workers (DeFilippis, 2009; Ferguson, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Vosko, 2006). Because precarious employment and income are linked to poverty and food insecurity in both Canada and Cuba, it is important to consider this particular effect of neoliberalism on the labour force.

In Canada, after several decades of neoliberalization, the policies and practices of neoliberalism have become so normalized that the effects can be difficult to see. The 'common sense' of individual responsibility, small government, and the unfettered market shape the experience of, as well as potential responses to poverty and food insecurity in Canada, as elsewhere. In Cuba, a consciously articulated resistance to neoliberal capitalism lies at the base of policy (see for example, PPC, 2011), but tensions between socialist ideals and neoliberal ‘pragmatism’ are evident in the pendulum swing of policy directives for the country (Mesa-Lago, 2014). Contemporary Cuba, in both state and non-state spheres, is grappling with how to preserve socialist ideals of equality while incorporating elements of capitalist entrepreneurship and foreign direct investment in a bid to ease the economic burden on the state of a controlled economy in the face of the ongoing trade embargo and diminished capacity to provide citizen entitlements.

Although the Cuba state vigorously rejects neoliberalism, the country must
nevertheless contend with the impacts of global neoliberalism on the domestic economy and culture. As Cuba increasingly incorporates elements of free-market economy such as entrepreneurialism and foreign direct investment, there is no escaping the hegemony of neoliberalism that shapes these business dealings. Personal relations that happen through tourism, international trade, cultural exchanges, increased access to the Internet, and webs of familial and friendship relations, bring with them the ideology and promises of neoliberal capitalism, introducing intractable tensions in Cuban society (Báez, 2004; Gordy, 2006; Härkönen, 2014; Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López, 2013; Powell, 2008).

Brodie (2008) recognizes precarity as a fundamental and institutionalized dimension of neoliberalism and particularly, of neoliberal governance. Writing about the insecurity engendered by neoliberalism and quoting Bauman (2002) she states

Our shared experience of systemic vulnerability, individualization, in effect, represents the “institutionalization of insecurity,” and, for Bauman, “a mode of domination grounded in the precariousness of existence (p. 104).

Precariousness in the Canadian labour force is increasingly recognized as a problem for workers. What we continue to insist on imaging as standard or ‘normal’ working conditions in Canada - permanent, full time secure jobs - have been in decline since the 1970s (Vosko, 2006; Lewchuck et al., 2011) and jobs have become increasingly precarious. This phenomenon reaches around the globe, as work has become increasingly precarious - part time, casual, contract, flexible and mobile (Gledhill, 2004; Lewchuk et al., 2011; MacEachen, Polzer and Clarke, 2016; Vosko, 2005). Precarious jobs are characterized by their lack of stability. They may be contract or temporary, part time or on-call. Schedules are often unpredictable, as are the number of hours for which employees will be paid. They typically lack health benefit or pensions, and rarely provide leaves beyond legally mandated sick days and vacation. Capital’s demand for a flexible, mobile,
‘just in time’ labour force has resulted in a concerted effort to weaken worker protections, including making calculated attacks against unionization and promoting the idea of the individual’s ‘freedom to choose’ to work under precarious conditions (Peck, 1996).

The 1990s saw a rapid shift towards precarious work in Canada. This trend has continued, particularly in food-service, health care, and education sectors (Vosko, 2006; Busby & Muthukumaran, 2016). A 2011 study prepared by the Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) Research Group, tellingly titled *It’s more than just poverty: Employment precarity and household well-being*, reports a 50% increase in precarious work in Canada over 20 years and indicates that precarious employment with wage insecurity has a greater negative effect on household wellbeing and community connectedness than do low (but secure and predictable) wages. According to this report, effects of precarious work include increased risk of food insecurity, increased social isolation, higher stress, challenges in budgeting for everyday expenses, and lower participation in community and leisure activities (Lewchuck et al., 2011).

The tendency towards part time, contract, insecure work crosses employment sectors. Research on precarious work often focuses on flexible contract workers but there is a difference between the precarious work of a part time or temporary service-sector worker with no guaranteed number of hours, constantly changing shifts, and no benefits on the one hand, and the kind of flexible working situations often experienced by knowledge-workers, consultants, and soft-ware developers, on the other. Flexible workers in self-employed, contract positions are more likely to embrace an optimistic reading of flexible work (MacEachen, Polzer and Clarke, 2016) in which they value the ability to set their own hours, work from home, travel, and opportunities for creativity. People working the night shift at a fast-food restaurant, or who are ‘on call’ for a low-paying call-centre job are less enthusiastic about precarious work and typically have less
control over the hours and conditions of their work. Both groups encounter precarious working conditions as a result of the demands of neoliberal capitalism and the effects of a precarious income are potentially damaging for both, including negative effects on health, citizen engagement, and family life (Lewchuk et al., 2011; MacEachern, Polzer & Clarke, 2016, Vosko, 2006).

Precarious work puts people at risk for poverty. Lewchuk et al. (2011) found that according to their research in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area, people in precarious work on average earned 46% less, and reported household incomes that were 34% lower than those in secure employment. They experienced more income volatility and are more likely to experience periods of a week or more with no work. In Canada, until recently, those segments of the population who were in need of charity or public support were typically understood as those outside the labour force such as welfare recipients, seniors, the disabled, and so on. The disappearance of protected or unionized jobs and the rapid increase in precarious work means that now not even wage earners are guaranteed to be able to meet their food and other needs through earned income. In 2012, 62% of people who reported experiencing food insecurity in Canada rely on wages from paid employment (Tarasuk, Mitchell & Dachner, 2014). While Food Banks Canada data only captures a percentage of the people who are food insecure in Canada, almost 17% of people who used food banks in Canada in 2016 relied on wages as their income (Food Banks Canada, 2016), suggesting that paid employment is not sufficient protection against food insecurity in Canada.

While effects of precariousness on the labour force in the context of neoliberalism have been the subject of considerable analysis, other sites of neoliberal precarity have
received less attention. In addition to discussing the negative effects of precarious work, my research participants talked about experiencing social assistance as precarious, due to concerns about having benefits cut off and uncertainty about changing eligibility requirements. They also shared stories about the precariousness of food charities which are sometimes unable to meet the needs of their clients because they operate on unstable and insufficient budgets. There is a gap in research about the effects of neoliberalism on the precariousness of social assistance and on the charitable food assistance sector (Pettes et al., 2016).

2.1.3 Governmentality and the neoliberalization of everyday life
Neoliberal ideology works to construct self-governing neoliberal subjects in a variety of ways. Practices of self-governance neatly aligned with the hegemony of neoliberalism, and reinforce the ideology of freedom, choice, individualism, competition, consumerism, and self-reliance. In short, they work towards the construction of good neoliberal subjects (Magnussen, 2011; Polzer and Power, 2016).

The penetration of neoliberal logics into every aspect of life means that it is difficult to conceive of alternative discourses for understanding poverty and deprivation. The neoliberalization of everyday life “commoditizes the most intimate of human social relations and the production of identity and personhood” (Gledhill, 2004, p. 13). The deleterious effects of the infiltration of neoliberal ideology into social welfare, housing, health services, and education is well documented (see for example Braedley & Luxton, (eds), 2010; Glynn (ed), 2009; Harvey, 2012; Polzer & Power, 2016).

In neoliberal ideology, free market capitalism provides the ideal conditions for a particular kind of moral economy as well as a financial one. Working from a Foucaultian
notion of governmentality, Mark Goodale and Nancy Postero explain that under neoliberalism individuals are “encouraged to adopt a civic identity in which they are urged to take responsibility for their own behaviours and welfare. Those who don’t or can’t are subject to punitive measures” (2013, p. 8; see also Maki, 2011; Polzer and Power, 2016; Power, 2002). When it comes to food insecurity, neoliberalism shapes culturally appropriate and structurally available means for individuals to procure food, predominantly through the market (or in some circumstances, growing one’s own). People living with food insecurity under neoliberalism must negotiate a moral economy that demands individual self-sufficiency and enthusiastic participation in consumer culture. At the same time, many people find themselves unable to exercise the ideal of consumer choice in the market due to financial constraints and competing needs. The economic and cultural imperatives of neoliberalism violate western democracies historical social contracts for social equity and shift attention for social ills, including food insecurity, onto individuals and families, and away from structural and systemic causes (Jarosz, 2011). The inability to successfully provide for oneself through the market is framed and experienced as an individual failure or deviancy (Lyon-Callo, 2004; Maki, 2011), rather than as a result of systemic or structural barriers.

People who fail in their efforts to participate in the market create a moral problem within neoliberalism which is often reflected in how society responds to the failure (Contreras-Natera, 2013). Thus, discourse that constructs and explains the failure, and the mechanisms put in place to address it, are devised as responses to the fact of the failure itself, rather than as remedies for the situation that the failed neoliberal subject is encountering (Gledhill, 2004). State policies, and many well-meaning charitable
organizations often respond to poverty and deprivation with practices that reward neoliberal values such as self-discipline and ‘healthy’ life-style practices, and punish those who do not act like the deserving poor (Little, 1998; Maki, 2011; Power, 2005).

Neoliberal subjectivities are deepened and cemented by the strategies and resources that are available for people living in poverty. In the absence of legitimate paid work or secure state entitlements, people are sometimes forced to seek alternatives to socially acceptable survival strategies through activities that are, at best, ineffective and demoralizing and at worst, criminalized (Contreras-Natera, 2013; Gledhill, 2004; O’Neill, 2011). These activities may range from using food charities, working under the table, working at illegal activities such as drug dealing or prostitution, or stealing.

2.2 Roll-back under neoliberalism

Through neoliberalism, political, economic and social life is increasingly subjected to the logic of free markets, competitive relations, and the minimal regulation of capital by the state (Purcell, 2008). At the same time, new mechanisms for the protection of these markets and new modes for the governance and management of people have emerged. Jamie Peck (2010) uses the concepts of ‘roll-back’ and ‘roll-out’ to describe how states contract their services while at the same time, create new systems for advancing the ideology and structures of neoliberalism. These concepts are key to understanding responses to food insecurity in Canada and Cuba.

A fundamental principle of neoliberalism is frictionless market rule - “an economy in which the logic of the market will take care of the needs of all” (Peck, 2010, p. 16). In the pursuit of this, neoliberal states reduce or eliminate forms of state ‘interference’, particularly those concerned with protecting trade (subsidies, tariffs, price
supports, etc.), and those concerned with the redistribution of resources (including income supports, health care, education, etc.) This can be understood as the roll-back dimension of neoliberalism (Peck, 2010). The neoliberal ideal is that the market, left to its own logic, will take care of meeting our needs, hence the rationale for the ‘roll-back’ of state services. This roll-back process is buttressed by the hegemonic discourse of the benefits of smaller governments, lower taxes, and the prioritization of individual and corporate freedoms and rights unfettered by state interference (Nafstad, 2007, 2009).

Jamie Peck (2010) uses this notion of roll-back to describe the “destructive and deregulatory moment” in which the state pulls out of their role in social welfare provisioning and other public services (p. 26). When the state rolls back its role in the redistribution of wealth, they typically cut social income and supports for social programs. The poor are left to find their way along the edges of the market, through informal economies and through the maze of services available through the charitable sector.

In neoliberal approaches to social welfare spending, we can see how neoliberal moral and economic arguments come together in a mutually reinforcing cycle. Neoliberals blame government deficits and slow economic growth on wasteful social programs and unfair restraints on capital accumulation, rather than on corporate tax cuts and other costly business incentives. Social and economic problems that derive from low corporate taxes and the decimation of social programs, such as high rates of unemployment, precarity in the labour force, and the limited efficacy of eviscerated social supports provide incentive to further dismantle social safety nets that seem ineffective, while further propping up corporate interests that promise to remedy
economic and social problems through market forces.

Two classes of policy are typically targeted for roll-back by neoliberal regimes. The first is social policy, including direct provisioning by the state in the form of welfare support payments and subsidized services for people living in poverty. Social assistance, according to neoliberal ideology, costs taxpayers too much money, and further, leads to a loss of individual initiative and erodes work ethic. Strict eligibility requirements and surveillance mechanisms are imposed to try and ensure that no one receives assistance who doesn’t ‘need’ and ‘deserve’ it, and to discourage people from applying.

The other class of policies targeted through the roll-back project of neoliberalism is that which restricts capital’s ‘freedom’ including worker protection, employment standards, and constraints on trade. Paradoxically, each of these roll-back measures create conditions that demand ‘roll-out’ strategies in the neoliberal regime.

In first world contexts, the roll-back aspect of neoliberalism typically reduces or eliminates Keynesian social welfare programs through cuts to income supports, public housing initiatives, and support for community spaces, services and facilities (Fainstein, 2011). Rolling back income supports can cause an increase in the rate of deprivation including food insecurity. Geddes (2014) describes how roll-back looks different in third-world cities that have never enjoyed a comprehensive network of Keynesian social welfare services. In these cities, the roll-back phase tends to have more of a ‘trickle down’ effect, as the dismantling of import substitution policies aimed at protecting local markets has devastating effects on employment, income security, and the ability of small and mid-level producers to hire and retain workers. Roll-back in these situations exacerbates existing inequities based in what Contreras Natera (2013) describes as the
“colonial-modern logos” of the wider colonial world. This framework for ordering social and economic relations is based in a long history of colonialism, patronage, and racism, which intersects with neoliberalism and development in particular ways.

2.3 Roll-out under neoliberalism

During the roll-back phase of neoliberalization, regimes remove or weaken policies and structures that impose limits on capital, and cut social welfare protections leaving inevitable gaps in services provision for vulnerable groups. In response, states must ‘roll-out’ new mechanisms to deal with emerging issues (Peck 2010). The roll-out phase is supported by explicit (formal) and implicit (informal) state policies. Some theorists have conceptualized roll-out activities as ‘aidez faire’ (Purcell, 2008), or as the ‘consolidation phase’ of neoliberalism (Geddes, 2014). Both the roll-back and the roll-out function of the neoliberal state have profound implications for whether and how people get access to the resources they need to survive and thrive.

The roll-out dimension of neoliberalism happens in different domains. Despite the ideology promoting a small state, the roll-out function of the neoliberal state often results in the creation of more state structures and mechanisms to manage the poor. One aspect of roll-out is to institute new government mechanisms to discipline people on low income. The administration of workfare programs and surveillance hotlines are new costs that serve neoliberal notions of promoting self-discipline and identifying the deserving versus the undeserving poor in the name of fairness and efficiency. The neoliberal discourse that rejects the ‘nanny state’ makes an exception where people on social assistance are concerned. These programs actually expand the role of the state in governing the lives of people receiving social assistance. People being governed through
these mechanisms are those who understood to need state oversight and discipline in order to be properly functioning neoliberal subjects (Maki, 2011; Power, 2005).

The other principle domain in which roll-out functions happen is in the creation of government policies and programs designed to support business interests. These may include new protections for intellectual and other property rights, the introduction of regulatory bodies demanding adherence to the principles of free trade, and the implementation of policies and structures that protect corporations from liability for environmental or social ills. It may also include allocating public funds for the provision of municipal infrastructure (roads, utilities, and other services) to prioritize the needs of businesses, often at the expense of environment or social concerns. Neoliberal logic reasons that protecting and supporting business will stimulate economic growth in the private sector, which, according to the trickle-down theory of economics, is the best guarantee for the efficient delivery of goods and services to the masses, the creation of jobs, and, by extension, for the eradication of poverty (Harvey, 2005).

Roll-out instruments are not confined to increasing activities in the public sector. During the roll-out phase, the private sector, including corporations, informal economies, and non-governmental agencies are often awarded tasks that would previously have been carried out by the state. Governments contract with businesses in the private sector in various ways to provide or augment social services. Workfare programs contract with small and large businesses to provide work placements, training, and the surveillance of people receiving social assistance (Little, 2001). In many jurisdictions, private landlords receive eligible tenants’ housing allowance payments directly from the government (CMHC, 2014). Government bodies also outsource research and planning processes. In
the case of Kingston, this has including poverty reduction strategies, housing and homelessness plans, and even pet licensing, to private companies.

Relationships between the state and the private sector are managed through formal contracts laying out the relative responsibilities of each party. While governments contracting out work to the private sector is not a new phenomenon - in construction and road work, for example, this has long been the practice - under neoliberalism it has intensified and expanded into new areas, including the privatization of utilities and the delivery of social services. In Canada, the institutionalization of Public Private Partnership projects (also known as 3P or P3) was cemented under the Stephen Harper conservative government with the creation of a crown corporation, P3 Canada Inc. in 2009, which promised to deliver “better value, timeliness and accountability to taxpayers, through P3s” (PPP Canada Inc., 2017).

This quote demonstrates the hegemonic notion that the private sector is more efficient and cost effective than the public sector. In reality, however, the track record of P3 projects in Canada is characterized by cost-overruns and confusion about governance and employment standards. A CUPE fact sheet on P3s (CUPE, 2009) points out that governments typically have cheaper access to financing than does the private sector; that there are significant legal, insurance, and other administrative costs associated with the contracts; and that by definition, a profit margin will be built into the cost of projects involving the private sector, often putting return on investment ahead of the public good. P3 projects raise questions of accountability and the loss of public control. Questions arise about conflicting goals, over which party has control over the agenda and outcomes of projects, and to whom each party is responsible. P3 projects may be built on the backs
of an underpaid private sector labour force. Regardless of the actual efficacy of the P3 model, the idea of transferring costs and risk from the public sector to the private continues to hold hegemonic sway, even though “Public-private partnerships have fundamentally been about giving private investors and financiers high returns with low risks, at the long-term expense of taxpayers and the public.” (Sanger & Crawley, 2009).

While generally only large-scale infrastructure projects fall under the name Public Private Partnership similar principles are also often applied in the delivery of social services (Wolch, 1999). Neoliberal assumptions about the inherent inefficiency of the state and the corresponding belief that the private sector is able to provide goods and services more efficiently, cheaper, and of better value to the taxpayer, results in the off-loading of some social services from the state onto the not-for-profit sector.

The state enters into formal contracts with charitable organizations to provide services such as housing, homeless shelters, and health services for marginalized or street-involved people. In Canada and elsewhere these arrangements are growing in number and in reach as more and more functions previously handled by states are offloaded onto the charitable sector (Mitchell, 2001; Wolch, 1990). The organizations that take up this work, operating in a sphere between the state and the public and are sometimes called ‘shadow state’ institutions. They have an ambiguous relationship with the state, performing some state functions but not technically as public institutions (Wolch, 1990). Shadow state organizations do not have the same direct accountability and oversight systems characteristic of state apparatus (Wolch, 1990).

Neoliberalization creates opportunities and structures for those organizations tagged to deliver services to address the casualties and gaps caused by the roll-back phase
of neoliberalism, while maintaining the ideal of the ‘small state’. As such, these relationships can be seen as central to the neoliberal effort to halt the expansion of the welfare state.

Not only have states offloaded a good deal of social service delivery onto the not for profit sector, based on my own observation, the process of conducting research and developing strategic plans and policy to address poverty, food insecurity, homelessness and other social issues is increasingly being carried out largely outside of the public sphere. Municipalities, provinces and the federal government often use multi-stakeholder model for developing social policy. Increasingly, these models engage paid consultants and private sector stakeholders as key players in the development of social policy and planning. While there are many multi-stakeholder approaches to community development, a brief discussion of a popular multi-stakeholder model used throughout Canada - the Collective Impact model (Tamarack, 2017) - helps to illustrate pervasive neoliberalization of these processes. The Collective Impact model engages stakeholders from government, the not for profit sector, the business community, and community members, including, ideally, those with lived experience of the issue (homelessness, food insecurity, poverty, etc.) being addressed. The collective impact approach calls for the participants from different sectors to put aside their own agenda in favour of a common agenda, shared evaluation, and alignment of effort. Unlike other models of collaborative policy development, collective impact projects ideally revolve around a backbone organization that provides the human resources necessary to keep the project on track.

Proponents of this style of public-private policy development and planning point out the value of engaging multiple voices in policy and planning, and assert that the role
of the backbone organization guards against power imbalances among the stakeholders (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Tamarack, 2017). Critics of the Collective Impact model and similar multi-stakeholder processes point out that these projects often engage paid consultants to facilitate the process, reproducing a business consultation model of efficiency that works to business-like timelines and agendas that are not always aligned with community needs (Sanger & Crawley, 2009; Wolff, 2016). A concentration on efficiency and a drive towards measureable results within contractually determined timelines often results in a focus on ‘low hanging fruit’, i.e. easily attainable goals and fragmented solutions rather than systemic or structural change (Sanger & Crawley, 2009; Wolff, 2016).

In a neoliberal climate of competition and lean efficiency, governments are critiqued for being inefficient and not delivering adequate value to the ‘customer/citizen’. A similar set of critiques are applied to the charitable sector. Many charities, particularly small local charities in front-line service provision such as food banks, meal programs, and so on, are criticized for being inefficient and financially unsustainable; i.e. relying on unpredictable grants and charitable donations for operating and programming funds. There is growing imperative for charities to develop ‘sustainable’ funding models, attracting large endowments and estate donations that will generate investment income, and by investing in profit-seeking social enterprise activities to generate ‘honest’ - which is to say earned, income to support charitable activities (Teasdale et al., 2013). Here again we see the hegemony of the business model for the delivery of goods and services, even for those delivered outside the sphere of the market.

Jennifer Wolch (1990) describes how charitable organizations must straddle two
functions in shadow state relations. The first is to facilitate social service provision on behalf of the state. The other, often foundational to the establishment of the charity, is to act independently from either the state or the market to advance principles of charity and/or democracy. Acting in a shadow state capacity, whether through formal contract or more informal connections to the state, many charitable organizations take on the role of “Trojan horses of neoliberal values” enabling neoliberalism to penetrate into many aspects of daily life which were previously protected (Richard, 2013, p. 165).

These pressures have an insidious effect on the internal culture and workings of not-for-profit agencies. The moral weight of voluntarism and charity sits in tension with the new imperative for entrepreneurial activities and professional (i.e. highly paid) fundraising. The corporatization of not-for-profit organizations affects how they deliver their programming and what exactly gets delivered. Shadow state arrangements under neoliberal logic help to depoliticize civil society, where “activism is dismissed as uncivil, while charity stands in for democratic citizenship” (Richard, 2013, p. 141). Charities, in taking on social responsibility on behalf of the state, may actually end up working against the social justice principles they originally seek to advance (Purcell, 2008; Harvey, 2008; Fainstein, 2011; Gledhill, 2004)

There is a considerable body of literature critiquing state reliance on charities for the provision of basic goods and services both within critical development literature and critical social policy literature (See for example Gledhill, 2004; Riches & Sylvasti, 2014; Power, 2011; Tarasuk, 2001; Moyo, 2009; Easterly, 2006). There are other analyses, however, which posit the role of civil society, including the charitable sector, as a potentially powerful partner in grass roots based policy making (see for example,
Desmarais & Wittman 2014; Koc & Bas 2012; Levkoe, 2011; MacRae & Abergel, 2012).

The roll-back and roll-out formations of neoliberalism are deeply ideological, as well as structural, changes in how social service delivery or public policy work is carried out. Neoliberal concerns about ‘big government’ are articulated as opposition to the ‘nanny state. On the other hand, the fear of fostering ‘dependency’ among individuals identifies the poor as lazy and undisciplined and in need of surveillance and discipline. According to neoliberal logic, without harsh incentives provided by low social assistance rates and invasive surveillance procedures, the poor would refuse to work (O’Brien & Penna 1998; Power, 2005).

Despite the tenacity of neoliberalism and its imperative to shrink the size of government, there is some evidence that this is shifting. Recently there has been an overall global net increase in the size, budgets, and scope of social safety nets, many working in partnership with local and international charitable organizations, to deliver services (World Bank, 2015). In Canada, a recent report from the C.D. Howe Institute recommends an increased role for government programs to counterbalance some of the negative effects of precarious work in Canada (Busby & Muthukumaran, 2016). The recent surge in interest in the idea of a basic income guarantee in Canada and around the world is another example of a reconsideration of the expansion of the role of the state and perhaps, evidence of a crack in the hegemony surrounding the primacy of ‘free market’ solutions to issues of poverty. It remains to be seen to what degree this apparent move towards a new era for the social welfare state represents a major shift away from neoliberal hegemony, or whether it is merely another occasion of neoliberalism’s ability to “fail forward” (Peck, 2010, p. 6) by absorbing challenges and turning them to its own
2.4 The theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu

Within the social structures and conditions shaped by neoliberalism, people conduct the day-to-day work of putting food on the table. I use the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu to unpack the logics of practice of the everyday work that my research participants in both sites engage in to avoid and to manage food insecurity.

Bourdieu’s concept of logic of practice gives us a way to understand lived realities of coping with the experience of food insecurity. Logics of practice are not the rational logics of the outside observer. Rather, they are embodied, largely unconscious practices that rely on the actors internalized understanding of themselves in relation to the situation, and their assessment of available tools and resources available (Bourdieu, 1990). Logics of practice follow social patterns. The available and logical practice in any given arena are shaped by internalized social norms, culture and experience, and also serve to recreate the social even as they are enacted (Bourdieu, 1990).

In order to recognize and interpret logics of practice in social research we need to understand the concepts of habitus, field, and forms of capital as expounded by Bourdieu. The everyday decisions we make, and the actions we take, derive from the interaction of habitus (what makes us tick) and field (the arena in which we are operating). These decisions and actions are negotiated through mobilizing available forms of capital; the tangible and intangible resources we can draw on to negotiate our lives.

2.4.1 Habitus

The concept of habitus is central to Bourdieu’s theoretical framework. Habitus explains patterns of social behavior while overcoming the dichotomy of subject/object or agency/structure in social
science research. It describes the unconscious embodiment of social structures and histories in the individual, producing a set of dispositions that reflect and reconstitute social structures, shaping how individuals understand and navigate the social world.

Habitus, according to Wacquant (2005) is;

…a mediating notion that revokes the common sense duality between the individual and the social by capturing ‘the internalisation of externality and the externalisation of internality’ [in the famous expression of Bourdieu], that is, the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel, and act in determinate ways, which then guide them in their creative responses to the constraints and solicitations of their extant milieu (p. 316).

Social structures and norms are embodied in habitus. They do not determine behavior per se, but individuals are predisposed to act in accordance with their internalized habitus. One of my favorite metaphors to describe habitus compares it to the disciplined musical improvisation of jazz (Moore, 2004; Power, 2002). Jazz musicians work within musical traditions and structures, follow certain conventions of improvisation, and are constrained by the characteristics of their particular instrument. As free-form and unconventional as some jazz improvisation may seem to be to the outsider, and as incomprehensible to the outsider the relative roles of each player, there is a logic in place that the players involved all understand. The music is built on, and comes back to, the structure, traditions, and limitations that define it. Further, everyone who is actively participating understands the conventions and so is able to participate in the production of the moment’s particular iteration of the song, always somewhat different from the previous iteration. In this way habitus - the internalized and unconscious knowledge of the ‘world’ of jazz - is created by, and at the same time creates, the world in which it operates. To extend this metaphor, the outsider (such as a researcher) may share to a greater or lesser degree the conscious and unconscious knowledge that makes the music logical to the participants. However, even the most
informed observer will likely miss some of the more subtle cues and adjustments used by the players engaged in the logic of producing the music together in a particular moment in time.

A key characteristic of habitus is its durability (Bourdieu, 1990). While habitus can and does change throughout one’s life as the individual has new experiences, acquires education, and so on, according to Bourdieu, the habitus acquired in childhood tends to be more durable than secondary habitus that comes with, for example, education, career, or migration. The social structures of gender and social class or origin, for example, have been identified as particularly persistent and durable elements of habitus that are rarely clearly articulated or resisted (Bourdieu, 1990; Power, 2002).

2.4.2 Field and forms of capital

While habitus shapes one’s logic of practice, it is not the only dimension at work. Bourdieu identified any social sphere or arena in which power relations are negotiated as a field, not coincidentally a metaphor related to sports and/or battle. Fields are structured spaces in which power hierarchies and social relations are negotiated by social actors by mobilizing various forms of capital. In his work, Bourdieu analyzed various fields including law, art, education, science and religion.

Within a field, actors marshal various forms of capital as resources that function for negotiating social relations in pursuit of ends. Bourdieu outlines four types of capital. Economic capital is the one we are most familiar with and exists as money and wealth. Economic capital is easily exchangeable for goods and services, and often translates into social power. It is the most visible and consciously considered form of capital in contemporary capitalist cultures. Bourdieu extends the concept of economic capital to other forms of capital; cultural capital (cultural goods and services, also including educational credentials), social capital (networks and acquaintances) and symbolic capital.
Social capital accumulates from networks of relationships, including family, friends, and connections made through other institutions. A discussion of social capital is particularly salient in this research, as many of my research participants cited the importance of informal and formal social relationships for managing the everyday problems related to food insecurity. While research participants in both Kingston and Havana talked about the importance of social relations as a resource, the structural and discursive forms these relationships took was distinct in each site.

Bourdieu devoted considerable scholarly attention to cultural capital. He identified three interrelated forms of cultural capital; embodied, objectified, and institutionalized (Bourdieu, 1986). Embodied cultural capital signifies what he called “long lasting dispositions of the mind and body” (1986, p. 47). This includes things like self-confidence, authority, legitimacy, verbal ability, aesthetics, and other ways in which what we typically think of as embodied signals of class, status and power. Objectified cultural capital includes physical manifestations that denote value, such as books, clothing, artistic works, and machines. Today we might include things such as electronic goods, access to technology, and so on. The third dimension of cultural capital is institutionalized cultural capital, typically accrued through education and licensing (Bourdieu, 1986).

While the concept of cultural capital is usually used to explain inclusion and exclusion in relation to main-stream power, status and class, the concept of cultural capital is not only applicable to what we think of as ‘high’ culture. We can also use the concept of cultural capital, particularly embodied cultural capital, to understand what is
necessary to navigate marginalized fields such as social and charitable services, or informal sector economies (Small, Harding, & Lamont, 2010). A very different form of embodied cultural capital is necessary for effective power within a corporate board room on the one hand, and in a black-market transaction for stolen lobster on the streets of Havana, on the other. Each requires field-specific cultural capital including confidence, knowledge of unarticulated rules, specific vocabularies and codes, and aesthetic markers of belonging.

The final form of capital that Bourdieu discusses at length is symbolic capital. Symbolic capital can be said to be at work when any form of capital becomes disproportionately important in a social interaction (Bourdieu, 1986). It is often used to magnify or confirm social standing by misrecognizing or distorting the value of social, economic or cultural capital. A crucial aspect of symbolic capital is that it has to be recognized as important, meaningful and valuable both by those who possess it and, importantly, by those who do not (Bourdieu, 1986). Examples of symbolic capital could include purchasing expensive consumer goods that bring prestige out of proportion to their use-value, or running for public office on the reputation as a celebrity or an elite athlete, or dressing in such ways as to ensure you are not marked as living in poverty.

Logics of practice, then, are the everyday decisions we make, and the actions we take, derived from the interaction of habitus (what makes us tick) and consideration of the field (the arena in which we are operating). These decisions and actions are negotiated by mobilizing available forms of capital; the tangible and intangible resources we can draw on to negotiate the social relations of our lives. There are some particular dimensions of logics of practice worth elaborating for the purpose of this study.

First, it is difficult and sometimes impossible for social actors themselves to articulate the logic of their practice because it’s just ‘how things are done’. Logics of practice only become visible and knowable when a person encounters a situation in which they cannot act
automatically. For example, how does one navigate a food bank for the first time? People have spoken about the balancing act involved in being one of the ‘deserving poor’ - needy, but not too needy, but needy enough. In this situation, people make conscious decisions about which components of cultural capital to animate in the particular field, i.e. what to wear, how to speak, what to mention and what to hide.

The second dimension of logics of practice that presents a dilemma to the social researcher is the social researcher’s job of articulating in words and patterns a logic of practice that is inherently about action and not about logic at all, in the mathematical sense of the word. In his work *Logic of practice* (1990), Bourdieu discusses at length the dilemma of trying to make visible that which by its very nature is invisible and unconscious, operating almost at the level of instinct:

Science has a time which is not that of practice. For the analyst, time disappears: not only because...the analyst cannot have any uncertainty as to what can happen, but also because he has the time to totalize, that is, to overcome the effects of time. Scientific practice is so detemporalized that it tends to exclude even the idea of what it excludes (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 81).

Further, a logic of practice is specific to a particular social position and in social research, the researcher and the researched will almost always have different social or class positions. It is easy to impose the logic of practice from a more powerful position onto a less powerful one:

One thus has to acknowledge that practice has a logic which is not that of logic, if one is to avoid asking of it more logic than it can give, thereby condemning oneself either to wring incoherencies out of it or to thrust upon it a forced coherence (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 109).

Bourdieu presents a theory of reflexive social research - a “sociology of sociology” (1992, p. 192) intended to make logics of practices visible, and to account for those differences in logics between researcher and researched (Bourdieu, 1992).
2.4.3 Symbolic violence

The final concept of Bourdieu’s that I will introduce is that of ‘symbolic violence’.
Symbolic violence describes social domination in light of logics of practice. It refers specifically to constructed inequalities are made to appear natural or common-sensical. Through symbolic violence subordinated individuals and groups are disciplined to ‘misrecognize’ their own experience of inequality as natural, or as a consequence of their own character flaws (Bourdieu, 2000). Other forms of violence are legitimized by symbolic violence. For example, structural violence, the way in which the political economic organization of society wreaks havoc on vulnerable categories of people is entwined with and reinforced through symbolic violence (Bourgois & Schonberg, 2009).

As Bourgois and Schonberg point out in their ethnography of homeless drug addicts (2009), symbolic violence is an especially useful category for talking about homelessness and drug addiction in the United States as those conditions are commonly understood (by insiders and outsiders alike) as character flaws, not as the consequences of structures and forces that produce suffering. Similarly, the concept of symbolic violence can be helpful in understanding how people talk about and experience food insecurity.
Chapter 3 Methodology and Research Design

In this chapter, I outline the methodological approach I used to address the research questions of this project: First, what can we learn from comparing people’s experiences of, and responses to, food insecurity in two countries with very different state approaches to food security? Second, how does neoliberalism shape the possible individual, societal and governmental responses to food insecurity? My research starts with how people describe and make sense of their lived experience of food security and food insecurity.

I begin this chapter by discussing the value of an ethnographic approach for addressing these questions. I go on to discuss the importance of a reflexive approach to research and summarize ethical considerations for this research. I discuss how my own habitus and the cultural capital I bring to field work has an impact on the relationships I establish in the field, the data I collect, and the analysis I bring to it. Finally, I explain the various methods and data collection techniques used to address the research questions. I discuss my coding and analysis processes, challenges arising from the research design, and my strategies for addressing them. Copies of interview and consent materials used in the research process are included in the appendices.

3.1 Ethnography

Paul Willis and Mats Trondman (2000) define ethnography as a family of methods involving direct and sustained social contact. Ethnographic field work can include a range of qualitative research techniques including participant observation and interviews, aimed at developing a detailed, in-depth description of everyday life and practice (Hoey,
This is sometimes called “thick description” (Geertz, 1973, p. 10). Ethnographic methods promise access to data that helps us understand and analyze the lived manifestation of, and day-to-day construction of what Willis and Trondman identify as the “economic, political, juridical, ideological, [and] institutional ‘levels’ of society” (2000, p. 9). They go on to state that “no social relation or process can be understood without the mediation of culture” (p. 9) and that this is what ethnographic methods bring to social science research. Michael Burawoy (1998) echoes this commitment to using ethnography to describe and analyze how global forces are “…mediated, resisted, seized, ridden, and denied” (p. 29).

In order to get an up-close look at the day-to-day experience of food insecurity in two very different sites, I used ethnographic methods including semi-structured interviews and participant observation in structured and unstructured settings to generate a rich body of data with which to work. Ethnography puts the researcher in direct, intimate and relatively sustained contact with the research participants. Herein lies the promise of ethnographic research for getting at people’s day-to-day experiences in relation to social and cultural structures and forces.

Through my ethnographic field work aimed to unpack the multiple logics of practice of people managing food insecurity. I strove to understand enough about the histories and particular positions of each research participant so that I could follow the logic of, first, how they understood their own food security/insecurity and second, the strategies they used to manage it. Researching logics of practice meant putting aside my assumptions and judgements about reasonable and responsible responses to the problem
of food insecurity, and instead asking research participants to describe in detail the everyday work they do, including emotional work, to put food on the table.

There is a history of mutually supportive qualitative and quantitative research in Canadian food insecurity research. Qualitative research on food insecurity in Canada ranges from participatory research, to participant observation, questionnaires, surveys, ethnographies, and interviews (see for example, Beagan, Power & Chapman, 2015; Beaumier & Ford, 2010; Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht, 2002; Power, 2005, 2006; Tarasuk & Eakin, 2005; Williams et al., 2012). Qualitative research has been used to prove the validity of the survey tools used for measuring household food insecurity (Campbell & Desjardins, 1989; Radimer, Olson, et al., 1992) and has contributed to a deeper understanding of the multiple forces and structures that underlie food insecurity in Canada and elsewhere. Ethnographic research, as a subset of qualitative methodology, has been used in Canada to examine experience of food insecure populations including homeless people in meal programs (Dachner, et al., 2009), food insecurity among homeless youth (Dachner & Tarasuk, 2002), school feeding programs (McIntyre, Travers & Dayle. (1999), and the experiences of low income single mothers (Power, 2002; Tarasuk & Maclean, 1990).

Bringing ethnographic methods to politically engaged research on food insecurity helps ground theory and observations about larger social, political and economic phenomena in the day-to-day lived reality of people and to create research that can move back and forth, from the particular to the theoretical and back in again. An ethnographic view of the ‘particular’ in the social brings nuance and complexity to research and analysis about the ‘general’ or the theoretical. Ideally, it allows us to identify and tease
out instances of agency, denial, resistance, and creativity within and around seemingly immutable structures and forces. It allows us to use those instances to inform our understanding of larger social processes and to enhance theory. Of course, ethnography involves working with people, and dealing with real people in any situation complicates even the most well thought out model.

Carol Stack (1997) writes of using ethnography to uncover ‘the erroneous common sense’ underlying social policies and practices. She strives to make visible what is invisible in social relations. Stack uses ethnography to show how the everyday-normal is constituted and argues for critical policy studies within anthropology with the goal of advocating for better social policy. I share this goal, and hope that my research into food insecurity in Canada and Cuba enhances our understanding of food insecurity and contributes to new directions for social policy in Canada.

3.1.1 Using an ethnographic approach in Canada and Cuba

Taking an ethnographic approach to research into food insecurity in Canada and Cuba made sense for this comparative project. I hoped that for the Cuban portion of the research, ethnography would help to make familiar the unfamiliar; for the Kingston portion, an ethnographic approach would help me to unpack the ‘common sense’ around food work in Canada.

My research begins from people’s descriptions of their experiences managing food access on a low income. Based on my initial observations from previous visits to Havana, I had observed the Cuban system of food procurement and found it to be so complex as to be nearly opaque. Having read contradictory, and what I knew to be inaccurate, descriptions of the rations system, the black market, and other aspects of the
Cuban food economy in secondary sources, I decided that my research should start from how people actually engage in the everyday work of food procurement, how they think about this work, and how the form and structure of food markets and entitlements shape the day-to-day lives of people in Havana. An ethnographic approach in which I could observe, interview, and to an extent, participate in everyday food work would be ideal for this. The case of Canada was nearly the opposite. Here, I had to work to unpack my assumptions and pre-existing but largely untheorized knowledge about food work for people living with food insecurity in Kingston. An ethnographic approach helped me to ask questions about, rather than take for granted, my ‘common sense’ understanding of how people manage food insecurity in Canada.

In Cuba, personal relationships are the best, and perhaps, the only way to gain access to and reliable information about those parts of society which are informal and often illicit. For my Cuban research, I lived in a household in a neighbourhood; I had friends throughout the city who were able to introduce me to a variety of people willing to talk to me. Without a deep understanding of the informal dimensions of life in Havana, only a limited understanding of the experience of food insecurity would be possible. In Kingston, despite living here, I was less immersed in the day-to-day world I was studying and so it felt less classically ethnographic. Still, my research methods were similar to those employed in Cuba, and I relied on similar networks of friends and acquaintance to assist in finding people to interview. In each case I tried to remain cognizant of my pre-suppositions and prejudices as I carried out my research.

Among my research participants in Kingston, most framed their inability to always budget and plan effectively as a personal failure of self-discipline, and not
because of the low incomes, precarious work and inadequate housing options available to them. This is an example of symbolic violence. Similarly, the popular support for programs offering cooking classes or gardening opportunities to people living with food insecurity presumes that the key to resolving food insecurity lies in improving individual skills, knowledge and self-discipline, and not in the social structures that create and perpetuate the symbolic violence of food insecurity.

In Havana on the other hand, food shortages are politically and culturally constructed as the result of forces beyond the control of the individual or the household. Food insecurity is understood not as a personal failure, but as a result of forces such as the US economic embargo, the fall of the Soviet Union, tropical storms and hurricanes, and increasingly, the failure of the state to predict, mitigate and resolve the effects of these external forces.

My research helped me to uncover some dimensions of the logic of practice for people living with food insecurity in each site, although inevitably things get lost in translation between the invisible and largely unconscious world of practice and the codified and analyzed product of social research. We run a risk when we try to articulate ‘what goes without saying’ (Bourdieu, 1990 p. 92), and Bourdieu cautions against what he sees as the social researchers tendency to ascribe rigid logics and structural analysis to things they are studying (1998). Researchers tend to exaggerate the systemic logic of things and to devalue or ignore the things that don’t make sense, particularly when we find ourselves in different social positions than our research participants.

Consequently, we should refrain from searching the productions of habitus for more logic than they actually contain: ‘the logic of practice is logical up to the point where to be logical would cease being practical.’ The peculiar difficulty of sociology, then, is to produce a precise science.
of an imprecise, fuzzy, wooly reality (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 22-23, italics in original).

Bourdieu cautions against the tendency to “confuse the actor’s point of view with the spectators point of view” (1990, p 82), and argues the importance of a reflexive research practice. In such a practice, we continuously make explicit the scholarly act of objectifying, codifying, and analyzing the practices of the people whose lives we are researching. Further, it is important to seek to understand the effect of the research process on the very phenomena under investigation.

Unexpectedly (to me) this research project also presented an opportunity for people to reflect on their own unarticulated logics of practice. In coding interviews, I repeatedly noted phrases along the lines of “I guess I never thought too much about it” and “I think maybe it’s because of the way I was raised”. When asked to reflect on the actions they took when facing food insecurity, many people had an intuitive understanding of their own practices as a kind of logic, attributing their attitudes and actions to an intersection of habitus (dispositions acquired in early life), the setting (field) and resources (capital) at hand.

3.1.2 Reflexive praxis
A commitment to reflexivity in social research may help to address at least some of the pitfalls of doing politically engaged research. By conducting what Bourdieu calls a ‘sociology of sociology’ (ref, the researcher remains aware of effects of their own position of status, power, and other aspects of their own habitus, and assessed how these are likely to distort their understanding of the social phenomena under investigation. A reflexive praxis may also uncover ways in which the research process itself affects the
information gathered and the outcomes. Finally, a reflexive praxis may also help researchers make conscious decisions about how to engage with vulnerable individuals and populations in order to minimize harms. At different moments throughout this dissertation I will bring a reflexive analysis to the themes I am discussing as they arise.

In the case of my field work in Havana and Kingston, in addition to my identity as a Queen’s University researcher, an identity that conferred different meaning on me in each research site, I was also aware of markers of my class, and my academic training. During interviews, I was conscious of modulating my vocabulary, both to ensure understanding of the concepts I was talking about, and to facilitate a level of comfort between me and the research participant. For example, in Kingston I tended to use the term ‘not enough food’ or ‘worry about putting food on the table’ rather than to talk about ‘food insecurity’, a term that confuses many people. Through tone of voice and my choice of words I also tried to express that I didn’t have judgements about using food banks, about addictions, about employment status, or other topics that may have been sensitive or caused research participants to become defensive or evasive.

In Havana, I used local terms and phrases as much as possible (for example, ‘guagua’ instead of omnibus (bus); ‘almendre’ instead of taxi; ‘jabba’ instead of bolsa (bag)’ ‘moneda’ instead of Peso Cubano (Cuban peso currency) ‘divisa’ instead of peso convertible (Cuban convertible peso currency) and ‘izquiera’ instead of mercado negro (black market). This was not about making myself understood, as I believe that everyone would have known exactly what I was taking about if I had used the more formal Spanish terms. Rather, it was a way of establishing rapport by indicating that I already possessed some knowledgeable about everyday life in Havana. I also made it clear to most of my
interviewees that I took the local bus rather than tourist taxis; that I shopped in markets in the Cuban peso economy (rather than solely in stores catering to foreigners), and that I had a long history of visiting Cuba. I took many of these cues from my key informants who were always quick to tell interviewees that I had arrived to their neighbourhood on the bus (uncommon for foreigners) or that I was frustrated by the lack of eggs in my neighbourhood, indicating that I shared some of the same experiences as a ‘real’ Cuban.

In neither research site, though, could I have hidden the cultural capital I carried as a university researcher or, in Cuba, as a foreigner who had the money and ability to travel to do research. I remain aware of the ways that this may have affected the interactions I had with research participants. On many occasions in both research sites, I had the sense that people were telling me what I wanted to hear, or conversely, were not particularly interested in the interview about food insecurity, but welcomed the opportunity to vent about social assistance rates, or rents, or other issues of concern to someone who would listen. As bell hooks (1992) reminds us, we must remain conscious that even as we carry out our fieldwork, ‘their’ gaze is equally on us. We shouldn’t underestimate the ability of research participants to turn research projects around to their own ends; to refuse, deny, lie, and obfuscate when they don’t want to go down a conversational road we may propose.

A clear example of the impact of my own status and position on the research I was conducting is evident in how people talked about nutrition. Through my chain referral sampling method, I was often presented as an ‘food expert’ in one way or another by research participants explaining me to potential interviewees. Although I didn’t ask questions about nutrition per se, many people in both sites wanted to reassure me that
they understood about healthy eating, that they ate plenty of vegetables, and limited their salt, sugar and fat intake, that they made sure to feed their children ‘appropriately’ nutritious foods. In Kingston, reflecting perhaps the growing hegemony of the discourse of the superiority of local and/or organic food, several interviewees said that they buy local (or organic) whenever they can because ‘of course’ it’s healthier. Whether they actually do buy local or organic is less interesting to me than these spontaneous demonstrations of knowledge about how to be a ‘good food citizen’ (Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011).

3.2 Research design and data collection

I conducted interviews and participant observation in Kingston, Ontario, and Havana, Cuba during 2015 and 2016. I drove people to the grocery store and tagged along as they shopped for groceries; I helped cook lunch at a meal providing organization that serves between eighty and a hundred people every day; I processed requests for food bank orders and helped to sort the goods in the pantry. I hung around stores and markets and watched the interactions taking place before me. My research interest in both sites grew out of and drew upon previous experiences and connections. In Havana, my field work built on experience I had living there for 4 months in 2004, and for 6 months in 2012. Both times I lived in an apartment with my family, and so shopping, cooking, and sharing meals with others was part of my day-to-day reality. While I would never claim to have ‘lived like a Cuban’ - after all as a foreigner I had considerably more money than the average Cuban, and there are certain parts of the Cuban food system that remain off limits to me, but it was these experiences that piqued my interest in Cuban food access.
In Kingston, my research built upon my experience working as the Executive Director of Loving Spoonful, a food justice organization that works with many of Kingston’s food assistance agencies, shelters, and other social services. During my four years with Loving Spoonful I got to know staff, volunteers and program participants from these organizations. Having lived and worked in downtown Kingston for over 25 years, I also have other casual social connections that I was able to draw on for sampling.

3.2.1 Conducting fieldwork

My fieldwork is based on semi-structured interviews and participant observation carried out in Kingston, Ontario, Canada and Havana, Cuba in 2015-2016. I interviewed people about their experience of food procurement, and the challenges they faced and the strategies they employed to put food on the table every day. In addition to the interviews, I also carried out participant observation in each site. In Kingston, I accompanied three of my research participants on grocery shopping trips at their invitation. I volunteered once a week for 6 months with an organization that provides hot meals to between 80 and 100 people a day, and operates a small food pantry. At that organization, I assisted with meal preparation in the kitchen, and worked in the food bank processing requests for food and sorting donations. I ate meals and conversed with program participants, and engaged in informal conversation with volunteers, staff and donors.

In Cuba, I accompanied several of my interviewees to market, observed two others at work in their home-based cafés during and after the interviews, and joined two interviewees preparing food in their kitchen at their invitation. In many ways, my research in Havana was more classically ‘ethnographic’. It was easier to maintain an observant outsider position who found nearly everything interesting and worth noting.
For the duration of my stays in Havana, I lived in a Cuban household and participated in the everyday work of planning, shopping and cooking meals.

In each site the scheduled semi-structured interviews were augmented by what ethnographers sometimes call "deep hanging out" (Wogan, 2010). In each case I took ‘jottings’ or ‘scratch notes’ (Emerson et al., 1995; Weinreb, 2009) during significant activities such as shopping, cooking or volunteering. I did my best to make time as soon as possible after these activities to write detailed notes, capturing my experiences and observations in more detail.

3.2.2 Sampling
In seeking research participants my criteria were simple. I was seeking people who currently or recently had had trouble putting food on the table, or who worried about putting food on the table, and who were the ones in charge of food planning, procurement and preparation in their respective households. I primarily used a ‘snowball’ or chain-referral sampling technique to find research participants for interviews. I asked key informants to introduce me to potential interviewees who in turn helped me find other participants (Standing, 1998). Snowball sampling is often used to reach hard-to-identify research participants or in cases in which trust is difficult to establish and for those reasons it was the most appropriate sampling technique in both sites. In Kingston, I was reluctant to rely solely on my pre-existing contacts, primarily in the emergency food sector, to identify research participants as I did not want to limit my sample to those who used meal programs and food banks on a regular basis. Similarly, in Havana I wanted to interview people who I did not know, and who did not have daily contact with tourists and other foreign visitors. In each site, I found that I had to start the snowball several
times, backtracking to well-connected key informants, and seeking new connections in the community, as not every interviewee was able or willing to suggest or introduce me to other research participants. This is not unusual in snowball sampling (Standing, 1998) and I had anticipated this challenge, and actually found that re-starting the sampling allowed me to target, at least to a degree, a diversity of respondents that was lacking in the sample that had accrued. For example, in Kingston I began with two key informants who I knew from different areas of my life. From one informant, I was introduced to several research participants who shared many of her characteristics including age, work status, the neighbourhood, the school their children attended, and so on. These were good interviews, but limited in diversity, and they generated very few suggestions for new interviewees outside their acquaintance circle. After a series of these interviews, I was satisfied to move on to start anew. The other of my first two key informants was unable or unwilling to connect me to appropriate research participants. I knew her well enough to know that she lived in public housing and had friends and acquaintances who lived with food insecurity, which is why I had identified her as a key informant. Despite this, and despite our long conversations about the range of people I was interested in talking to, she would only connect me to organic farmers, holistic health practitioners and other people she judged to be ‘experts’ in food-related matters. None of the people she suggested met my criteria of being people who currently or recently had had trouble putting food on the table, or who worried about putting food on the table. These sampling challenges were frustrating but by no means insurmountable and through my network of connections in Kingston I was able to find sufficient number and variety of people to interview. I started several of what I think of as ‘short-chain’ snowballs that lasted two to
five people before fizzling out.

Snowball sampling in Cuba also brought its challenges. My first two key informants in Havana, both close acquaintances from previous visits, were reluctant to have me interview people that they didn’t know or have at least some connection to, and insisted on brokering most of the interview scheduling and planning. I was concerned that this gave too much control over the sampling to my key informants. Half way through the research process I engaged other acquaintances to help me identify other people to interview, thus expanding considerably the diversity of my sample. In hindsight, there was likely a benefit to being presented as someone de confianza - trustworthy - by my key informants who formally introduced me to each interviewee. As a clear outsider, it may have been difficult to establish trust with interviewees without someone who was respected in the community to vouch for me. I believe that my clear connection to my key informants helped to mitigate against distrust and provided some assurance that information would be kept confidential, thus encouraging people to speak more openly with me than they might have otherwise.

Snowball sampling was an appropriate strategy to find participants for my research, allowing me to reach a relatively diverse sample within each food insecure population. Interviewees included people living alone; people with children and/or other dependents; people of different ages, and people who had different strategies for managing food insecurity. My sampling strategy did not, unfortunately, engage a visibly racially diverse sample of research participants, although the sample in Havana seemed to be more racially diverse than that in Kingston. I say ‘seemed to be’ because in neither site did I ask people what race they identified as. Racial identity is not always evident to the
observer and so in this research I refrain from describing the ethnic or racial
c characteristics of my research participants except in cases where they spontaneously self-
identified during conversation, as did some of my Havana interviewees.

Of my 21 Kingston interviews, 12 were with people who spoke about current
struggles with food insecurity and 9 were with people who spoke about past experiences
of food insecurity, but who asserted that they were not currently worried about food
access. Three of my interviewees were men and 18 were women, many of whom were at
the time, or had been, lone mothers. All but one of my interviews in Kingston were with
people who currently identify as living on low incomes. The other interview I conducted
was with a staff member of a meal program who had also experienced homelessness and
food insecurity. Her insights, drawn from her own experience and reflected through her
observations of those she was working with were particularly valuable.

While my interviews in Kingston were all with individual research participants,
many of my 30 interviews in Havana engaged more than one person. In six cases I
arrived knowing that I would be interviewing two people, usually a couple, or adult
relatives, but in many more cases interviewees casually invited spouses, other family
members, friends or neighbours to join the conversation. Altogether, excluding children
that often wandered in and out of interviews, at least 45 people ended up participating in
or observing the interviews. Some were invited from the beginning but more often,
people would interrupt the interview to call on someone to join in to address particular
questions. For example, in one case, when I asked about where she did most of her food
shopping, a woman invited her retired father in from the next room to talk about
travelling all over the city on his motorcycle in search of difficult-to-find food items for
their household. In another case, a woman invited her husband in to talk about gardening. While these interviews were sometimes noisy and hard to transcribe, and typically lasted much longer than solo interviews, the presence of other people often helped to naturalize the discussion and elicited information I would not have otherwise had access to. People did not hesitate to contradict, correct, or remind each other about many details, points of history, and shared stories about the work of food procurement in Cuba.

These incidents raised an ethical dilemma, as people joined the conversation who hadn’t been briefed about the research or signed a consent form. In some cases, the parade of people made it difficult even to get the names of everyone present. In all cases I took the time to explain that the interview was being recorded, and that all identifying information would be kept confidential. I also offered the original interviewee the opportunity to reschedule if they wanted, in the interest of providing the opportunity to speak with me in a more private setting. No one took me up on this offer.

During the 30 Havana interviews, only one person professed to never worrying about having enough food, although she did have stories about food deprivation as a youth during the 1990s. Four of the primary (planned) interviewees in Havana were men, and the remaining were women. Incidentally, most the people who were invited to join in the interview by the primary interviewee were men. These men tended speak with a tone of authority about problems with food access in Havana even when they were not the ones primarily responsible for food procurement for the household. This suggests two things to me. The first observation I had was that this reflects the machista culture of Cuba in which I have observed that men generally present themselves as ‘experts’ on almost everything, particularly with talking with a woman. The second observation I had
was that this may also reflect that, in Havana, putting food on the table does often include most members of the family, and that conversation about prices, quality and availability of food are common topics of conversation among all Cubans, not just the (typically) women who do the majority of the planning and shopping.

In Havana, in addition to interviews with people who were selected because they experienced food insecurity, I interviewed a social science researcher who studies poverty in Cuba and an American anthropologist who had been living in Havana for several years studying class formation in contemporary Cuba. I also had the opportunity while in Cuba to interview ‘bodegueros’ - a husband and wife who ran a state-rations outlet for 35 years. Their knowledge of the inside workings of the rations system, the importance and fragility of state production and distribution mechanisms, and changes in availability and cost of food items over time helped me to better understand how that system worked, providing me with information that helped greatly to contextualize information gleaned from other interviews.

I offered my Kingston research participants a small sum of $20 for sharing their stories and their time with me. I decided on this amount as significant enough to make some difference in a weekly budget but still affordable to me as a graduate student without a large research budget. I had planned to do the same in Havana, but was cautioned by two key informants that this would bring on a deluge of volunteers that would be hard to turn away. Instead, I offered small gifts of good quality Cuban coffee
(more highly valued than the coffee on the rations which is cut with dried peas), and flash drives.  

The English language version of the interview guide I used for conducting semi-structured interviews in Kingston is attached in Appendix B, along with the letter of information and request for consent that was presented and/or read to each research participant in accordance with the ethics requirements for this research. I translated the questions and the information and consent form into Spanish with the help of a translator in Canada, and adjusted several of the questions to be specific to the Havana setting. I later adjusted the wording of the questions in Spanish with the assistance of a key informant in Havana who, after being interviewed herself, expressed concern that some of the questions were ‘too direct’. For example, I deleted a question I had included about satisfaction with the quantity and quality of foods available through the rations, as my key informant felt this would be too close to a criticism of the state as the provider of food. I needn’t have worried, as every respondent had plenty to say, unprompted, about their opinion about the quality and quantity of foods available through the rations and other markets in Havana.

I conducted all of the interviews myself in both sites, without the use of an assistant or translator. I believe this helped me stay very engaged in conversations with

---

4 Flash drives are an important commodity for everyday life in Cuba. In a country with limited legal access to global television or movies and limited and expensive internet service, Cubans have developed a system called “el paquete semanal” - the weekly package. El paquete is a collection of digital material distributed through the underground market in Cuba that includes episodes of popular TV series, music, films, music videos, Spanish language news websites, computer technology websites, instructional videos and more. The distribution system works by someone showing up at your door and transferring the files you want from their laptop onto a flash drive that you provide. A paquete transfer costs around the equivalent of 1$ USD. New material is then shared (or resold) among family and friends.
my research participants and it was easy to ‘go with the flow’ when necessary, moving an interview to a new location, managing conversational tangents, or incorporating other people into the interview. Working solo also had its challenges, however, as I was simultaneously talking, listening, translating (in the case of Cuba), making notes, and managing the recorder.

As the interviews progressed in each site, I incorporated new prompts based on themes that I found emerging in previous interviews. For example, in Kingston as it became apparent that many people relied on social relationships including family, neighbours and case-workers for managing food insecurity. I began to draw out more information about that intentionally as I did more interviews. In Havana, it became apparent after the first few interviews that when talking about food shortages in the market, many people were describing Cuba of the early 1990s but speaking in the present tense. I consciously developed prompts to clarify the time period and to draw interviewees back to exploring food access in the present.

I recorded each interview and also took notes about the setting, non-verbal cues or gestures, and my general impression of the household and individuals I encountered. The research questions I used to guide the interviews were designed to open up discussion about the participants’ experiences of acquiring sufficient food for their households, including their feelings about the availability of foods in the market and their access to it, their descriptions of the day-to-day work involved in procuring and preparing food, and their opinions of and understanding of the range of markets, entitlements and charitable services available to them. I included questions that asked if they worried about running out of food because they couldn’t afford it, and about whether or not they changed the
quality and/or quantity of food due to lack of money. The conversation often strayed from the questions on the guide as I followed conversational tangents that emerged.

Most interviews in Havana lasted well over an hour and several lasted as long as two hours. I allowed for plenty of time both before and after the interview, knowing from experience that the bus system I was relying on to get around the city was unreliable, that most meetings in Cuba don’t start or end on time, and that there were likely to be plenty of interruptions. This gave me several opportunities to walk the streets and visit small neighbourhood agricultural markets and stores, killing time waiting for someone to return from an errand. It was typical to be offered coffee or juice after the interview, and the conversations that continued after the formal part of the interview were over were often helpful for learning more deeply about the neighbourhood, personal histories, or other details. For example, after an interview with a woman who runs a small café out of her front patio, I spent the afternoon hanging out with members of her family and some neighbours, watching the comings and goings of the neighbourhood while she continued to narrate stories about the business, her neighbours, and family abroad. These post-interview conversations were not recorded. Instead, I took hand-written notes on things that struck me, sometimes during but more often after the visit.

In Kingston, most of the 21 interviews I conducted lasted about an hour. When interviews were over there was rarely further conversation. While I gave research participants the option of meeting in a quiet public setting of their choice, most of my interviews ended up taking place in private homes. Of the Kingston interviews six were conducted in my home; eight took place in the homes of research participants at their invitation, and seven took place in other spaces such as at the meal program in which I
volunteered, in a coffee shop, or in a park.

In addition to interviews that had been set up for specific times, I tried to take advantage of chance social encounters to engage people in conversations that pertained to my research, without using the semi-structured interview guide or recording the conversations. This approach is normal within ethnographical research (Weinreb, 2004; Bourgois & Schonberg, 2009), and is what Miles and Huberman (1994) call ‘opportunistic sampling’. These conversations varied in length and by topic and were not recorded. Instead I relied on making notes or recording a voice memo about my impressions as soon after the conversation as possible. Some of those conversations drew my attention to dimensions of food insecurity that I had not considered, or rounded out my understanding of themes that had begun to emerge in the interviews. For example, I hadn’t considered how the lack of a wholesale market for emerging small businesses in Havana might affect the availability of food in the market for regular Cubans. A chance conversation with an acquaintance on the street alerted me to the long line ups, higher prices and general sense of unfairness that resulted from the competition between people buying in bulk for their businesses and people doing their daily shopping in the same agricultural marketplaces. After this I began to raise the issue during interviews. Prior to this, my questions about the effect that the expansion of small businesses in Havana had on food work, answers were usually vague and I was unable to elicit either positive or negative responses. Once I began to offer the example of how emerging small business sector might affect food availability or food work, i.e. more competition in the markets, or conversely, increased availability of inexpensive street foods, and so on, people began sharing detailed stories about the effects, for good and for ill, of new private sector
businesses on food access.

### 3.2.3 Mapping exercise

In my original research plan, I had hoped to start each interview with a request that the research participant draw me a map (or guide me through drawing a map) of the work they do and places they and their families/households go to get the food they need. Early in the interview I would show them a map I had drawn with the help of my Cuban housemate, of my household’s ‘food procurement circuit’ in the Havana neighbourhood I was living in. Then I would ask them to draw me a similar map. This worked well in Havana where most food procurement happens within a neighbourhood and is part of daily or near-daily work. In Havana, this exercise worked well as an icebreaking activity, as a way for research participants to easily recall all the places they regularly or occasionally visit, and as a set of prompts I could use during the interview. As the conversation progressed and new locations emerged I added them, or encouraged the interviewee to add them, to the map. Examples of two Havana maps are included in the appendices of this dissertation.

The map exercise didn’t work as well in Kingston. Although I provided an example of a rough map of my own food procurement geography, research participants were reluctant to engage in this exercise, seeming to find it overwhelming. I changed my approach and instead gave them the option of naming and describing the places they went. I used verbal prompts based on my pre-existing knowledge of Kingston to draw out, for example, how many different food sources they might visit in a week or month, how they travelled, whether they ever visited food banks, and whether they or other members of their families used other food-assistance programs. As in Havana, as new
information emerged during the interview, I would add it to the list that we had drawn up.

3.2.4 Managing and analyzing the data
While field observation is at the heart of ethnographic research, analyzing and ‘writing up’ the findings are also key dimensions of ethnographic methodology (Willis & Trondman, 2000). I turn now to a discussion of the process of transcribing and coding my interviews and field notes. Transcribing research interviews is a key step in analysis. It is an opportunity to re-familiarize oneself with the material collected, and, for me, was the first step in identifying and codifying themes and ideas that emerged from the data.

I did all the transcription and translation of the interviews myself, though I had to call in help from a translator to interpret some particularly noisy and vernacular-filled passages of the Havana recordings. I could preserve the anonymity of the interviewees during these occasions. I transcribed interviews as soon after completion as possible. This helped me to synthesize my memories, written notes and transcribed notes as data, to begin to note patterns, and to develop a basis for coding the material. Oliver & Serovich (2005) describe different transcription methods and suggest that the researcher engage in a process of reflection on the goal of the research as a way to guide the approach. For my first several interviews, I began transcribing using an approach similar to what Oliver et al. term *naturalized* transcription, in which where virtually all verbal utterances and cues are kept in the transcript as much as possible. Upon re-reading the first several transcripts, I decided that there was little to be gained from transcribing every part of every interview so closely, and that there were several passages in each interview, particularly those that veered far from the topic, that could be captured descriptively. I judged that what I wanted to glean from the interviews had little to do with the mechanics
of speech, and more to do with the words and ideas being conveyed. I also found that I was often uncomfortable with what felt like classist depictions of the interviews that resulted from verbatim transcription of all sounds. These records full of hesitations, “ums and aws” seemed at odds with my recollections and my written notes about the creative, resilient, and perceptive people I interviewed. This follows the arguments of Bourdieu (1996), Standing (1998) and others who propose that marginalized stereotypes can be reinforced by the use of verbatim representation, and that this can contribute to the perpetuation of hierarchies of power between researcher and researched.

I ended up using primarily denaturalized (verbatim, but adjusted to omit vocal tics and accents) and descriptive transcription (describing some passages in my own words) in most of my interviews, depending on content and context.

Because the Havana interviews were conducted in Spanish, transcription of those interviews involved an extra layer of work. I had to listen to them at least once through while taking careful notes, before actually transcribing the recorded interview. The addition of multiple voices in many of the Havana interviews, along with high ambient noise levels sometimes presented a challenge. With the Spanish language interviews, I also had to make a decision regarding at what point I would translate my data into English. I chose to transcribe the interviews entirely in Spanish and then do the coding in English. This allowed me to maintain the meaning and flow of the language but gave me codes I could easily search and match or contrast with codes that emerged in the English language interviews.

3.2.5 Coding
To prepare for the coding and analysis phase of the research I familiarized myself with texts including Shaw and Holland’s *Anticipating Analysis and Making Sense of Qualitative Data* (2014) and Emerson, Fritz, and Shaw’s *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (2011) along with the methodology portions of various ethnographies. While there are many computer programs that can help with coding, I found myself bogged down in researching which one would be best for my purposes, particularly given the complications that came with working with data in two languages. In the meantime, in order to better understand the process of coding, I had begun coding manually on printouts of my transcripts. I found that this immersion in my data brought forth unnoticed details and new insights into the material, and so I abandoned the search for an electronic approach and settled in to the labour of manual, line by line coding.

When I transcribed the interviews, I had begun to make notes of things I thought might be important to code, particularly in light of my research questions seeking differences and commonalities between food insecurity experiences in each research site. To begin coding, I read through each transcript one or more times with these categories at hand and began to add and sort for phrases, ideas, and themes using key words or phrases of two or three words. Some coded categories emerged in one research site and not the other. For example, not surprisingly, ‘black market’ and ‘Special Period’ emerged frequently as phrases in my Havana data, whereas reference to ‘food bank’ and ‘welfare’ only emerged in my Kingston data.

After completing coding for three Kingston interviews and three Havana interviews, I sorted the line by line ‘micro’ coding I had done, seeking common themes
and patterns in order to develop ‘meta’ categories of code. The meta categories included such themes as:

Household and Personal Details; Anxiety; Compromise Quality; Compromise Quantity; Strategies; Food and Children; Family Stories; Other livelihood concerns, and so on. Because of the interconnected nature of many of these categories, I maintained the fine grain of the micro categories within the meta themes so that different interpretations, opinions, debates, and perspectives from separate transcripts could be understood in relation to one another within and across coded categories. This was useful when, for example, I was comparing the multiple strategies that people use to manage food insecurity, or in cross referencing expressions of anxiety about being able to afford food with worry about other livelihood issues. After coding my interviews, I revisited my field notes and applied the codes that had emerged from the interviews to these notes.

3.3 Challenges for researchers in Cuba

Many foreign researchers in Cuba write about the frustrations and barriers that come with dealing with state bureaucracy. Historically, researchers in Cuba were advised to register with an appropriate national institution in order to carry out research. Those regulations have loosened up somewhat, and after reading and listening to accounts of the difficulties some researchers have had in Cuba, I made a conscious choice not to align myself with an institutional ‘home’ to carry out this research. First, I was wary of the strictures that might be imposed on my project. From other researcher’s accounts, I believe I might have been steered to talk only to people who had been vetted by the authorities. Second, I was concerned about the time and expense that would be added to my research process as these procedures are famously bureaucratic. Poverty and
inequality are still sensitive subjects in Cuba, as I discuss in detail in Chapter Four. By investigating the day-to-day work involved in food access for people living in poverty, I could have been seen to be positioning myself as a critic of the food entitlement system of the Cuban state, and possibly even inciting Cuban citizens to criticize the state. Having read accounts by other ethnographic researchers (Brotherton, 2012; Bell, 2013) and talking with other scholars who do research in Cuba and who have been stymied by the slow-moving Cuban bureaucracy, I decided to forego any benefits that having formal academic researcher ties to Cuba might bring such as the ability to conduct interviews with Cuban officials, and possibly access to official archival sources. I decided to instead focus my research around every-day people I could access through my personal contacts.

A more concrete challenge I faced in Havana was that of language. I speak, write, and understand Spanish well enough to conduct deep one-on-one conversations about complex topics, and had consciously worked on improving my speaking vocabulary and grammar prior to embarking on my field research. Cuban Spanish is notoriously fast, slurred and full of slang. Even native Spanish speakers write of having trouble understanding and making themselves understood in Cuba. Additionally, I was often engaging in conversation with more than one person at a time during interviews and in informal social settings. Prior to engaging in my field work, most of my conversations with Cubans had been with people accustomed to speaking to foreigners, who knew how to modulate their vocabulary and speed to accommodate the listener. Most of my interviews for this research were (intentionally) with people who had little experience interacting with tourists, and who therefore, did not tend to modulate the way they spoke. While I could always manage fine in face to face conversation, transcription of recorded
material was another matter, and, as I mention above, at times I had to call on the good ears of Cuban friends who live in Canada to help me make sense of some recorded passages.
Chapter 4

Setting the Context: Cuba and Canada

In this chapter I provide background information that helps to situate my field work in each site. Focusing on how poverty and food insecurity are measured and understood, I outline historical, governmental, civil society and market structures and systems that shape the experience of food insecurity for my research participants.

4.1 Cuba: A brief history

*I want to see Cuba before it changes.* (Multiple media sources, 2014-2017)

Cuba, particularly Havana, is often imagined as a place frozen in time. Images of classic American cars against Spanish colonial architecture; smiling musicians playing traditional Cuban son and salsa, and the pageantry and decadence of the Tropicana stage show, a scene straight out of the 1950s, are iconic. They are also ironic given the tumultuous history of Cuban politics, economics and social life (Pérez, 2016; Perttierra, 2016). Here I will explore some of the major themes, periods, policies and crises which have shaped Cuban food security for the past 50 years.

Historians identify five periods in Cuban history, culminating in the Revolutionary Period (1959 - present) (Bastian, 2016). Modern Cuban history is characterized by struggles; for independence from Spain (1868-1898), through resistance to American business interests during the Republican period (1902-1958), to the victory of the Cuban Revolution in 1959. This continuous narrative of anti-imperialist resistance
is a story that is fundamental to what it means to be Cuban today (Bastian, 2016; Powell, 2009).

My research focuses on contemporary Cuba, shaped by the revolution in 1959 and by the cold war and its fall out. Following World War II, widespread economic turmoil in Cuba set the stage for upheaval. Corruption, political violence, repressive dictatorship and growing socio-economic unrest made the country fertile ground for radical change. President Fulgencio Batista fled Cuba in anticipation of a violent coup on the 1st of January 1959, and on January 8th, after a long and difficult campaign, Fidel Castro and his co-revolutionaries rode into Havana and established a provisional government. Following the revolution social and economic policies were put in place specifically to address inequities in Cuban society. Fidel Castro quickly assumed a leadership role, and within the first nine months of 1959 over 1500 new policies, edicts and laws were enacted, restructuring nearly every aspect of Cuban economic and social structure (Pérez, 1998). Agricultural land was appropriated and redistributed; wages grew and the cost of living fell, with cuts in the rates for telephone, electricity, and rents (Reina 1996). Beaches, hotels and private clubs, previously only available to the wealthy were opened to the public (Pérez, 1998). Policies introduced shortly after the Revolution largely eliminated extreme concentrations of wealth in the population, and set the stage for the admirable population health and HDI figures Cuba continues to enjoy today. The present socialist regime has been in place for the past 58 years. Through this era the country has experienced armed invasion, mass exodus, a crippling economic embargo from their nearest neighbour (the USA), the fall of crucial trading partners, and several destructive hurricanes and tropical storms. Each adverse event has sparked significant changes in
economic and social policy, and so has affected everyday life for people on the island.

4.1.1 Overview of Havana

Havana, the capital city of Cuba, sits on the north shore of the island, famously 91 nautical miles across the Florida Strait from Key West, Florida. A city of 2.1 million inhabitants (ONEI, 2016), Havana is by far Cuba’s largest city. Havana is comprised of 15 municipales or administrative districts; I carried out my research primarily in el Cerro, an administrative district within Havana with a population of 124,000 (ONEI, 2016 c).

Imposing a capitalist conceptualization of class on my research site, I think of el Cerro as a working-class neighbourhood. The proportion of labourers and technicians who live in the district is high, compared to the number of managers and professionals (ONEI, 2016). Housing stock is modest, and there is little of the ornate Spanish colonial architecture of the older sections of the city that attract tourists. The population is racially mixed, and streets are noisy and lively. There are few commercial outlets in Cerro besides the shops offering the necessities for day-to-day living.

Class is a difficult concept to apply in Cuba. Like Sean Brotherton in his study of health care clinics in Cuba, I distinguish the class of this community by observation and interviews with research participants as data on income by district is not available (Brotherton, 2005). Until recently the government has maintained that there is little poverty or inequality in Cuba, pointing to 50 years of political commitment to the eradication of inequality through universal access to free social services, subsidies to consumer goods, and a commitment to full employment. Among state sector workers the income gap between those earning the most and those earning the least was narrow (Espina Prieto, 2007; Mesa-Lago, 2004).
Recently, though, this has changed as poverty and inequality have become more obvious in Cuban society, and have emerged as legitimate areas of research. Still, class in Cuba is hard to read. The impact of private enterprise, the tourist sector, and black-market activities on household income means that there is little correlation between level of education and standards of living. Professionals, including doctors, lawyers and university professors continue to earn state salaries in the Cuban peso economy. A waiter in a tourist restaurant may, in one day of tips, earn the equivalent to the monthly salary of a professor (Burchardt, 2002). A taxi driver may be able to afford many luxuries that a surgeon or a university professor cannot afford. The often-inverse correlation between professional qualifications and income makes class is a difficult thing to read in Cuba.

Tourism is one of the key drivers of the contemporary Havana (and Cuban) economy, and the effects of it are felt everywhere. Tourism is now a major industry in Cuba, and while the el Cerro, the neighbourhood in which I conducted most of my interviews, is removed from the tourist economy, there is no escaping the impact of an 13% increase in tourism between 2015 and 2016 on a city with crumbling infrastructure and an emerging private-sector service economy hungry for tourist dollars (Veraz, 2017). Visits to Cuba, and to Havana in particular, have increased rapidly over the past few years. Cuba welcomed around 4 million visitors in 2016 with cruise lines and new airlines targeting Havana and popular beach resorts, precipitating severe shortages and price hikes for hotel rooms in the capital (Veraz, 2017). In Havana, attractions, accommodation and other facilities are heavily concentrated in the areas around the old city, Habana Vieja, and the neighbourhood of Vedado in the administrative district of Plaza de la Revolución. El Cerro, where I conducted the bulk of my interviews, is close
to the city centre, however it is geographically separated from it by major roadways, and has virtually no tourist accommodations and boasts few attractions of interest to tourists.

The Cuban government has announced significant investment in tourist accommodations and infrastructure in Havana, indicating the country’s commitment to a continued investment in that sector. Tourism figures for Havana alone are difficult to find, however, the ministry of tourism in Cuba reports that the arrival of international visitors to the airport in Havana had increased, as of May 31, 2017 by 29% over the same period in 2016 (Granma, July 6, 2017). Of course, some of these visitors would have been continuing on to other destinations within Cuba.

The surge in tourism to Cuba is credited to the thawing of relations between Cuba and the United States that began in 2014. While this drew renewed international attention to and interest in Cuba, US tourism to the island still lags behind visits from of Canadians, Cuban expatriates, Europeans and other Latin Americans (ONEI, 2016; Veraz, 2017). The current US administration’s reversals in the opening of relations with Cuba, including the renewed commitment to the economic embargo will no doubt have a negative impact on economic growth and the tourist sector in Cuba.

4.1.2 Poverty and social inequality in Cuba

Prior to the revolution of 1959, economic and social inequality was notable throughout the island with major differences in standard of living between social classes, between urban and rural residents, and between Afro-Cubans and white Cubans (Bastian, 2016; Mesa-Lago, 2004). While enjoying one of the highest per capita income levels in Latin America in the 1950s, Cuba, and in particular Havana, was integrated into the economy and culture of the United States. They lived, as Cuban historian Louis Pérez
puts it “within a North American cost of living index” (1988, p. 296), dependent on US imports and consumer goods, but without access to US wages, social services, or legal protections.

Since the revolution, Cuban poverty has been characterized as poverty with protection and guarantees (Bastian, 2016, p. 2; Ferriol et al., 2004). The direction and character of the Revolution has always been debated - was it a nationalist revolution, or socialist, or populist? (Brenner et al., 2015). It is clear however that the Revolution ushered in a period of vast, state-directed change. Structural and programmatic changes to Cuban economic and social institutions that were introduced shortly after the revolution largely eliminated extreme concentrations of wealth in the population and set the stage for the admirable population health and Human Development Index (HDI) figures Cuba continues to enjoy today.

After the revolution, special emphasis was placed on rural health, economic and educational development, to equalize the vast imbalances between the city and the countryside and to generate and maintain support for the Revolutionary government (Brenner et al., 2015). Access to health care services throughout Cuba was universalized and public health programs were rolled out across the country. Children were vaccinated, health care was expanded to rural and low income urban areas, and most contagious diseases were eradicated or drastically reduced (Mesa-Lago, 2004). In each community, neighbourhood clinics were established to ensure equitable access to primary health care (Brotherton, 2005; Mesa-Lago, 2004). At the same time, food security entitlements such as universal rations, and workplace and school meals were implemented in an attempt to eradicate inequality and to ensure equitable access to scarce food resources.
At a press conference in June 1960, Ché Guevara, president of the National Bank at the time, stated “Our duty is, I repeat, first of all, before anything else, to see to it that no one in Cuba goes without food.” (quoted in Benjamin et al., 1984 p. 15). With the revolution, the new Cuban government assumed virtually complete control over the production and distribution of food. The leadership brought most agricultural land under state control, set up large collective farms, and instituted a system to get food from farm to consumers. A decrease in agricultural production due to the sudden out-migration of many Cuban landowners and agronomists immediately after the Revolution (Pérez 2006), and increased demand because of quickly rising incomes and rapid urbanization on the island resulted in food shortages. To address this, and to meet the revolutionary goal of social equality, rationing of some food products began in 1961. Conditions continued to decline as the United States government imposed an economic embargo in response to the Cuban expropriation of US landholdings on the island and the formalization of Cuba’s alliance with the Soviet Union. The embargo, coupled with problems in transitioning agricultural production strategies from pre-revolutionary private plantations to state-run operations, created repeated food shortages throughout the country, and in 1962 a permanent rations system was implemented in concert with a number of other food security policies (Benjamin et al., 1989; Gonzales, 2009; Premat, 2012; Carter, 2013).

While today many Cubans struggle with day-to-day expenses, they continue to enjoy a level of social services and a basket of entitlements superior to that which the poor in the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean receive. Universal health care, free education including the post-secondary level, subsidized prices for food, transportation,
and utilities continue to ensure that at least basic needs are met for most Cubans. These entitlements are, however, shrinking in quality and quantity, and are widely perceived to be unsustainable. This is recounted not only in contemporary research about Cuba (see for example, Brundenius, 2014; Torres Pérez, 2014; Espina Prieto, 2015; Mesa-Lago, 2004), but in policy documents of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) itself, that describe in detail measures that must be taken to rectify a social support system the state can no longer afford (PCC, 2011).

### 4.1.3 Cuba in the 1980s

By the mid-1980s, the widespread social and regional inequalities, malnutrition, unemployment, and poverty, which had characterized pre-Revolutionary Cuba had been largely eliminated (Zabala Argüllas, 2010; Burchardt, 2002). Preferential trade agreements with the Soviet Union and their allies, accounting for over 80% of all trade, ensured subsidized farm machinery, fuel and other inputs for an increasingly industrialized farming economy, as well as imports of most of the food consumed on the island (Altieri et al., 1999). Most people in Havana remember the 1980s as a prosperous period, sometimes called the ‘golden age’ of the revolution.⁵ Virtually everyone in the labour force drew a state salary sufficient to meet the household’s basic monthly needs. Food supplies were subsidized, ample, and varied, and most people were even able to

---

⁵While several of my interviewees spoke nostalgically about the 1980s as a golden era for Havana and Cuba, not everyone felt that way. In fact a mass wave of outmigration from Cuba to the United States, known as the Mariel boatlift took place between April and October of 1980 after approximately 10,000 Cubans occupied the Peruvian embassy seeking asylum. Fidel Castro announced they were free to leave the island and opened Mariel Harbour to boats sent by the Cuban American community. As many as 125,000 Cubans fled to Florida during this exodus (Card, 1990). People continued to leave Cuba throughout the 1980s for economic as well as ideological reasons.
save a portion of their salaries for family vacations and other luxuries (Bastian, 2016; Field notes, 11/2015).

**4.1.4 Cuba in the Special Period**

By the late 1980s, trade within the Soviet Union accounted for almost 85% of Cuban imports and exports (World Bank, 2017). Programs and policies that supported food security in Cuba were disrupted with the collapse of the Soviet Union through the late 1980s and early 1990s. The food, fuel, equipment and training that Cuba relied on began to rapidly disappear, as did the market for Cuban sugar and tobacco. Cuba’s agricultural sector had become highly industrialized during the Soviet era, building a reliance on fuel, heavy equipment, and chemical inputs for productivity. The imports of oil and oil derivatives decreased by nearly 90% between 1989 and 1992, reducing agricultural productivity. By 1992, imports of materials and spare parts essential for industry, including agriculture, ceased altogether. During that same period, fertilizer imports had declined by 80%, and animal feed imports by 70%, hampering domestic production of meat, poultry, milk and eggs and resulting in widespread food shortages in Cuba (Altieri et al., 1999)

In 1992 Fidel Castro declared a ‘Special Period in Time of Peace’ known in Cuba simply as ‘the Special Period’ (*período especial*). Memories about the Special Period in Cuba continue to be characterized by stories of food shortages (Wilson, 2014; Garth, 2009, 2014). Everyday life in Cuba became what Louis Pérez (2006) characterizes as “a grim and unrelenting cycle of scarcity” (p. 38x). Some Cubans refer to the Special Period as “the time we went hungry” (Wilson, 2014, p. 108) or as “the time we were skinny” (Field notes, 12/2015). In response to the crisis of the Special Period, the United States
tightened the trade embargo that they had imposed on Cuba in an attempt to further destabilize the Cuban economy and government, hoping to bring about a regime change and a move towards a capitalist market economy. This embargo worsened the effects of the economic crisis for everyday Cubans (Davidson & Krull, 2011; Ritter & Henken, 2015).

Not surprisingly, the sudden economic crisis of the Special Period had a profound effect on health and food insecurity. Prior to the crisis imported food accounted for 57% of the Cuban population’s consumption of protein, and for 50% of its overall caloric intake (Ritter & Henken, 2015). Both food production and food imports fell dramatically. Items available through the subsidized food rations system were severely curtailed and lineups for available foodstuffs were interminable. Daily per capita food consumption in Cuba fell from 2,835 calories in 1989 to 1,853 calories by 1994 (Pérez, 2015). For those most dependent on state rations - the very old and the young - consumption fell even more to 1,450 calories per day, 30 percent below the recommended minimum of 2,100-2,300 calories per day (Deere, Pérez, & González, 1994; Ritter & Henken, 2015).

Nutrition related health indicators deteriorated in the first half of the 1990s, and gradually improved as the millennium approached. While malnutrition never reached starvation levels, there were severe health consequences to the deprivation. Food availability in the eastern provinces was dire enough that rates of undernourishment in some areas increased from 5 percent in 1990-92 to 17 percent in 2000 (Mesa-Lago, 2004), and in 1993 it was reported that more than 50,000 Cubans suffered an epidemic of optic neuropathy due to a deficiency of vitamin B complex (Brotherton, 2005).
Deprivation in Cuba drove the rapid expansion of the black market as the informal economy, present since the early days of the Revolution in some form, ballooned and became essential for everyday survival during the Special Period. Regardless of one’s commitment to the revolution, during the Special Period it was virtually impossible to procure all household needs through legitimate markets (Bastian, 2016; Gollum, 2016; Wierzbicki, 2005). Food and other household items, impossible to acquire through legitimate channels were, at least sometimes, available in the black market. The high demand for products, including food products, meant that anyone with access (legal or illegal) to goods could find an inflated market for them on the street. The black market that flourished through the Special Period has become entrenched in the Cuban economy (Porter, 2008).

4.1.5 Policy response to food shortages during the Special Period

In response to food shortages during the Special Period the Cuban leadership introduced new policies and programs to address hunger, bridging food production and distribution through initiatives such as urban agriculture and market liberalization (Alvarez, 2001; Premat, 2012; Carter, 2013). The Cuban government also allocated considerable resources to avoid a deterioration of social services during the Special Period crisis. Expenditures on social services climbed from 15.8 percent of the GDP in 1989 to 20.7 percent in 2000; 7.5 percent for education, 6.5 percent for pensions, 6.1 percent for health and 0.6 percent for social assistance (Mesa-Lago, 2004). While the Special Period is generally understood to have eased by the late 1990s, it has had a profound and lasting effect on the Cuban economy and social structures. The effects continue to be felt in how Cubans experience the everyday work of food procurement as...
One of the Cuban state responses to fuel shortages and food deprivation in Cuba during the Special Period was the rapid implementation of organic urban agriculture programs which today provide as much as 80% of the produce consumed in Havana (Altieri et al., 1999; Koont, 2011). In 1991 the first high-yield, organic, garden of raised container beds and drip irrigation was piloted in the historically wealthy neighbourhood of Miramar in Havana. The intent was to grow a variety of vegetables and herbs that could be sold directly to the public. In 1994, this model was rolled out in towns and cities across Cuba and a dedicated government division created within the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAG). Different scales of gardens were promoted from the backyard patio garden to large 10-acre peri-urban operations that included livestock. Today over 35,000 hectares of land are in cultivation in and around the city of Havana (Koont, 2011).

Widely studied around the world, this system of urban agriculture has contributed significantly to global knowledge about intensive, minimally mechanized organic crop production for urban environments. The Cuban state invested in the science and technology necessary for developing high-yield gardens, and today urban agriculture in Cuba relies on the use of well-adapted varieties, mixed cropping, crop rotation, drip irrigation, organic and vermi-composting, integrated pest management and other agro-ecological horticultural practices.

Despite the success of the urban agriculture programs in Cuba, most of these gardens produce crops such as lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, green onion, spinach, oregano, and mint. While these are important components of the Cuban diet, they provide only a fraction of necessary daily calories. Most calorie-dense food production such as rice, beans, meat, dairy, and root vegetables are produced in peri-urban or rural farms.
4.2 Measuring food insecurity in Cuba

My mother makes magic three times a day, performing alchemy with only 3 ingredients
(Delgado, 2008. *Carta de un niño Cubano a Harry Potter*, Letter from a Cuban boy to Harry Potter.)

According to conventional global measures of hunger Cuba appears relatively food secure. The prevalence of undernourishment of Cuban population has stabilized at less than 2.5%, well below the average for the region of Latin America and the Caribbean at 6.5% (FAO, 2017). The under 5 years child mortality rate for 2015 was 5.5 per 1000 live births, again well below average for the region, comparable to that of Canada at 4.9%, and better than that of the United States, 6.5%. Incidence of stunting and wasting are negligible, and calories available per capita measured 3287 in 2007 (WHO, 2017).

When it comes to access to food, however, the lived experiences of Cubans tell a different story than national health statistics. In his research on health care in contemporary Cuba, Sean Brotherton (2005) notes the “international fetishism” that has arisen around Cuban health statistics, “particularly the way in which statistics have a way of eclipsing the everyday realities of the people or things they claim to represent…” (p. 342). Complaints about the difficulty of procuring sufficient quantity and quality of food, and long discussions about what food is available at which locations and when, and the relative cost of food items from different sources are at the centre of everyday conversation among Cubans of all classes. While people still profess pride in the Cuban health care system and other social protections they continue to enjoy, access to food in Havana is a contentious topic for nearly everyone (Field notes/ 01/2015. See also Brotherton, 2005; Garth, 2008; Premat, 1998; Weinreb, 2009; Wilson 2014).
Despite the burden of the work involved in food procurement, and the cultural preoccupation with accessing adequate food, little research has been done on food insecurity on the island. Unlike in many developing countries, Cuba has not implemented an HFSSM-derived measurement survey to assess the prevalence of household food insecurity. Cuba has a robust capacity for scientific and social science research through the University of Havana and associated research institutes, however social scientists in Cuba have only recently begun to address questions of poverty, social inequality and forms of deprivation including food insecurity.

Since the revolution, statistics in Cuba have been kept according to employment category rather than household or individual income (Ritter & Henken, 2015; Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López, 2013). Data on income levels are extrapolated from employment category and from self-reported income for private sector small business. This self-reporting is understood by researchers to be grossly inaccurate, as most people, at least in urban centres, earn unreported income by working in the informal or black market. As many as an estimated 65% of the population receive at least occasional remittances from family outside Cuba, money which is notoriously hard to track (Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López, 2013).

7According to social science researchers in Havana, the term “poverty” is somewhat loaded in Cuba, implying that the revolution has been less than 100% successful in achieving its declared social and economic goals, and that the broad slate of social security mechanisms has not completely eradicated poverty. For many years, in place of the term poverty Cuban social scientists used other terms to describe problems related to “precaridad” or insecurity. These terms include “social disadvantage”, describing adverse conditions that place schoolchildren at risk (Díaz et al., 1990), “vulnerable groups,” to describe groups of citizens unable to achieve a minimum standard of living (Torres, 1993), and “at-risk population,” defined as those danger of not being able to meet basic needs (Ferriol et al., 1997). In more recent years, however, Cuban social scientists have begun to use the term poverty (pobreza) more frequently (see for example works by Añé Aguiloche, 2005; Espina Prieto, 2007; Garcia & Cruz, 2012; Zabala Argüelles, 2010).
López, 2013). While some remittances arrive through formal channels, an inestimable amount arrives informally, in envelopes tucked in the suitcases of visitors to the island.

With the gradual elimination of entitlements and inadequate increases in state incomes since the Special Period, Cuban’s today find that their state salaries are no longer sufficient to meet needs. Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López (2013) presents this graph showing the drastic decline in real average salaries and pensions from 1989 to 2010:

**Figure 1: Real Average Salary and Pension, Cuba, 1989-2010**

The rapid decline in purchasing power illustrated by this graph is startling, though Mesa-Lago and Pérez López note that these figures do not capture non-salary sources of income, proceeds from illicit activities, or the informal trading of food and other goods that arose in response to the situation described by these data.
4.3 Inequality and poverty in Cuba

A Cuban joke popular in the 1980s mocked that the revolution had eradicated capitalism’s three classes (upper, middle and lower) only to replace them with three new socialist ones: the dirigentes (the few communist officials at the top), the diplogente (the fewer diplomats and foreigners in the middle), and the indigentes (the indigent masses at the bottom). The egalitarianism of socialism had made everyone equal by making them equally poor. Except, of course, that some were more equal than others. This joke changed with the advent of the Special Period and its concomitant dislocations and piecemeal reforms. A fourth group was added to the hierarchy, the delincuentes (delinquents, people who survived by breaking the law) (Cluster, 2004, paraphrased in Ritter & Henken, 2015).

The joke above continues; given the low salaries of most Cubans and the recognized economic benefits of breaking the law, some wonder whether the delincuentes should be placed at the bottom or the top of Cuba’s new social hierarchy (Ritter & Henken, 2015).

Researchers agree that economic inequality is growing in Cuba. This is attributed to a combination of the market liberalization that has opened up opportunities for private enterprise, particularly in the tourist sector and the persistence and ubiquity of the black market and the informal labour economy combine with the continued effects of the US trade embargo as the understood causes of economic inequality (Powell, 2008; Mesa-Lago, 2013; Burchardt, 2002; Ritter & Henken, 2015).

While Cuba does not publish statistics on income distribution, the Gini

---

8 The most commonly used measure of income inequality is the Gini coefficient, which is measured on a scale of 0 to 1. The Gini coefficient calculates the extent to which the distribution of income among individuals within a country deviates from an exactly equal distribution:
- a Gini coefficient of 0 represents exact equality—that is, every person in the society has the same amount of income
- a Gini coefficient of 1 represents total inequality—that is, one person has all the income and the rest of the society has none
coefficient, an internationally calculated figure representing income disparity in a country, rose by 63% between 1989-1999 (Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López, 2013). Recent data on inequality in Cuba are not available, although small-scale qualitative studies and ethnographic observations suggest that the problem continues to increase with a move towards more market liberalization and the growing presence of tourism throughout the country (Añé Agüloche, 2005; Zabala Argüelles, 2010, 2016).

4.4 Race and gender in Cuba

Economic inequality is linked inextricably to gender and race inequality in Cuba. Aspects of racial and gender inequality that were not ‘resolved’ by the revolution intersect with economic inequality in particular ways. Several authors describe how non-white Cubans have less access to convertible (CUC) currency, and are more likely to live solely in the much poorer Cuban Peso economy (Espina Prieto, 2008, 2011; Zabala Argüelles, 2008, 2010; Zabala Argüelles, et al., 2015).

The emerging self-employment sector with its promise of an injection of cash into household economies is only available to and lucrative for those who have money to invest. Because much of that income comes from foreign family remittances, those without families abroad (disproportionately those of Afro-Cuban heritage, and people with roots in rural Cuba) are less likely to have funds to invest. The best opportunities for earning money through self-employment come with access to the tourism sector. People with property and social connections in the affluent, central neighbourhoods where tourists cluster, are more likely to find opportunities to make money by, for example, turning a front yard into a cafe, or tapping into the supply chain for the growing number of private restaurants and apartment rentals. Afro-Cubans are less likely to have jobs that
give them access to assets such as a car that can be used after work hours to earn money; they are less likely to have had family members emigrate, and so are less likely to receive foreign remittances, and they are more likely to be discriminated against in employment in the tourist industry (Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López, 2013; Burchardt, 2002; Espina Prieto, 2008; Espina Prieto & Gonzalez, 2012; Fernandez, 2005; Weinreb, 2009; Zabala Argüelles, 2008; 2010). Despite state campaigns to end the differential effects of race and racism in Cuba, racism continues to be a serious problem, and is particularly evident as inequalities widen in *la nueva Cuba*.

Traditional gender roles around household food-work also remain intransigent in Cuba. Despite decades of campaigns demanding that Cuban men take responsibility for household work including cooking, the historically machista culture continues to dump most of the work of food planning, shopping, cooking and cleaning up on women (Andaya, 2007; Burwell, 2004; Davidson & Krull, 2011; Fleites-Lear, 2001; Zabala Argüelles, 2010). In Cuba as in Canada poverty makes food planning, procurement, and preparation more difficult. Poor households are less likely to have a well-functioning kitchen in which to prepare food, less likely to have a reliable source of clean water, and are more likely to be overcrowded, making the work of food procurement and preparation that much more difficult.

### 4.5 Poverty and food insecurity research in Cuba

Despite the challenges of measuring and studying poverty, inequality, and food insecurity in Cuba, research indicates that deprivation and income inequality are increasing in Cuba, and that income levels are directly related to consumption patterns in all sectors, with a
particular effect on food access (Zabala Argüelles, 2010; Añé Aguíloche, 2005; Garcia & Cruz, 2012; Mesa-Lago, 2013; Espina Prieto, 2007; 2008; 2011).

While there has been no national household survey measuring food insecurity in Cuba to date, in recent years there have been several notable studies that link the experience of poverty to food insecurity (see for example, Añé Aguíloche, 2005; Espina Prieto, 2008, 2010; Ferriol et al., 2004; Garcia & Cruz, 2012; Zabala Argüelles, 2010). As part of her investigation into poverty in Havana, Lia Añé Aguíloche (2005) asked a representative sample of families to identify the three problems that had the biggest effect on their everyday life. Insufficient food was identified by 23% of respondents as their primary problem after insufficient income, followed by deteriorating housing and problems with transportation. Further, respondents in the study indicated that overall, food insufficiency was considered the most pressing, or daily encountered problem among respondents. Añé Aguíloche’s research also asked respondents to indicate how well they felt they fared in relation to food sufficiency. Fifty nine percent of respondents answered “poor” or “nearly poor” while 41% answered “not poor” (2005, p. 16).

Cuban economist Viviana Togores combined rates of dependence on social services and income from salaries of households, and an estimate of the cost of a basic food basket into a single index. From these she calculated income poverty, defined as a condition in which the household is not able to meet its basic food needs. According to her estimates, 48.4% of the Cuban population fit within this category of income poverty (2007). At the same time, she acknowledges that the redistributive effect of entitlements - in subsidized foods, education, health, social assistance, etc. - while it does not compensate completely for the loss of purchasing power, has a mitigating effect on
deprivation among the population, especially for those in the most vulnerable sectors (Togores, 2000, 2007).

Garcia and Cruz (2014) also carried out research on the cost of a nutritious food basket in Cuba in relation to incomes of households of various compositions, comparing data from 2005 and 2011. They found that for 2011, food costs had risen in real terms and comprised between 58% and 75% of total household costs, and that families with children and/or seniors in residence experienced a significant deficit in available income compared to costs (2014).

While each study uses different methodologies, and therefore data aren’t directly comparable, the findings in both cases mirror what ethnographic studies of Cuba also identify; that despite admirable health statistics in relation to the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, food insecurity is a primary preoccupation for people living in Havana (see for example, ethnographic work by Bastian, 2016; Garth, 2009, 2012, 2014; Padrón Hernández, 2012; Weinreb, 2009; Wilson, 2014, 2016).

Researchers in Cuba have not categorized Cuban food insecurity management strategies as have researchers in Canadian, United States, and European food insecurity research. In a review of the literature that touches on food insecurity in Cuba I have identified several categories based on the field in which the strategies are enacted. These are Strategies in the Household, Augmenting Income through Entrepreneurialism, and Social Networks.

4.5.1 Strategies in the household: No alcanza - It doesn’t reach
Cubans understand the difficulty they face in food procurement to be a function of inadequate income relative to food prices. Maria del Carmen Zabala Argüelles, Argüelles
(2010) states that in Cuba “Insufficient income is directly associated with limited consumption of all kinds, but food most of all” (p. 116). Household-based strategies such as careful planning and budgeting, or travelling to distant neighbourhoods to procure food at better prices are common. Another set of household strategies that became commonplace during the special period, and continue to this day fall under the heading inventar. Cubans use this word - to invent - to describe creative food preparation solutions to food insufficiency (Alfonso, 2012; Garth, 2014; Padrón Hernández, 2012; Powell, 2008). Rice may be cooked with extra water to make it seem like there’s more of it (field notes, 12/2014), and stories of cooking plantain, grapefruit, or mango skins as ‘steak’ appear in many stories of special period food insufficiency in Cuba (Bastian, 2016; Pertierra, 2011). Although there is little evidence that these particular inventions lasted much past the worst years of the special period, the stories remain in circulation as evidence of the inventiveness of the Cuban people in the face of food shortages.

Another well researched household strategy for managing food insufficiency in Havana is to grow your own food or raise animals (Koont, 2004, 2011; Murphy, 1999; Premat, 2012). In addition to the well-known large scale organoponicos (raised bed urban organic farms) throughout Havana, the state also instituted supports for home gardening during the special period. People developed gardens called parcelas or patios (depending on whether the land you are using is part of your property or allocated to you by the state) to feed themselves. Raising chickens, primarily for eggs but also for meat, as well as pigs and rabbits, in urban settings throughout Cuba, became common during the special period. There are many apocryphal yet persistent stories of pigs being raised on balconies
and in bathtubs of high rise buildings in Havana during the worst of the Special Period. Today, raising chickens is still a common practice in every neighbourhood of Havana.

4.5.2 Strategy: Augmenting income

While these household-based strategies for managing food insecurity take place throughout Cuba, most Cubans also try to ‘resolver’ - resolve the gap between available income and sufficient food by supplementing their incomes and/or by dealing in the black market. There are many different strategies, legal and illicit, for augmenting one’s income in Havana. Research on household food insecurity in Cuba and the strategies people use to manage it demonstrate how Cubans navigate the informal or illegal market as workers, vendors and buyers (Bastian, 2016; Espina Prieto, 2008; Padrón Hernández, 2012; Weinreb, 2009; Wilson, 2014). Padrón Hernández narrates stories about Cubans working to supplement inadequate state incomes. Part time jobs, particularly in the private sector, allow many Cubans to earn double or more what they earn in their state jobs. Some of these jobs are legal and people registered their self-employment with the appropriate authorities. Others, possibly most of them, are illicit. Part time work becomes even more enticing when paid in convertible pesos rather than Cuban pesos, as are many of the jobs related to tourism in the new Cuba. Many people work as tour guides, run illegal taxis, or producing food in their home for sale.

A common way of earning more money is to make food or other goods in the home and sell them. People might make pastries or pop-corn to sell from their home or on the street (Añé Aguiloche 2005; Bastian, 2016). Padrón Henandez (2012) interviewed a couple who both held state jobs (earning $360 and $328 Cuban pesos per month, respectively) but their informal businesses selling air fresheners ($325 Cuban pesos) and
roach poison ($770 Cuban pesos) that they produced at home accounted for more than half of the household income (Padrón Hernández, 2012).

Within the state sector, workers in the Ministry of Tourism and food service have among the lowest state salaries (Bastian, 2016). In 2014, the average monthly salary in hotels and restaurants was $377 Cuban pesos, below the national average of $584 Cuban pesos (Tamayo, 2015). While salaries are low, these jobs are highly valued because of the possibility of receiving tips, and because, like many other state jobs, tiene busqueda - they give you access to goods that can be stolen or ‘diverted’ and sold or traded on the black market or used for personal consumption. Redirecting state property for private good is generally accepted in Havana as a justifiable and necessary practice (Bastian, 2016; Padrón Hernández, 2012; Wilson, 2014; Zabala Argüelles, 2010). The perceived morality of the activity seems to depend on the scale of theft and the effect it has on other people (Wilson, 2014). For example, in 2015, when it was discovered, a high profile large scale egg-theft operation that was perceived to be the cause of a long period of egg shortages in Havana drew harsh judgement not only from the state, and in the press, but from many Habaneros on the street as well (Fuerte, 2015; Castro Morales, 2015).

People often leverage their entitlements (food rations, housing, access to a state-owned vehicle) to sell, trade, or provide services for other people (Bastian, 2016). A job that provides a vehicle, for example, also provides the means to run an informal taxi service, delivery service, or to engage in the complex trade in illicit sources of gasoline (Field notes, 12/2015). People rent rooms in their homes (Bastian, 2016), or sell unwanted portions of their rations to a neighbor (Weinreb, 2009; Wilson, 2014). It is understood to be practically impossible to survive in Havana without engaging in the
informal market, either as a buyer of things that are in short supply in the formal market, or as a vendor of goods or services in the underground economy (Weinreb 2009; Wilson 2014).

**4.5.3 Strategy: Relying on social networks**
The operation of the illicit market in which so much income generating activity takes place would not be possible without extensive social networks based on trust and reciprocity. Ethnographic research about Cuba often foregrounds the considerable role of social networks for managing food scarcity and other forms of deprivation (Brundenius 2014; Härkönen, 2015; Powell 2008; Weinreb 2009; Wilson 2014). In the sphere of the household, the time-consuming work of food procurement is often shared by members of the family (Bastian 2016; Weinreb 2009), although cooking is still typically women’s work (Fleites-Lear, 2012; Härkönen, 2015; Davidson & Krull, 2011). Lining up to collect portions of the rations may fall to seniors or youth, for example, while another family member may purchase fruits and vegetables at a market closer to their workplace (Field notes, 12/2014).

While reliance on extended family and friends to help with day-to-day food work is common in Havana, these household relations are inextricably linked to a broader network of *socios*. Cubans and Cuba scholars often note that the Cuban economy runs on *Socialismo* - a play on the Spanish word *socialismo* - the official state doctrine of socialism (Bastian, 2016; Powell 2008). A *socio* is a trusted acquaintance who can help resolve one's needs. They may have food to sell, lend or trade, or be connected to someone who does. Sociolismo is an extensive network of reciprocal social relations based on trust. This social network spans state institutions, informal markets, and
households in what Powell (2008) terms a “complex economy of practices” (p. 182). As Añe Aguiloche (2005) notes in her research on poverty in Cuba:

Although most of the interviewees used multiple strategies, it is notable that they relied most frequently on intimate social circles: friends, co-workers and religious brethren; that is, they go to family and social relationships to solve their problems, based on trust and norms that govern these relationships. The use of social capital, as it has been called, makes it possible to reciprocally enjoy the benefits of belonging to a network of protection (p. 24, my translation).

Because this complex network relies on trust and reciprocity and takes place largely within a shadow economy, it is one of the more difficult aspects of Cuban life for an outsider to completely understand, despite its centrality as a theme in ethnographic research in Cuba. Along with one's extended family and neighbours, a complex network of business-like, reciprocal social relations is the key to survival. While socialism remains the state sanctioned ideology, many have noted, as I mention above, that the real economic and political power in Cuba functions through socio-lismo (Brundenius, 2014; Härkönen, 2014; Powell, 2008; Wilson, 2014). The word sociolismo has also been translated as buddy capitalism or clientelism (Powell, 2008). As sociolismo becomes more and more central to the economic workings of Cuba it contributes to growing economic inequality. “While on the one hand sociolismo facilitates access to resources such as work opportunities and scarce goods for the well-networked, in reality it distributes these resources very unevenly” (Powell, 2008, p. 185).

Despite these robust social networks, precarity remains a defining factor in the Cuban experience of food insecurity. At risk for tropical storms and hurricanes that threaten domestic food production and thus, food prices, environmental precarity affects
Cuba each year (Davidson & Krull, 2011; Mesa-Lago & Pérez López, 2013). Income precarity is increasingly a problem for everyday Cubans as well. Most scholars consider that worst effects of the Special Period in Cuba were over by the late 1990s (Davidson & Krull, 2011; Wilson, 2014). For many Cubans, however, the roll back of entitlements that began during the Special Period, including the diminishment of the rations, engendered feelings of being abandoned by the state (Burchardt, 2002; Togores, 2007; Weinreb, 2009; Wilson, 2014). As the state continues to retract through the current period of transition to a new economic model, these feelings persist, continuing to colour many Cuban’s experience of food insecurity.

4.6 Food charity in Cuba

Cubans do not turn to charities for food assistance for the simple reason that food banks and meal programs don’t exist in that country (Garth, 2014). As the state draws back from the responsibility for direct food provision, the work necessary to maintain households and keep food on the table is shifting away from state entitlements, and onto individuals and families. The state offers some targeted social services based on rigorous needs assessment, but there is no place Cubans can go, other than family or friends, when things get desperate. In Canada and elsewhere, food banks and other food assistance programs exist within the sphere of civil society. As Sujartha Fernandez (2004) and others explain, the question of whether or not civil society truly exists within Cuba is, itself, a debated subject (Hernández, 2003; Ramirez, 2005). I explore the unique formation of Cuban civil society, the lack of a charitable sector, and what that means for food insecurity in Havana in more detail in Chapter Seven.
As in Canada, most people in Cuba mobilize multiple strategies for increasing income for procuring food. A combination of household planning and strategizing, engaging in often illicit income generating activities, and navigating state, private, and informal/illegal markets are all bound up in a network of reciprocal trusted social relations that allow access to money and food that otherwise would be unattainable. Environmental, political, and income precarity increasingly define the experience of food insecurity in Havana. Virtually all research on and speculation about ‘la nueva Cuba’ includes observations and predictions about increased inequality among Cubans (see for example Burchardt, 2002; Garcia & Besy, 2007; Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López, 2013; Powell, 2008; Espina Prieto, 2011; Togores, 2007).

4.7 Mounting dissatisfaction with neoliberalism in Cuba

Despite policies and programs enacted to ensure food security in Cuba, today many Cubans are dissatisfied with the costly, complex food procurement system, and frequently complain about the prices, quality and availability of food. It can, of course, be argued that Cuban food policies have successfully resolved chronic hunger and malnutrition in most regions of the country, and further, have contributed to global knowledge about agro-ecological food production (Koont, 2011; Premat, 2012). Cuba’s slate of policies that were meant to ensure the fulfillment of the right to food are now unraveling with the (neo) liberalization of the market and Cuba’s increasing integration into the world economy. Household incomes in Cuba, always low, are becoming more precarious as state jobs disappear and more people move into the small business economy (formal and informal). The population is rapidly aging and more and more people rely on low state pensions. Cuba has the second oldest-aged population in Latin America due to a
low birth rate combined with a relatively high rate of emigration. Averaging around 250 Cuban Pesos (CUP) per month (~$28) retirement pensions in Cuba are insufficient to meet living costs (Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López, 2013). As with state sector wages, the purchasing power of pensions fell drastically between 1989 and 2011, by about half (Mesa-Lago, 2013). The income inequality that began to grow during the Special Period is becoming ever more apparent with the influx of income from private businesses as well as from remittances from abroad for some households but not others (Espina Prieto, 2011).

4.8 Stability and precarity in Cuba

The economy and culture of contemporary Cuba exhibit a level of precarity that cannot be attributed to neoliberalization, at least not directly. Precarity in Cuba is often attributed to a combination of the fall of the Soviet Union that left Cuba with no market for exports and no source for food or fuel imports, and the ongoing trade embargo by the US government (Baéz, 2004; Mesa-Lago & Pérez López, 2013). Because the fall of the Soviet Union, an outcome of the cold war, is intricately tied to the project of global neoliberalization (Braedley & Luxton, 2010), it can be argued that neoliberalism did have a role to play in creating a particularly precarious Cuban economy (Baéz, 2004).

Carmelo Mesa-Lago and Jorge Pérez-López identify eight policy cycles in Cuba since the revolution (2013) each moving either towards or away from the idealized socialist ‘command economy’ model introduced in 1961. Mesa-Lago and Pérez-López characterizes four of those policy swings as ‘idealist’ - typified by ambitious goals moving away from the dominant global capitalism model, and three of them as ‘pragmatist’ - introducing policies that liberalize the Cuban economy, loosening
restrictions on small business, decentralizing control, and so on. Mesa-Lago suggests that fear of regime instability regularly prompts the leadership to institute pragmatist policies to ‘correct’ the course by increasing productivity and counter threats to the stability of the regime. So far, once the political leadership perceives that the regime had been sufficiently stabilized, a new idealist cycle is instituted through curtailing or reversing liberalizing policies. As Mesa-Lago and Pérez-López note; “Most of the cycles have lasted between five and six years, creating instability and uncertainty and hampering long-term economic growth” (2013, p. 2). Many key policy areas subject to these cyclical changes drastically affect access to food. Each cycle has introduced changes in policy for agricultural production and modes of food distribution, including the role and scope of the rations system and agricultural produce markets.

Prior to the Special Period, Cubans, particularly in Havana, enjoyed several years of economic stability through the 1970s and 1980s. State employment accounted for 94% of jobs in 1989 (Mesa-Lago and Pérez-López, 2013). Wages were never high, but with free housing, generous subsidized food rations, universal daycare, school and workplace meals, Cubans living in Havana experienced livelihood security that most still recall with fondness as a time of stability and prosperity. The system of social assistance for those outside the labour force during that period was generous, particularly when compared to other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean (Mesa-Lago, 2004).

The precarity that ensued as a result of the fall of the Soviet Union was exacerbated by the intensifying exclusionary policies of the US government which worsened shortages by severely constraining trade possibilities for Cuba. This blockade continues to constrain Cuba’s ability to trade on the global market.
Precarity in Cuba is also tied to the very real threat of environmental shocks. An increasing number of tropical storms and hurricanes in recent years have challenged the food supply and threatened the housing stock of Havana (Davidson and Krull, 2011). Large parts of Havana are subject to regular flooding. The water, sewer, and electrical infrastructure are crumbling, and tropical storms and hurricanes result in frequent *derrumbes* - buildings collapsing, sometimes with fatal consequences.

In September 2017, Hurricane Irma wreaked havoc along a 300 kilometer stretch of Cuba’s northern coast. The Category 5 hurricane, the worst since 1937, did devastating damage to several populated areas, including Havana. Waves up to thirty-six feet high crashed onto and over Havana’s Malecón, the sea wall that protects the city from the ocean. Ten people died, and thousands of homes were destroyed. The electrical grid for the entire island suffered damage. The agricultural sector took a severe hit with one senior official describing the destruction to the island’s banana, rice, and sugar crops as “incalculable.” (Anderson, 2017). The main poultry production facilities for Havana lost most of their birds, creating a shortage of chicken and eggs in the capital city.

An additional level of vulnerability to precarity was introduced with the threat of the retraction of recently reinstated US/Cuban relations after the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States. Cubans are experiencing a new sense of precariousness because they do not know what this might mean for food trade with the US, for the anticipated influx of tourist dollars drawing more and more people into the formal and informal tourist economy, or for family remittances to Cuba.

The effects of precarity on food insecurity per se have not been researched in Havana, although I would argue that given the rapid changes and uncertainty in the
Cuban economy and policy, any contemporary study of social, political and economic dynamics in Cuba are, by definition, studies in precarity. Cubans who rely on self-employment in or outside the informal sector cannot predict their monthly income, and experience increasing anxiety about making ends meet. And tiny margins of income versus expenses in a country where “everything goes to food”, means that even small price fluctuations in the market or a slight decrease in income can throw a household’s food economy into disarray.

4.9 Food access in Revolutionary Cuba

Since food rationing was officially established in Cuba by Law No. 1015 of March 12, 1962, the issues of food scarcity, food security, and food crisis have commanded the attention of both supporters and detractors of the Cuban regime. Supporters have gone so far as identifying the U.S. economic sanctions against Cuba as the main culprit behind the situation. The food problem has impacted detractors of the regime so much that many have left the island simply because no hay comida (there is no food) (Alvarez, 2004, p 305)

In March 1962, the Cuban government distributed rations booklets giving each household the right to purchase a set quantity of each food item at a heavily subsidized price from designated neighbourhood outlets known as bodegas. The rations booklet - known simply as la libreta - is assigned to the household and outlines the quantities and items of subsidized foods the household is entitled to, based on ages and medical conditions that may entitle some people to receive special items or quantities. Every Cuban, regardless of income, is entitled to their rations based on the address that appears on their national identity card. While the system of food access in Cuba extends well beyond the rationed food available with the libreta de abastacimient o (supplies booklet), the rations system remains emblematic of Cuban state control over food access for the
population

In the early days of the rations system, nearly all common foods in the Cuban diet were identified on the rations including rice, beans, meat, dairy products, sugar, salt, fruits and vegetables. It also included spices, cigars, pop, and rum, as well as household items such as soap, detergent, brooms, and more. Alvarez (2001) notes that this was somewhat optimistic on the part of the state, and that many items that were named in the rations booklet were not actually available in the bodegas - a situation that has continued to plague the system intermittently ever since. As items became more plentiful in the market through the early decades of the Revolution, they were moved off the rations and instead were made available *por la libre* at unsubsidized prices in a parallel free market.

The system for food access in Cuba is rapidly changing and state entitlements are dwindling although most still exist in some form. Today, the rations system, still universally available to all Cubans, provides perhaps 10 - 30% of monthly calories for most Cubans (Alvarez, 2004; Lam, quoted in Togores & Garcia 2004; Ritter & Henkin 2015; Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López 2013; Nova Gonzalez, 2006). The monthly rations per person include 5 lbs rice, ½ lb of either ground beef cut with soy meal or processed ham, $1^{3/4}$ pounds of chicken, 4 ounces of ground coffee, beans, cooking oil, and 4 pounds of sugar.⁹

Children’s entitlements are more generous than those for adults, and include more meat protein and milk products per month, though that, too, differs by age. Children up to the age of 7, for example, receive powdered milk, as well as 1/2 pound of meat,

---

⁹ See appendix for a list of rations and prices as of September 2017.
alternating ground beef and chicken each month. Children between 7 and 14 receive no milk, but they are entitled to soy yogurt three times a month. This means making extra trips on the 1st, 10th and 20th of the month. People with severe and/or chronic medical conditions are entitled to further rations, which, depending on the condition, may include more protein (fish and chicken), root vegetables, and dairy products. Often the chicken entitlement for the special diet is not available on the same day that the regular chicken entitlement comes in. From 2013 until the summer of 2017, the 11 ounce fish ration in Havana was substituted with an extra 11-ounce ration of chicken, but remained on the rations and in public discourse as **pollo por pescado**- ‘chicken for fish’. In the summer of 2017 this charade ended, the amount of the official ration of chicken was increased and any mention of fish disappeared from the rations announcements in Havana, though they remain on the rations in the Eastern provinces of Cuba. Some items on the rations come monthly; some come every other month. Salt comes every three months, and some products that used to be available every week are now available every 9 days, saving the state a few portions per year per person but complicating household planning and scheduling tremendously. Most rationed items come on a monthly basis, though they are not all available on the same day. Dry goods - rice, beans, sugar, and so on - are available at the bodega, generally throughout the month. The remaining items appear in rotation among the 15 municipalities that make up the city of Havana and are usually only available for three or four days once they arrive. While each Cuban is entitled to 5 eggs per month, the date at which they will arrive is unpredictable. Different food items also mean lining up at different outlets. Chicken and meats are available from a butcher, usually in a different location than the dry goods. Bread rations - 80 gram portion per
person per day, must be collected daily and is available only by lining up at the bakery. Milk products, and soy yogurt are only available only at the dairy outlet. Amounts and schedules change regularly. If a household contains children of various ages, adults, and seniors, some of whom are on a special diet, not atypical for a household in Havana, the planning and coordination of multiple trips, over multiple days to access all food entitlements is a complex and time consuming job.

The rations booklet plays a contested role in Cuban society. The food rations system is only one dimension of the Cuban food system, but since the revolution it has been highly symbolic as evidence of the Cuban government’s commitment to social equality and at the same time, as proof of the state’s inability to properly fulfill its revolutionary promises (Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López, 2013). Critics of the Cuban revolution have called the libreta “the Cuban consumer’s hated little passport to survival” (Dickey, 1982) and “a testimony to equality in scarcity” (Gilly, 1964 p. 69). Cubans often mark time by the dates when items on the rations have been plentiful, scarce, or absent (Field notes, 12/2014). Despite the myriad critiques of the rations system, public resistance to announcements about dismantling it has been fierce.

At its inception, the rations system seemed like an elegant solution to ensuring equal access to food after the revolution. Today, it is cumbersome, inefficient, and resented, though still nearly universally utilized. Wealthier Cubans, however, now express disdain for the food available from the state. Rationed items are considered to be of poorer quality than can be found in the ‘free’ market. The rice, for example, consists mainly of broken grains; ground meat is extended with soy protein and coffee cut with dried peas.
4.10 Other food entitlements

In addition to accessing food through the libreta and the market, some Cubans receive food at their workplace - a universal entitlement at all workplaces until 2009, but today primarily offered only within the health-care sector. People in other workplaces now receive a small allowance to buy lunches in the private market although these allowances are generally regarded as insufficient. Children receive food at school, but it is no longer considered to be adequate in quantity or quality, and most of the people I interviewed considered it regrettable but necessary for parents to send ‘reinforcements’ with their children. Children in circulos - the universally available and free daycare system, still receive what are seen to be adequate meals and snacks during the day. For seniors and other vulnerable people with no one to cook for them, each neighbourhood has a comedor - a subsidized state run hot-meal program which provides two basic meals a day for one peso (~.4 cents USD). A needs assessment determines eligibility for this service. Virtually no information is available about these facilities; according to several of my interviewees, the food provided through comedores is “simple and nutritious” and typically includes a serving of beans and rice, a root vegetable, some protein (egg or meat) and a dessert.

4.11 Food in the free market

To acquire food beyond that available on the rations system, Cubans shop in various state owned and private shops and agricultural markets. Mesa-Lago and Pérez-López (2013) identify six different food markets in Cuba: rationing, parallel (in which the state sells the same products as on the rations, but at higher prices); free agricultural market; state agricultural market (with virtually the same products, but with price
controls); TRD or ‘shopping’ (in convertible Cuban currency - the highest prices); and the black or illegal market. There is some overlap in products among the markets, but as Garcia-Alvarez and Cruz (2014) note, many basic items that used to be available in state markets in Cuban Pesos are now only available in the “shopping” outlets that price goods in Convertible Pesos, putting them out of reach of many Cubans.

Private enterprise (formal and informal) and a free market have emerged in a parallel, and often uneasy, relationship with the state controlled food system. Adopted and published in 2011, the Guidelines of The Economic and Social Policy of The Party and The Revolution included significant plans to ‘rationalize’ food production and distribution in Cuba by adopting more market-based measures for the production and distribution of food (PCC 2011). Many of these plans have been at least partially enacted, although in 2016 price controls were again implemented in the fruit and vegetable market when prices were judged to be getting too high (Londres, 2017; Field notes, 11/2015).

One unintended consequence of opening up opportunities for private enterprise, particularly where food is concerned, is heavy competition for food in the markets between Havana residents and businesses. Without a wholesale market, restaurants, cafes, bed and breakfasts, and bakeries, many of them catering to the emerging tourist economy, shop for supplies at the same markets that people rely on for their groceries. This is creating shortages and, at least in the popular imagination, is driving prices up (Ahmed, 2016; Field notes, 11/2015).

To further complicate the work of food access in Cuba there are two different currencies in circulation. After the fall of the Soviet Union, first US dollars, and then a Cuban Convertible peso roughly equivalent in value to US dollars, were introduced to the
economy as a way of capturing currency that could be used on the global market, as the Cuban Peso was not (and still is not) recognized in international currency transactions outside of Cuba. Prior to the 1990s, day-to-day Cuban life including purchasing food, and paying for transportation and utilities, could be conducted entirely in Cuban Pesos, but that is no longer the case for most citizens. Some food items and other necessities are available only in Cuban Pesos (1 CUP = ~.04 USD) and others only in the much more valuable Cuban Convertible Pesos (1CUC = ~$1 USD); some are available in both for radically differing prices. People working in state jobs are paid in the lower value CUP, but, depending on the sector and location, may receive extra stimulus pay in CUC. The tourist sector runs entirely on CUC, and the black market runs on both. Raul Castro has called for the “progressive, gradual and prudent revaluation of the peso”, emphasizing that the elimination of the dual currency, will be a complicated and long-term project (Castro, quoted in Mesa-Lago & Perez-Lopez, 2013 p. 191).

4.12 Food and time

While my Cubans research participants often cite lack of income as a primary challenge for achieving food security, the time spent in food procurement comes a close second and should not be underestimated. Retail stores, and agricultural markets are typically only open during office hours, and food procurement in Havana involves multiple trips to multiple locations throughout the month. Chronic delays with the public transportation system and unpredictable shortages of specific food items make this work all the more challenging. In the state sector, this has had a damaging effect on labour discipline as, over time, places of employment have reluctantly accommodated the need to spend time on food procurement and other errands at the expense of efficiency and

### 4.13 Civil society responses to food insecurity

Researchers question whether or not civil society actually exists in Cuba (Fernandez, 2004; Ramirez, 2005). From an outsider perspective, it is notable that there is no system of charitable food banks or meal programs in Havana. Nor are there domestic, non-governmental advocacy organizations challenging government policy on matters of poverty or food insecurity. The particular formation, or lack thereof, of civil society within Cuba is addressed more depth in Chapter Four.

Outside aid initiatives, including the World Food Program, have a small foothold in Cuba, but are primarily concerned with improving agricultural production and enhancing emergency preparedness for food security during and after tropical storms and hurricanes which plague the island. Cuba has not at all experienced the same level of international NGO presence as have many Third World countries. This is due to factors including the history of ‘development’ in the context of the Cold War, the strong opposition of many American-based NGOs to Cuban policy, the Cuban state reluctance to allow independent organizations to operate freely in Cuba (Kapcia, 2008; Marin-Dogan, 2008). Furthermore, Cuba has a high profile as a medical-relief sending nation to disaster and conflict zones around the world. This contributes to the image of Cuba as a nation that sends aid rather than receiving it (Horowitz & Suchlicki, 2003; Natsios, 2003; Hearn, 2004).

In recent years there has been a shift, and Cuba now increasingly relies on local and international civil and religious agencies for the delivery of some public goods and
services, including social and medical supports (Hearn 2004; Kapcia, 2008). The Catholic Church is playing a growing role providing assistance to parishioners in need. Some parishes in Havana may deliver food to the indigent and provide limited in-home care. Religious orders manage homes for the elderly, people with leprosy, a home for children with Down syndrome and a hospice for people with AIDS (Tamayo, 2012).

4.14 Cuban solidarity and culture

Many researchers have noted that national unity has been a stabilizing factor in Cuba through successive crises (Burchardt, 2002; Báez, 2004; Powell, 2008). The history of struggle for sovereignty has fostered a sense of what Burwell (2004) calls “we-ness”, a reference to historically inscribed cultural codes that have shaped, and been shaped by the revolution and other events.

One of the contemporary manifestations of this sense of we-ness in Cuba is the complex set of formal and informal social relations that lubricate the workings of the black market. The black or informal market remains vital to the Cuban food economy, though many policies have been aimed at curtailing, formalizing, and controlling the informal economy known, ironically perhaps, as la izquierda - the left. The origin of this terms is likely the biblical passage “don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing”, paraphrased from Matthew 6:3 (Field notes, 12/2104).

4.15 State responses to food insecurity: Perfecting socialism

Regardless of the direction of the policy pendulum swing described by Mesa Lago (2014), the Cuban leadership typically characterizes policy change as a means to “perfecting socialism”, as is evident in the language of the 2011 Policy Guidelines of the
6th Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba, commonly called los lineamientos, a document widely distributed throughout Cuba. These policy guidelines, published in 2011, outline the most drastic market liberalization measures to be realized in Cuba since the revolution, including plans to eliminate the rations, the eradication of universal workplace meals, reducing the number of state sector jobs, and opening up more opportunities for self-employment. Each are presented as steps towards the ‘perfecting’ of revolutionary socialism in Cuba. The document identifies the goal of these changes to be;

…to update the Cuban economic model, with the aim of guaranteeing the continuity and irreversibility of Socialism, the economic development of the country and the raising of the standard of living of the population, combined with the necessary formation of ethical and political values of our citizens (PCC, 2011, p. 6).

The Cuban state is faced with the challenge of how to maintain revolutionary gains in health, literacy and social welfare while implementing significant economic reforms. The sixth Cuban Communist Party Congress held in April 2011 worked to create a plan to restructure the faltering Cuban economy while addressing the everyday economic realities faced by Cuban families living on wages with rapidly decreasing purchasing power. The core task of the Congress was to restructure the expensive social programs and state-sector labour force. Among the measures outlined in the guidelines were the unification of the dual currency, the elimination of more than 20% of state sector jobs, increases in the number of small business licenses, changes to the structure of rural land ownership easing access to agricultural land for small farmers, and the phasing out of the rations system. The proposed timelines for these reforms were, as it turns out, overly ambitious.
As the Cuban economy struggles and the pendulum continues to swing between idealized and pragmatic economic policies, work in Cuba has become increasingly precarious. With the 2010 announcement of the plan to eliminate between 500,000 and 1.3 million redundant state sector workers, work suddenly became precarious in Cuba. The new Cuban reality shares many attributes with precarious work in Canada i.e. low pay, uncertain income, and the instability of jobs. The elimination of jobs marks the first time in revolutionary history that the state has not borne responsibility for full employment, creating an unprecedented sense of precarity in state employment sectors.

Cuts to state sector jobs have unequal impacts among the population. A higher percentage of Afro-Cubans hold state jobs than do whites or mestizos, and women are also disproportionately over-represented in state sector jobs (Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López, 2013). The income gaps that already fall along race and gender lines will only increase as women and Afro Cubans are hit hardest by the gradual elimination of state sector jobs.

The hope is that increasing private sector opportunities will absorb the workers who become unemployed as a result of state lay-offs and the state has relaxed restrictions on several categories of private enterprise. Many of these businesses are selling food and have changed the food procurement landscape of Havana. Cuba has slowly opened its doors in recent years to both foreign and local private-sector businesses, hoping to address economic deprivation and to bring much-needed capital to the island. The gradual relaxing of prohibitions on private sector businesses started in 1994 in response to the Special Period hardships, and was expanded significantly in 2011. This, along with the elimination of 500,000 state jobs in 2010 -11 has resulted in a much more precarious labour market for Cubans who must now seek work in the private sector. The loosening
of restrictions on small private enterprise, along with the marked increase in tourism in Havana and throughout the island, has created new income and food access opportunities, and at the same time, heavy competition for scarce food stuffs and fuel.

4.15.1 Growth of the private sector in Cuba
The Cuban state now licenses 201 categories of small business ranging from arcane trades such as Umbrella Repair Person, Button Upholsterer, Operator of Children’s Fun Wagon Pulled by Horse, Pony or Goat, and Disposable Lighter Repair/Refill, to better known trades such as carpenter, furniture repair, and electrician. There are half a dozen categories of food service occupations including Restaurant (up to 50 seats), Cafeteria Specializing in Light Snacks (in own home; no seating), and Food and Beverage Street Vendor (with strict limitations on allowable products). Many businesses intend to cater to tourists. Besides restaurants, categories include Habaneras (women who pose for tourists wearing colourful colonial attire), Trained Dog Exhibitor, and Fortune Tellers (Ritter & Henken, 2015). These businesses are formally registered, operate above board, and are subject to taxation, but like any small business, are often precarious. Small business registration in Cuba rose quickly until 1996, but by 2001 had fallen off significantly, suggesting that the conditions were not yet in place to facilitate a rapid transition to a market economy in Cuba. Today, private enterprise is on a sharp rise again (Ritter & Henken, 2015).

Cuban authorities impose limits on the growth of Cuban businesses (Ritter & Henken, 2015). Most are sole proprietorships or operate with a very small number of employees who are registered with the state as ‘Contracted Employee for Another Self-Employed Person’s Business’ - itself a category of self-employment. Small businesses
operate within the confines of an unstable and unpredictable formal supply chain with prohibitions on the sale of imported goods. There are few wholesale markets, and many goods and services are completely unavailable through legitimate suppliers. The government has been reluctant to legitimate the businesses of middle men making a profit by brokering between producer and seller although there are a few exceptions such as food wholesaler (added in 2013) and Producer/Seller of Household Items (which can include items made by others) These wholesalers can only broker domestically produced items. There are no legal occupations that authorize importing of goods to the island (Ritter & Henken; 2015). There are many ingredients, materials and supplies that are not easily available on the island and wholesaling of imported materials and supplies is handled by the state or, increasingly, through the black market. A heavily bureaucratized inspection system adds another element of precarity to many businesses. Inspectors regularly shut down enterprises temporarily and with little notice in order to conduct an audit of the finances, supply chain, employment practices and health and safety practices within the enterprise, although not surprisingly, business owners can often illicitly expedite inspections if they have the cash to do so. To exacerbate the problem of precarity in the private sector, as the fortunes of a business ebb and flow, so does its ability to provide secure, predictable employment to others, magnifying the effect of instability.

Just as conditions are precarious for small businesses, so to do they sometimes introduce problems into the wider population. For example, due to the lack of wholesale markets for small businesses, Havana residents complain that previously available fruits and vegetables, along with toilet paper and cleaning supplies, are now in short supply
Residents now must compete with the burgeoning number of private restaurants, bakeries, and bed and breakfast establishments for fresh food.

Each of these changes is likely to have a substantial effect on food insecurity in Cuba. Talk of the elimination of the rations causes particular consternation among Cubans. The thirty five percent of Cubans who rely on low state pensions or salaries, and who receive no remittances would not be able to survive without the roughly 10 days of consumption of food stuffs provided by the rationing system (Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López, 2013). If rationing were to be eliminated it would be necessary to devise a social assistance system to either augment incomes for vulnerable population, or to maintain a subsidized food source based on needs assessment (Carter, 2013). Mario Gonzalez Corso (2009) argues that the elimination of the rations system would disproportionately affect Afro-Cubans, pensioners, and residents in the poorer areas of the cities and of the island as a whole. These are the populations with less access to hard currency, less likely to own assets that can be leveraged for earning, and who have less access to lucrative encounters with tourists, whether legal or illegal.

4.15.2 Social Assistance in Cuba
Immediately after the revolution, the Cuban state instituted a system of social assistance and pensions. By 1989, the Cuban system was probably the most extensive and liberal in Latin America and the Caribbean (Mesa-Lago, 2004). The system is financed by a payroll contribution charged to state enterprises, farms, and agencies but there is a widening gap between contributions to this system and growing need among the aging and increasingly unemployed population.
Social assistance, like most state services in Cuba, have eroded in recent years, and social assistance expenditures fell by 67% between 2007 and 2011. Means-tested social assistance programs continue to protect destitute people who are not entitled to pensions, however in 2010 the means-testing process was revamped and households were assessed for their ability to take on more of the costs of the care of their vulnerable relatives (Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López, 2013).

4.16 Conclusion

December 2014 saw a historic thaw in relations between the United States and Cuba; this detente came with the promise that the US will lift its 50-year economic blockade. While it is tempting to see renewed political relations with the USA as a potential watershed moment for Cuban food security, the effects cannot be assessed without considering the significant and rapid changes to the food-system already underway in Cuba since the adoption of los lineamientos (policy guidelines) of the 2011 Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC). These changes include the restructuring of the agricultural sector towards more private ownership and control, reduction in entitlements including rations and workplace meals, raising incomes through salary and retirement income increases, and the rapid growth of cuentapropismo (small private business) which has the result of increasing incomes for some people and providing alternative sites for food procurement for others.

With the inauguration of a new US president in 2017, this detente is now in question and movement towards more open relations seems to have reversed. It is unknown how any of this will affect food availability and prices on the island but there is a lot of speculation on both sides of the Straits of Florida. However, it is important to
remember that significant change to Cuban culture and the economy was already well underway before the historic meeting between Obama and Castro, and the destiny of Cuba does not lie solely with the political decisions of the United States.

For many years, Cuba - the state and the people - has resisted neoliberalization on ideological grounds of anti-capitalism. Continued commitment to the socialist project and resistance to US imperialism, particularly through the Special Period and the death of Fidel Castro, came as a surprise to political economists of all stripes, as evidenced by the body of work by scholars predicting a ‘post-socialist’ Cuban society (Báez, 2004).

Cuban state resistance to neoliberal capitalism has been notable and is documented in the speeches and writings of Fidel Castro and in contemporary policy statements (Castro, 2002; PCC, 2011). Nonetheless, contemporary shifts to a market economy including not only domestic private enterprise, but through foreign direct investment signal a shift in Cuban relations with the rest of the world. They also give rise to some difficult contradictions within the country, most notably a rise in inequality among the Cuban population and the introduction of a consumer culture that has largely been absent from Cuba for 57 years. The expectations of the socialist state and the ideology of socialism exist in tension with the ubiquity and pervasiveness of the informal market and the emerging formal market catering to consumer culture (Porter, 2008). It is difficult to say how much these phenomena will change the culture of Havana and Cuba. Powell (2008) asks “to what extent these contradictions have effects within every day, intimate practices of struggle which threaten to undermine or problematize - at least patchily - dispositions to solidarity central to continued resistance”, i.e., what will these changes mean to internal solidarity, or what’s remaining of the ‘we-ness’ of Cuban
Cuba finds itself at a crossroads. Recent policy changes regarding food production and access, an emerging consumer culture, and newly uncertain relations with the US, Venezuela, and other world powers raise new questions, new possibilities, and new anxieties for Cubans about the role of the state and various forms of the market for household food security.

4.17 Canada

In May, 2012 a visit to Canada by Olivier De Schutter, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food sparked national controversy about food insecurity. De Schutter chastised Canada for our lack of compliance with obligations under international law to implement the human right to adequate food (De Schutter, 2012). Canadian government officials who refused to meet with him during his visit, were quick to dismiss de Schutter’s judgement in interviews with the press. Minister of Health, Leona Aglukkaq, stated that she was “surprised that this organization [the United Nations] is focused on what appears to be a political agenda rather than on addressing food shortages in the developing world” (“Aglukaak Slams UN Envoy…” 2012). Immigration Minister Jason Kenney called his report a waste of money, better used to help starving people in poor countries (Porter, 2013). Throughout his report on Canada, de Schutter drew a connection between poverty and food insecurity (DeSchutter, 2012), a correlation that has long been pointed out by food insecurity researchers in Canada.

4.17.1 Poverty in Canada

In 2013, Canada’s poverty level ranked 20th out of 31 industrialized countries (Statistics Canada, 2016). Although the rate of poverty, including persistent poverty in Canada,
defined as living below the LICO for more than 3 years, has declined since the mid 1990s, in 2015, one in seven Canadians was living in poverty (Statistics Canada, 2016). This represents 14.2% of the population or 4.8 million adults and children. Canadian population groups most likely to live in poverty include people aged 45 to 64 who live alone, single parents, recent immigrants, Indigenous people (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) living off reserve (Statistics Canada, 2016).

Seventy percent of the adults living in poverty in Canada are working poor, meaning that they derive their income from paid employment (Mah, 2017). As I outlined in Chapter Four, many working age adults in Canada are at risk of precarious employment and precarious work can increase the likelihood of living in poverty (Busby & Muthukamaran, 2016). Women and youth ages 15-24 are more likely to find themselves in precarious work. Other groups likely to work in precarious work in Canada include racialized people, Indigenous people, immigrants, people with disabilities, and adults over 65 (Fleury, 2016).

In the province of Ontario, the 2015 Census shows that 14.4% or nearly 1.9 million adults and children in Ontario lived below the Low income Measure (LIM) established by Statistics Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016b). A study by the Law Commission of Ontario (LCO) on vulnerable workers and precarious work in Ontario concluded that not only are youth and women overrepresented among precarious workers, but so too are racialized persons, immigrants, Aboriginal persons, persons with disabilities and older adults (LCO, 2012).

### 4.17.2 Social security in Canada

---

10 Using the Low Income Measure (LIM) After Tax Rate.
The history of Canadian social security reflects changing ideas about the role of government in ensuring that all Canadians are able to achieve a standard of living. Provinces and territories in Canada provide financial assistance towards covering the basic cost of living for individuals and families at different stages in their lives who have no other source of income. Programs have different names in different provinces, but are popularly known as ‘welfare’. In Ontario, the social assistance program is called Ontario Works. For Ontarians with permanent or recurring disabilities, social assistance is available in the form of the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). ODSP rates are considerably higher than rates for Ontario Works. As of September, 2017, a single person on Ontario Works receives a maximum monthly allowance of $721, while a single person on ODSP receives $1151 (ISAC, 2017).

The great depression of the 1930s was characterized by widespread unemployment, hunger and other forms of deprivation throughout Canada. The social security system that began to emerge in the post-war period of the 1940s was intended to prevent that level of deprivation from reoccurring (Moscovitch, 2006). Beginning with unemployment insurance, and the implementation of personal and corporate income tax, the social safety net in Canada was understood to be the responsibility of the state, and thus started the process of successive governments wrestling with questions of the role of the state in ensuring adequate standard of living for Canadians.

Through the decades following the war, the social security system in Canada expanded and contracted as different governments grappled with social reform. The 1970s saw an overall increase in social security spending, but by the end of the decade growing inflation and an economic slump ushered in an era of cut backs to social
expenditures. From the mid 1980s through the mid 1990s a conservative federal government deeply committed to an agenda of neoliberalization implemented a range of measures to reduce expenditures on social programs.

A severe economic recession in Canada from 1990 to 1995 precipitated the erosion of federal social programs and had the effect of shifting provincial attention away from poverty reduction initiatives that had emerged through the 1960s and 70s, cementing neoliberal-style reforms. In Ontario, the 1995 election of a conservative government led by Mike Harris ushered in eight years of draconian spending cuts on provincial social programs. Welfare rates were cut by 21.6%. The poverty reduction agenda in Ontario was transformed into workfare-type programs characterized by harsh cuts to benefits, increased surveillance mechanisms, and the downloading of services and programs onto already-strapped municipal service providers. Low income Ontarians found themselves falling deeper into poverty (Maxwell, 2009). Social assistance rates in Ontario have never fully regained ground since these cuts were made. Today, in real spending terms adjusted to inflation, the rates remain lower than they were prior to the cuts (Maxwell, 2009).

The history of the social security system in Canada stands in contrast to that of the United States, particularly where food insecurity/hunger is concerned. During the depression of the 1930s, as a way of subsidizing the agricultural sector and contending with the increasing need of unemployed Americans, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) began distributing surplus agricultural commodities to the poor (Poppendieck, 1986). Through the post-war era, the US focus on propping up their agricultural sector gave rise to food stamps, piloted in 1939, and school feeding programs established in
1946, both of which were designed to absorb surplus food production (Poppendieck, 1986). A third program federal feeding program, the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) was introduced in 1972. The extensive reach of these programs helped to form a culture in the US of responding to food insecurity problems with food-based programs, a tendency that has had a lasting effect in the United States even as agricultural surpluses have found other markets. Cutbacks to federal social assistance programs in the US under Reagan in the 1980s shifted responsibility for dealing with hunger away from government and onto the charitable sector, resulting in a rapid increase in the number of food banks across the country.

Canada did not structure post-war social relief programs based on farm surpluses, and instead built on a social security system based on income transfers to address issues of poverty and hunger (Davis & Tarasuk, 1994). Today, Canada’s social security system includes a wide variety of programs, and includes both programs that are universally applied regardless of income, and those that are based on needs-testing and/or income level. Universal programs include employment insurance including parental leave, universal health care, and old age security pensions, and are administered and resourced by different levels of government working in partnership. The primary income-based needs-tested program in Canada is social assistance (or welfare) which draws on federal funds, but is administered by provinces and municipalities, and is calculated and administered differently in different jurisdictions across the country. Income security programs are operated independently by provincial governments in Canada, with municipalities often delivering front-line administration of this assistance. Each province has different eligibility requirements, surveillance processes, and offer
different levels of income support, none of which approach any of the accepted ‘poverty lines’ in Canada.

4.18 Food insecurity in Canada

In most of Canada there is a sufficient supply of nutritious food for the population, available through the private sector market. Because money is needed to access food through conventional channels (supermarkets and restaurants) income poverty is a major risk factor for food insecurity in Canada (Davis & Tarasuk, 1994). When people are unable to afford to buy food at grocery stores in the private sector, we expect them to turn to charitable sector food banks to meet their food needs.

Since 2005, Statistics Canada has measured the prevalence of household food insecurity across Canada using the validated Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM) administered in alternate cycles of the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS). Provinces and territories may choose to administer the module in alternate cycles, meaning that we don’t have comprehensive national data on household food insecurity for each year of the survey. Nevertheless, changes in provincial and territorial rates of food insecurity for the years in which they have been measured have shown a remarkably constant rate of food insecurity over time, with a sharp increase appearing between 2008 and 2011 (Tarasuk, Mitchell & Dachner, 2014).

In 2012 the year of the last complete data set from the HFSSM, 12.6% percent of households reported experiencing food insecurity, with 2.6% experiencing severe food insecurity, 6.0% reporting moderate food insecurity, and 4.1% reporting marginal food insecurity (Tarasuk, Mitchell & Dachner, 2014). This number includes approximately 4 million people, including 1.15 million children (Tarasuk, Mitchell & Dachner, 2014).
Furthermore, in 2012, 69.5% of households in which the main source of income was social assistance were food insecure. This can be understood as the result of a pronounced discrepancy between stagnant social assistance levels and the rising costs of living (Newell, Williams & Watt, 2014; Tarasuk, McIntyre & Li, 2007; Voices for Food Security in Nova Scotia, 2017; Williams et al., 2012a). While living on social assistance is correlated with food insecurity, the majority of those who are food insecure in Canada report income from employment (Tarasuk, Mitchell, & Dachner, 2014).

Some population groups in Canada remain particularly vulnerable to food insecurity including 29% of households with incomes below the LIM (including those whose income is from employment), 26.1% of those who do not own their own dwelling, and 34.3% of lone female-parent households (Tarasuk, Mitchell & Dachner, 2014). Other household characteristics associated with a higher likelihood of food insecurity included), being black (27.8%), or being Indigenous (off reserve - 28.2%). Further research needs to be done about the intersection of gender, homeless status, race, and indigeneity in relation to food insecurity in Canada.

The CCHS is not administered to full-time members of the Canadian Forces, people in prisons or care facilities, people living on First Nations reserves, Crown Lands, or in the Quebec health regions of Région du Nunavik and Région des Terres- Cries-de-la- Baie-James, or people who do not have an address. It is therefore generally accepted that CCHS results underestimate the prevalence of household food insecurity in Canada. It is important to note that these exclusions disproportionately affect some population groups who are at an extremely high risk for food insecurity, including homeless people and First Nations households living on reserves. For example, while CCHS does not
survey First Nations households living on reserves, household food insecurity data were collected for this population between 2008 and 2010 through the First Nations Food, Nutrition and Environment Study (FNFNES). While national data is not available for this population, the prevalence of food insecurity for first nations people living on reserve in Ontario was 29% in 2011-2012, more than double the provincial average rate of food insecurity of 11.7% (Dietitians of Canada, 2016; Tarasuk, Mitchell & Dachner, 2014). Similarly, people who are homeless are not included in the CCHS, however the extreme vulnerability to food insecurity among people who are homeless has been the subject of considerable ethnographic research in Canada. Food insecurity is a characteristic of homelessness in Canada (Hamelin, Mercier & Bedard, 2007; Tarasuk et al., 2009; Tarasuk, Dachner & Li, 2005).

It is increasingly understood that Canadian food bank usage is not an accurate measure of food insecurity as measured by the HSSFM in the Canada Community Health Survey (Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2012; 2015), however the numbers reported by Food Banks Canada in their annual Hunger Count report provide an important measure of the need for food assistance in Canada. According to the 2014 Hunger Count, 841,191 Canadians used food banks in March of that year (FBC 2015). This number has risen relatively steadily since the inception of food banks in the 1980s, and saw a rapid 25% increase in unique individuals accessing food banks between the economic crisis of 2008 and 2015 (FBC, 2016). While food banks are the predominant societal response to food insecurity in Canada, research shows that only about 1 out of 4 food insecure Canadians actually turn to food banks to manage their food insecurity, indicating that food banks are an
inadequate mechanism for addressing food insecurity, and that people must rely on other strategies for meeting their food needs (Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2012; Poppendieck, 1999).

4.18.1 Governmental Responses to food insecurity
Canada’s social security system does not provide food directly to people living with food insecurity and neither, for the most part, do government departments in Canada provide direct sustained funding to non-governmental charitable agencies that provide food. Two notable exceptions to this are school feeding programs which receive provincial government support, and federal subsidies for transportation of food to some of Canada’s northern communities.

Canada is the only G8 country that does not have a federally mandated school lunch program (FSC, 2009). A 2017 UNICEF report ranked Canada 31st out of 41 high-income countries for children’s access to nutritious food (UNICEF, 2017). Most provinces and territories do provide support for school breakfasts or lunches which are typically coordinated and administered by a combination of the schools themselves, parent councils, and volunteer charitable organizations. In Ontario, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) provides core funding and support to the Student Nutrition Program (SNP) that offers school-age children and youth breakfast, lunch and snack programs in many schools throughout Ontario. The MCYS works in collaboration with local civil society and food industry organizations to provide meals for children in need in schools. The MCYS invests over 30 million dollars annually into these programs, and establishes provincial policy and guidelines for school food programs, monitors service contracts with the local volunteer agencies that coordinate the services, and evaluates program activities (MCYS, 2017). According to the SNP page of the MCYS
website, food available through this program is available to all children and youth at any given program site (MCYS, 2017). Critics point out that the same problems that plague food banks apply to many of the school-feeding programs that exist in Ontario. The quality of food available through the patchwork of school food programs that exist is not optimal; not all schools offer a food programs; accessing these programs may be stigmatizing for many students. Finally, many schools have no food preparation facilities or dedicated eating spaces, creating a less-than ideal environment for student nutrition and limiting the range of food, particularly unprocessed foods that can be offered (Field notes from private correspondence, 10/2015).

There is considerable academic and civil society support in Canada for the implementation of a national school nutrition program that would guarantee that all school age children in Canada have access to healthy food through the school system (Roustit et al., 2010;). The Coalition for Healthy School Food (CHSF), comprised of 35 civil society organizations and municipalities in Canada, is calling for the federal government to invest in a national student nutrition program that would guarantee access to healthy food for all children in schools (CHSF, 2017), moving it from a charity model to an entitlement.

The other well-known governmental response to food insecurity in Canada is Nutrition North Canada (NNC). Administered through Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), NNC was developed to reduce the cost of food, particularly of perishable food, in isolated northern communities in Canada. NNC provides subsidies to northern retailers and southern food suppliers to offset the costs of transportation of perishable food to the North. The retailers are accountable for passing on the subsidy to
consumers by reducing the price of this subsidized food. Despite this program, food in Canada’s northern communities remains notoriously expensive and the efficacy of NNC has been the subject of heated debate in recent years (Auditor General, 2016), and civil society organizations are calling for an overhaul of the Nutrition North program and demanding a better strategy to ensure food security in the North (Veeraraghaven, 2016).

4.18.2 Civil society responses to food insecurity in Canada

In the early 1980s in response to a long and deep economic recession, Canadian cities began borrowing from the predominant US response to domestic hunger, and food banks appeared across the Canadian urban landscape (Riches, 2002; Power, 2017). Food banks in Canada were initiated at the local level by churches and other community groups and coalitions newly aware of the inability of a growing number of people to access food. Intended as a short-term response to a temporary crisis, charitable food banks have become firmly entrenched in Canadian communities and in the Canadian imagination as the common-sense response to food insecurity. Different sizes and models of food banks exist in communities across Canada. Many larger food banks operate with a ware-house model in which a central food bank solicits, collects and sorts food and distributes it to smaller agencies that do the front-line distribution to clients. Some, as is the case in Kingston’s largest food bank, operate as a donation centre and a pantry, giving food out to individual households. This food bank also acts as a collection and sorting depot for a selection of smaller agencies in the region.

There are no hard data on the number of food banks in Canada. Food Banks Canada acts as a national umbrella organization that engages with approximately 500 food banks and 3000 other kinds of emergency food programs (FBC, 2017). The
organization claims that over 85% of people who use food banks in Canada rely on a FBC affiliated agency. Independent research suggests that membership in Food Banks Canada represents about two-thirds of charitable food organizations in Canada (Tarasuk & Kirkpatrick, 2009).

4.18.3 Critiques of food banks

Food banks have been roundly critiqued by food insecurity researchers in Canada on a number of grounds. Some critiques such as the poor nutritional quality of food offered (Irwin et al., 2012; Tarasuk & Beaton, 1999), problems with geographical inaccessibility (Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2012; Tam et al., 2014), issues of dignity in food access (Hamelin et al., 1999; Tarasuk & Beaton, 1999), exclusionary eligibility screening processes (Tarasuk & Eaken, 2005), and limited capacity to deal with surges in need (CBC, 2017; Tarasuk et al., 2014) have been addressed by some, though by no means all, food banks (Fisher, 2017; Saul & Curtis, 2013; Scharf, Levkoe, & Saul, 2010).

These operational problems are relatively straightforward to identify and address. Other problems are harder to tackle. Food corporations use food banks as a place to dump surplus food while collecting kudos for their corporate social responsibility (CFCC, 2013; Fisher, 2017). Food banks create the illusion that food insecurity is being managed at a societal level, relieving governments from having to address food insecurity, when in fact only a small percentage of food insecure people use food banks (Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2014). The ubiquity of food banks as a ‘solution’ to food insecurity in Canada obscures the necessity of policy based approaches to food insecurity (Poppendieck, 1995; Riches, 2011). Access to a food bank is not a state-based entitlement in Canada. Food Banks are run by charitable organizations including churches, and community health centres. There
are no enforceable operational standards specific to food bank policies and practices in Canada, although Food Banks Canada offers an Ethical Food Banking Code that they encourage their member organizations to follow (FBC, 2017).

No one has a right per se, to access food from a food bank in Canada (Riches, 2002, 2011) and eligibility standards and screening processes are developed by each organization according to their own mission and mandate. Eligibility criteria for food banks may exclude some people who are food insecure. Screening is typically based on proof of income versus set costs such as rent and utilities, and are formulated according to calculations deemed ‘fair’ by food bank staff and/or volunteer board of directors of the particular organization. They may not take into account other determinants of food insecurity. Screening processes may act as a deterrent for others who may be in need of food but who do not want to endure an invasive screening process. Most food banks in Canada rely on donated food and volunteer labour, and receive no government funding (Tarasuk & Eakin, 2005; Bocskei & Ostry, 2010; Riches, 2011), leaving their operational capacity vulnerable to the vagaries of granting agencies and personal donations. In a study conducted in 2010, Tarasuk et al. (2014) found that among 340 food banks surveyed in five Canadian cities, most were open one or two days per week, few were open on weekends, and most had restrictions on how frequently people could obtain food. Their funding and volunteer-based labour structure creates precarious conditions which can result in compromising food quality and quantity, tightening eligibility requirements, and turning away new clients.

4.18.4 Meal programs

173
The other major category of food assistance in Canada is meal programs. Meal programs are charitable programs that prepare and serve meals in a dining facility, usually free of charge or for a nominal fee. Similar to food banks, meal programs are intended as a last-resort support for people facing food insecurity and hunger. They tend to be associated with, and often are targeted at, homeless populations and most Canadian research on meal programs is framed through a homelessness lens, although in my research I found ample evidence that many people who use meal programs in Kingston, Ontario are not in fact homeless.

Like food banks, meal programs vary in scale, scheduling, food quality and food quantity, with some operating daily and others perhaps once or twice a week. Studies of meal programs in Canada have found that meal programs can be critiqued on many of the same grounds as food banks, i.e. nutritional quality, inability to change food insecurity status, precarity, indignity, and so on (Dachner et al., 2009; Pettes et al., 2016). They typically rely heavily on volunteer labour and receive at least some of their food as donations. Unlike food banks, meal programs in Canada tend to operate on a drop-in basis where everyone who walks through the door is eligible for service. There tend not to be screening processes for eligibility. There is some evidence that while meal programs, like food banks, do not actually solve income-based food insecurity, they may work to alleviate social isolation for some individuals, and may provide other social and health benefits as well (Dachner et al., 2009; Tarasuk & Dachner, 2005). In comparison to the body of research on food banks, meal programs in Canada have received much less attention even though Food Banks Canada counts more “other food programs” (3000) than food banks (500) among their membership (although see Dachner, et al., 2009;
Pettes et al., 2016; and Tse & Tarasuk, 2008, for research on emergency meal programs in Canada).

### 4.18.5 Other food programs

Food banks and meal programs represent the dominant civil society response to food insecurity in Canada, but other charitable and community food programs have also emerged in recent years. The best known of these are community kitchen programs that teach food preparation skills, and community gardens that provide land and sometimes instruction and support for growing food. There is considerable public support for these ‘teach a man to fish’ approaches to addressing food insecurity. Research shows, however, that food insecurity in Canada is not correlated with self-reported inadequate cooking or food-growing skills (Huisken et al., 2016).

### 4.18.6 Food insecurity and the market

While the charitable food system in Canada has been proven an inadequate solution to food insecurity there is no evidence that the market has been any more successful in meeting the needs of people facing food insecurity (Kirkpatrick & Tarasuk, 2010). The private food market for Canadians includes mainstream supermarkets as well as fast food outlets and corner stores (Bedore, 2010). Many people rely on large discount grocery stores. No Frills, a Loblaw’s subsidiary launched in 1978, has over 250 stores in Canada, and Food Basics, a subsidiary of Metro launched in 1995, has 128 stores. More recently, the integration of cheap groceries into stores such as Walmart, Giant Tiger, Dollarama and Dollar-Tree offer Canadian consumers living with food insecurity alternative retail sources for cheap food (Bedore, 2010; Moody, 2009). There is little evidence that this plethora of options for purchasing food cheaply has a positive impact.
on food insecurity rates in Canada. In fact, one study found that proximity to discount
grocery stores did not mitigate the effects of low income on food insecurity (Kirkpatrick
& Tarasuk, 2010).

4.18.7 Self-provisioning in Canada

A portion of Canadians engage in self-provisioning activities such as hunting,
fishing, gardening, and foraging to manage food insecurity. There are little data about the
extent to which these activities mitigate or resolve food insecurity in Canada, although
they may be important strategies, particularly for rural and northern residents (Smith &
Miller, 2011; McFadyen, 2015).

Participating in urban community gardens or learning to grow your own food at
home are sometimes presented as common sense solutions to food insecurity (Chenhall,
2010; Baker, 2004). There is little research to suggest that gardening has a significant
impact on food insecurity for Canadians (Huisken et al., 2016; Loopstra & Tarasuk,
2013), although activities such as gardening or participating in other community food
programs may have other benefits for participants (Baker, 2004; Hamelin et al., 2011;

Most food insecurity research that has been done about the value of hunting,
fishing and foraging in relation to food insecurity in Canada pertains to Indigenous
communities. Researchers look at the barriers to traditional food provisioning in
Indigenous communities, and about the extent to which a partial return to traditional food
ways could address Indigenous, particularly northern Indigenous, people’s food
insecurity (see for example, Cidro et al., 2014; Ford & Beaumier, 2011; Power, 2008;
Willows et al., 2011; Willows, 2005). Data about the number of hunters or fishers in
Canada are surprisingly difficult to come by. A survey conducted by Environment and Climate Change Canada in 1996 indicated that around 5% of Canadians hunt (Canada, 2017). Little research has been done examining the role that these activities may play for Indigenous and settler, rural and urban Canadians living with food insecurity in the southern parts of Canada. One recent study by McFadyen (2015) found that being highly skilled in self-provisioning activities does not protect rural research participants from experiencing food insecurity, although these activities may mitigate food insecurity to some extent.

4.18.8 Illicit and illegal strategies
In order to acquire food or money for food, some people may use illicit or illegal strategies such as panhandling, stealing, selling drugs and trading sex (Dachner & Tarasuk, 2002; Hamelin et al., 2002; Tarasuk et al., 2009). In Canada, these activities have primarily been studied among homeless populations, though my observations and research findings suggest that housed individuals in Canada may also engage in illicit or illegal activities to manage food insecurity and other deprivations.

4.19 Overview of Kingston

Kingston is a city in eastern Ontario with a population of 117,660 residents (Statistics Canada, 2016). It sits on Lake Ontario, at the mouth of the St. Lawrence and Cataraqui Rivers, about midway between Montreal and Toronto, on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The Tyendinaga Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte is Kingston’s closest First Peoples reserve community, and the only government-recognized territory within the Kingston region. The Kingston Indigenous community continues to represent the area’s Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee roots. There is also a
small Métis community as well as First Peoples from other Nations across Turtle Island residing in present day Kingston.

According to the 2016 census data released by Statistics Canada, the low income rate in Kingston for 2016 is 14.8% based on the Low Income Measure after tax, demonstrating a slightly higher prevalence of people living on low incomes than provincial (14.4%) or national (14.2%) rates. This low income rate has risen from 11.1% in 2006, indicating that income poverty in Kingston, as in the rest of Canada, is growing. One in four, or 25.3% of youth 20 - 24 years, and one in five (20.5%) of children aged newborn to four is living in poverty. The poverty rate for seniors in Kingston over the age of 65 was 9.5% in 2016, lower than the average national rate of 14.5% (Statistics Canada, 2016).

4.19.1 Food insecurity in Kingston
In 2013-2014, 15% of households in Kingston were food insecure, a rise from 12.2% in 2007-2008 (Tarasuk, Mitchell, & Dachner, 2016). While the report doesn’t elaborate on who is most at risk for food insecurity in Kingston, we can look to provincial and national data for guidance. For example, 38.4% of all households in the City of Kingston are renters, poverty in Kingston is high among lone-parent families (29.4%) and people that live alone (27.9%) (Statistics Canada, 2012). In Canada, as in Ontario, each of these groups are at high risk for food insecurity (Tarasuk, Mitchell, & Dachner, 2016).

Public health units across Ontario calculate the cost of a nutritious food basket for their region in relation to different family sizes and wage scenarios (Ministry of Health Promotion, 2010). Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington Public Health’s annual
report, *The Cost of Eating Healthy* demonstrates that most low income household configurations in the region must spend over 30% of their monthly incomes to acquire a nutritious food basket. For a single person on social assistance (Ontario Works) 40% of their monthly income would be needed to purchase nutritious food. KFL&A Public Health calculates that after rent and healthy food costs, the average person living on Ontario Works is left with a deficit of 87 dollars. This is without calculating expenditures such as telephone, transportation, toiletries or other costs (KFL&A Public Health, 2016). Similar findings have emerged from research done in other jurisdictions in Canada including public health units and independent research (see for example, Williams et al., 2012 and The New Brunswick Common Front for Social Justice, 2012; Walton & Taylor, 2013).

**4.19.2 Poverty reduction in Kingston**
There have been two large-scale poverty reduction initiatives in Kingston in recent years that have been initiated and supported by the municipality. In 2007 the Mayor’s task force on poverty identified the need for a community-lead process to reduce poverty in Kingston. This led to the establishment of the Kingston Community Roundtable on Poverty Reduction in January of 2008. The Roundtable received funding from the municipality, and included a cross section of people committed to reducing the number of Kingston residents who live in poverty. Members included retired people, social agency workers, social justice advocates, people from business and labour and people who have lived in poverty.

Among other activities, during its three years of operation, the roundtable generated a Deprivation Index for Kingston for 2010 and 2011, researched and launched
a Living Wage campaign, developed resource handbook to connect people living in poverty with services, participated in the provincial Social Assistance Review process, and hosted interactive poverty challenge activities for city councilors, students and the public (KCRPR, 2011). The cessation of Municipal support for the roundtable resulted in the end of the organization in December 2011.

Shortly thereafter, The City of Kingston initiated a new Poverty Reduction Strategy that was to be co-directed by the City, the United Way of KFL&A, and Kingston Community Health Centres. The Poverty Reduction Plan itemizes poverty reduction initiatives that the city and local social service agencies are already engaged in, and makes recommendations for future direction but does not produce materials or educational or advocacy activities towards poverty reduction. The most recent update of the Poverty Reduction Plan was in 2014 (United Way & City of Kingston, 2014).

Besides the institutionalized initiatives described above there are also several civil society organizations addressing poverty in Kingston, either as their core issue, as is the case with direct action group Kingston Coalition Against Poverty (KCAP), or as a logical extension of health promotion, food insecurity, housing, or mental health and addictions agencies.

4.20 Addressing food insecurity in Kingston

The municipal government of Kingston provides no core funding to civil society organizations providing food to people who are experiencing food insecurity. The city has, from time to time, provided one-time support to food programs considered essential in the city, and at public events sponsored by the city, they frequently ask for donations to the primary food bank in Kingston (Field notes, 12/2015). In describing their
commitment to food security on their website, the city names their partnership on community gardens and a new policy on fruit and nut bearing trees (City of Kingston, 2017).

In the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan, the City of Kingston made a commitment to addressing food insecurity (City of Kingston, 2015). In partnership with the United Way, the city has embarked on a Food Access strategy, engaging leaders from emergency food-providing agencies across the city. There have been no public reports about this plan as of the writing of this thesis.

### 4.20.1 Civil society in Kingston

Civil society organizations provide the bulk of emergency food service and leadership on food insecurity-related issues in Kingston. A common refrain heard among volunteers, staff, and clients of hot meal programs is that “you can’t go hungry in Kingston”. Community research identified over 66 different food assistance programs in Kingston, operating out of 30 agencies (Kingston Food Providers, 2016). This number includes 12 food bank/pantry programs, 13 drop-in meal programs, 7 agencies embedding meal-provision within other health or social services, 7 homeless shelters, each providing two to three meals daily, and 5 agencies providing vouchers/grocery gift cards. This annual survey shows that on one average Tuesday in May of 2016, these agencies served 1449 hot meals, 389 healthy snacks, provided free groceries to 434 people and grocery vouchers or gift cards to 89 others (Kingston Food Providers, 2016)\(^\text{11}\).

The programs providing this assistance include the expected food banks and pantries, churches, shelters, and hot meal programs, but increasingly Kingston is also seeing food

\(^\text{11}\) These numbers don’t include the breakfast, snacks and lunch provided by the Food Sharing Project (FSP), Kingston’s charitable school nutrition program. On that same day, the FSP served 2829 meals and 2508 healthy snacks to school children in public schools in Kingston.
programs offered by organizations not usually considered food-providing agencies, including Boys and Girls Club, HIV/AIDS Regional Services, school readiness programs, and mental health and addictions counselling organizations. These agencies integrate food pantries, grocery store vouchers or gift cards, healthy snacks, and/or hot meals into their daily operations. During my interviews for this research I encountered several people who stated they would never go to the food bank, or a ‘soup kitchen’, but who regularly relied on meals or groceries provided through other services they access, such as a program that teaches them how to manage diabetes, a parenting support group they attend with their toddler, or a free meal for their child during after-school programming.

Along-side food charity organizations working in Kingston are hybrid programs run by not-for profit agencies using a market-based model to make food more accessible to people living on low incomes. Kingston Community Health Centres operates a monthly Good Food Box (GFB) program that serves 350 - 400, primarily low income residents, monthly (private correspondence Oct 29, 2017). A GFB is a non-profit fresh vegetable and fruit distribution program that offers a box of produce at or below cost. People order and pay for the box at the beginning of the month, boxes are packed by volunteers, and picked up from assigned drop-off points near the end of the month. During the summer, Kingston Community Harvest (KCH) operates a weekly farmers market with subsidized food prices in a low income neighbourhood in Kingston. The KCH market is intended to make fresh, locally grown food available to people who otherwise wouldn’t have access to it, in an outdoor market-style environment. The market sells food grown by volunteers especially for the purpose.
4.21 Poverty reduction strategies in Canada

Among all levels of government in Canada, poverty reduction strategies and food security strategies are on the agenda. During the 2015 federal election campaign, Liberal party candidate, Justin Trudeau promised to develop and fund a national strategy to reduce food insecurity in Canada and public consultations were carried out in 2017. In Ontario, in the spring of 2017, it was announced that the provincial government would develop a provincial strategy to address food insecurity as part of the provincial Poverty Reduction Plan. And at the local level, while Kingston’s poverty reduction plan seems to be in hiatus, in 2017 the City of Kingston tasked the United Way of KFL&A with coordinating a Food Security Strategy (changed to Food Access Strategy when community members argued that if the committee couldn’t address income, they couldn’t address food insecurity) for the city of Kingston.

Canada’s track record for following through with poverty reduction strategies and food security plans has been less than stellar. In 1989, the House of Commons resolved to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. Sidetracked by the recession in the 1990s, this pledge was never re-visited by subsequent federal governments. As of the writing of this thesis, the federal Ministry of Employment and Social Development Canada has just completed the public consultation phase for the development of the Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy (October, 2017). This consultation process was done in partnership with civil society anti-poverty organizations across Canada who hosted many of the consultations under the leadership of the Tamarack Institute, a not for profit organization that coordinates and facilitates anti-poverty work in Canada. This collaboration between the government and the not for profit sector for Canada’s Poverty Reduction Strategy is
typical of the Collective Impact approach that characterizes most provincial and municipal poverty reduction and food security strategies in Canada.\textsuperscript{12}

At the same time that a federal poverty reduction strategy is being coordinated through the Employment and Social Development Canada, the Minister of Agriculture and Agrifood, Lawrence MacAuley, has been tasked with coordinating a Food Policy for Canadians aimed at increasing access to affordable food, improving health and food safety; conserving soil, water, and air, and growing more high-quality food. Civil society, particularly the national organization Food Secure Canada (FSC), has been active in providing research and coordinating citizen input throughout the consultation process. Input has also been sought from agro-food industry leaders and academic researchers.

This is not the first time that Canada’s federal government has proposed a food security Strategy. While Government officials in Canada publicly invoke food insecurity as a powerful indicator of poverty and deprivation (McIntyre et al., 2016), action on these issues has been largely absent. The 1998 Canada’s Action Plan for Food Security was developed in response to the World Food Summit (Canada, 1999). Examining Canada’s five progress reports on the Action Plan, Mah et al. (2014) demonstrate the change in discourse on food insecurity in Canada away from an explicitly rights-based approach to a piecemeal, charity, health and diet-focused set of recommendations.

In 2008 the Government of Ontario launched a poverty reduction strategy aimed at reducing child poverty. The government did not meet its target of the 25 per cent reduction in child poverty over five years. Subsequently, in 2014, it launched the 2014-

\textsuperscript{12} Collective impact is a collaborative strategy for social change which brings together different sectors around a common agenda to solve large complex problems. According to the Tamarack Institute, “Complex systems change requires leadership from various partners: government leaders, funding agencies, schools, hospitals, the private sector, the not-for-profit sector, community organizers and more.” (2017).
2019 Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). The new PRS promised to continue efforts to achieve the 25 per cent reduction in child poverty, and also committed to end chronic homelessness in Ontario by 2025, although specific definitions and targets are somewhat unclear (Benbow, et al., 2014; Smith-Carrier & Lawlor, 2016). Announced in April 2017, an Ontario Food Security Strategy is being developed in parallel with the poverty reduction strategy “with the aim of ensuring every one of us has sufficient access to affordable and nutritious food” (Ontario, 2017). At the same time, the provincial government chose not to opt into measuring food insecurity in Ontario in the 2015-16 cycle of the Canada Community Health Survey. This means that there will be no data available to use to measure the effect of the Ontario Food Security Strategy.

Many charitable food programs in Canada, taking critiques of the charity approach under advisement, are reconfiguring their programs for addressing food insecurity. In Kingston, and across Canada, a handful of charitable agencies are interrogating the role they could play in addressing food insecurity (FPCKFLA, 2014, Scharf et al., 2010). Civil society food activist organizations are working with all levels of government towards constructing food security strategies. Food Secure Canada (FSC) is a national civil society organization dedicated to promoting and working towards a broad definition of food security in Canada. FSC is leading the charge among civil society organizations to hold the Liberal government to their promise to address food insecurity. The organization hosts consultations and conferences, and prepares position papers and briefing notes on several key food issues, including food insecurity, Indigenous food sovereignty, sustainable food systems, and the right to food (FSC website, 2017).
At the local level, food policy councils have sprung up in many Canadian cities since the establishment of the Toronto Food Policy Council in 1991. Many local food policy councils are working to address food insecurity in their regions. In Kingston, the Food Policy Council for Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington (FPCKFLA) was established in 2013. It is an independent body consisting of community members and government representatives who live and/or work in the region. The council’s mandate is to work towards “creating a secure and sustainable food system for our region”.

Currently, the FPCKFLA is engaged in two projects; food and food programming in elementary schools, and income security as a prerequisite for food security (FPCKFLA meeting notes, 2017).

Also of note in Kingston is Loving Spoonful, the organization for which I was the founding executive director. Working with food banks, meal programs and other agencies in Kingston, Loving Spoonful offers a broad slate of food-access related initiatives including perishable food recovery and delivery to food providers, gleaning, community kitchen programming, and school and community garden coordination. From the beginning, the intent of the organization was to push the boundaries of charitable food model. Staff from Loving Spoonful participate in the Food Policy Council and other collaborative food security initiatives in Kingston and the province of Ontario, and engage in educational and outreach on issues around food insecurity including poverty, social inclusion, and mental health.

With a renewed attention to poverty reduction and food insecurity in Canada, the question remains: Will Canadian policy makers continue to seek market-based and charitable solutions for addressing food insecurity? Alternatively, will Canada propose
solutions to food insecurity that transcend the structures and systems re-constituted through neoliberalism; the structures and systems that give rise to food insecurity and other forms of vulnerability in the first place?
Chapter 5

Logics of Practice: Introducing the Findings

When I asked my research participants in both sites how they managed their food needs while living on limited means, I heard a wide range of answers. Many of the strategies echoed the findings of other food insecurity researchers. I heard about budgeting, comparison shopping, buying discounted food, and choosing cheaper food items over more desired items. My interviewees in Canada often cited visiting charitable food assistance programs, particularly food banks, in times of need, but they also talked about making use of school breakfast programs or making sure your kid stays late enough at the Boys and Girls Club to get the free meal, and so on. In Cuba, the absence of a charitable food system means people rely more heavily on income-based solutions in the informal economy as well as social networks. In both sites, I heard about income-based solutions such as working under the table, borrowing money, and selling items to bring in more cash. Each of these strategies require the mobilization of social, economic and cultural capital in the forms of social relations, learned knowledge and skills, and economic resources.

I found that in both sites, my interviewees used multiple strategies for managing food insecurity. These included strategies for acquiring food, whether in the market or through food charities, and strategies for controlling food within the household, including planning, rationing, cooking techniques, storage, and so on. The work of managing food insecurity also includes framing strategies, - the construction of discourse around food
work that guides and validates the strategies that are reasonable to use under specific conditions. People mobilize these three sets of food insecurity management strategies differently in different places and times.

In this chapter I will explore strategies for acquiring and managing food among my Canadian research participants, and in Chapter Six I will discuss strategies described by my Cuban interviewees. In Chapter Seven I will describe how the experience of food insecurity is similar and different in the two sites, and suggest implications for these differences and similarities for how we understand food insecurity and household and societal responses to it.

In order to understand the logic of practice of my Canadian research participants when it comes to managing food insecurity, in this chapter I consider how food is acquired, controlled and framed according to the arena or field in which food work is done. I will examine how food is acquired and managed within food insecure households, within informal social networks, in relation to food charities, and in relation to state entitlements. I look at some of the forms of capital that my research participants bring to each field and use to navigate the challenges of food insecurity.

While transcribing, coding and reviewing the transcripts of the interviews I conducted for this research I was struck repeatedly by participants’ grim and often humorous determination to do what has to be done in order to provide enough food for themselves and their families. This looked very different in Kingston and Havana, but in both sites, interviewees surprised me with their candor and creativity. In both sites, there was also often a palpable tension between hope and frustration, even within a single narrative.
As I began to consider the stories I gathered against my understanding of poverty and deprivation in Canada and Cuba in the early part of the 21st century, it became clear that the strategies my research participants recounted for managing food insecurity were intricately woven with broader livelihood concerns. During interviews, it was often difficult to keep the conversation focused on food insecurity experiences and strategies. As has been noted by many researchers, logics of practice when living in poverty demand that people balance multiple needs and desires, and that sufficient, healthy food is not always the primary or logical goal in a given day, week or even year (see for example Carter & Barret, 2006; Chambers & Conway, 1991; Hamelin et al., 2011; Maxwell, 1996). Other tangible needs such as housing, health, and transportation, or less concrete needs such as ensuring the long term stability of income; reinforcing social relationships, performing as a ‘good parent’, ensuring that a child is included in school or extracurricular activities, or participating in activities that feel meaningful or are enjoyable, often take precedence. Thus, while this research is ostensibly about food insecurity, the following stories demonstrate that most people juggle competing demands, often leaving food on the margins of other pressing needs.

Two main analytical themes that emerged from my data give insight into my central research question about the role of the state for addressing household food insecurity: Managing Day-to-day Food Insecurity and Managing Deprivation and Precarity. Using Bourdieu’s framework of forms of capital, I explore the different fields in which food work happens in each research site. Which forms of social, economic, cultural and symbolic capital do people in each site draw on and mobilize to manage every day food work? Strategies shift, and different forms and combinations of capital are
drawn on to navigate the multiple fields in which they are animated: the household, the
market, the black market, the charitable food sector, in relation to state entitlements, and
so on. While there was overlap in how participants in both sites talked about managing
food insecurity, different histories and cultures shape available individual and household
responses to deprivation and to the threat of food insecurity.

In addition to outlining the concrete tactics people use for managing food
insecurity, in each of Chapters Five and Six I investigate how my research participants
frame food insecurity issues in relation to entitlements. I examine how they frame
themselves as healthy eaters, as good consumers, and how they balance food-work
within the context of broader livelihood issues such as housing, transportation, leisure,
aspirations, love, and kinship. Through the stories people told me, I came to understand
that the experience of food insecurity is complicated not only by the limitations imposed
by inadequate incomes, but also by the necessity of juggling competing needs and
desires, and by the explicit and implicit expectations of self, family, formal institutions,
and the culture in general about what it means to be poor and to have to ‘manage’ food
insecurity. Because the experience of food insecurity is embedded in a host of other
needs and desires, I argue that the measurement of, and policy for addressing, food
insecurity should reflect the complexity of these experiences. I draw out how similar
food insecurity strategies, e.g. relying on social networks, or using charitable food
programs, have different meanings and do different 'work' for managing food insecurity
in different households.

As I present the data from my field research, I loosely group HFI management
strategies according to the sphere or field in which they are carried out; the household,
the charitable food sector, the market, and the state. For Kingston, I begin by looking at strategies that are mobilized within and around the household sphere, and how people use skills to navigate the relationship between the household and the market. I look at strategies that rely on informal social networks of family, friends and neighbours, considering some of the factors that people express as enhancing or threatening food security. I then step away from the intimate sphere of the household, to examine strategies related to charitable food assistance programs, including food banks and meal programs. Here, I introduce what I call *Formal Social Capital*, a form of social capital based on institutionalized or formalized relationships. I draw again on this category of Formal Social Capital to look at how some people are able to rely on their relationship to agents of the state as social welfare recipients to manage household food insecurity.

### 5.1 Who was interviewed in Kingston?

While I do not describe each research participants life in detail, here I present some basic information about each anonymized person I interviewed.

Here I have noted the neighbourhoods and the class-significance that each neighbourhood currently holds in Kingston. All of my Kingston interview participants lived in working class or mixed neighbourhoods. Most of my Kingston interviewees have lived in many different neighbourhoods in Kingston, and some of the stories recounted in the interviews take place in other locations in Kingston. I use the classification Mixed to denote neighbourhoods that are in the process of gentrification from being working class neighbourhoods to being more middle class.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n</th>
<th>Alias</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K01</td>
<td>Trina</td>
<td>Key Informant; Lives on ODSP; lives with teenage children; rents in market housing</td>
<td>Inner Harbour - Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K02</td>
<td>Devynn</td>
<td>Lives on ODSP; lives with two adult children; lives in RGI housing</td>
<td>Inner Harbour - Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K03</td>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>Lives on WSIB payments and informal sector income; lives alone and owns house</td>
<td>Rideau Heights - WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K04</td>
<td>Debb</td>
<td>Works as office worker; lives alone, in market rental housing</td>
<td>Rideau Heights - WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K05</td>
<td>Alexandra</td>
<td>Works for call centre; lives with partner, child, and roommate. Rents in market rental housing</td>
<td>Hillendale - WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K06</td>
<td>Lesley</td>
<td>Key Informant; Informal sector income; lives with husband, also self-employed, and two children. Own home</td>
<td>Inner Harbour - Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K07</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Works as musician and cook; lives alone in market rental housing</td>
<td>Rural, outside of Kingston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K08</td>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>Works in an office; her partner is also employed; lives part-time with two children from previous partner. Own home.</td>
<td>Inner Harbour - Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K09</td>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>Student; Income from service sector jobs and loans; lives alone with 11 year old daughter. Market rent apartment</td>
<td>Inner Harbour - Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K10</td>
<td>Derrick</td>
<td>Lives on OW income and informal income; Lives alone; has part time custody of son. Market rent apartment</td>
<td>Inner Harbour - Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K11</td>
<td>Esther</td>
<td>Unclear income source; lives with two year old son and several roommates. Owns home</td>
<td>Inner Harbour - Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K12</td>
<td>Madeline</td>
<td>Works several jobs; lives alone with school age daughter; market rental home.</td>
<td>Inner Harbour - Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K13</td>
<td>Caroline</td>
<td>Lives on OW income; in RGI housing</td>
<td>Hillendale - WC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**5.2 Strategies for managing food insecurity in Kingston ON**

It is a lot of work to manage household food insecurity on a limited income in Kingston, Ontario. According to my research participants and my observations in the field, managing food insecurity requires an intricate knowledge of market and non-market resources, budgeting and planning skills, and often, a reliance on a network of social and institutional relationships. My research participants in Kingston, to a person, demonstrated mastery over the work they had to do to put food on the table, many articulating pride at managing month after month despite limited resources. Most of my research participants talked about using multiple strategies to address food insecurity.

Each of my research participants were adults who bore the prime responsibility for food work in their households. I identified food work to include shopping and cooking, as well as invisible work of planning, knowing what is in the fridge, managing
school lunches, and other things. Households in my research were configured differently; they included lone mothers of young children (4) or of teens (2); one lone father of a young child (1); one lone man with no children (1); a partnered man with no children (1) partnered women with children at home (3); lone women with no children (2); partnered mothers with grown children (2); lone mothers with grown children who had left home (3) and a partnered woman with no children (2). Upon further discussion I found out that, in many cases, households might include, from time to time, transient dinner guests or residents such as grown children who came back for periods of time, or friends who were couch surfing between apartments. Some regularly hosted family or neighbours in need of a meal. In contrast to the multi-generational households of many of my Havana research participants, households in Kingston were primarily comprised of a small number of people related as parents, partners (married or unmarried) and children.

5.2.1 Compromising quality and quantity of food
In Kingston, as in other parts of Canada, we expect people to manage their resources so that they can fulfill their food needs through the market. For people living in poverty this is a challenge. The household is the first sphere in which we assume food insecurity ‘should’ be managed by allocating an adequate portion of income to purchasing food, and by mobilizing the skills and knowledge necessary to prepare it. Canadian food insecurity research clearly demonstrates the impossibility of making that work for people living on low incomes (see for example Dachner, Ricciuto et al., 2010; KFLA Public Health, 2016; Newell, Williams & Watt, 2014; Power, 2005; Williams et al., 2006; Williams et al. 2012 a, b). No amount of careful planning and budgeting can compensate for the reality of

---

13 Food work in the home increasingly also includes managing multiple food preferences among household members and managing and mitigating food waste - topics that arose in my interviews.
insufficient income for an adequate diet. As one of my interviewees states after a lengthy
description of how she carefully plans her budget and maps out her shopping to get
through the month "it doesn't always work out the way you think it will" (Alison).
Among my research participants this seems to be more the rule than the exception.

Food insecurity research confirms that compromising the quality of food is
typically the first strategy used to manage household food insecurity, followed by
compromising quantity of food purchased or eaten (Radimer, Olson, & Campbell, 1992;
Maxwell & Frankenberger, 1993; Kendall, Olson, & Frongillo, 1995). While a
monotonous diet may be nutritionally adequate, however my research participants
equated lack of variety in food with lack of purchasing power due to poverty. Nell, a
woman in her late 50s works at several small jobs, and lives with her partner, a musician.
While things are going a little better for them now, she recalls the monotony of their diet
during a recent period of low employment;

We did what we had to do. And we cooked meals that maybe I wouldn't
bother cooking anymore. Like those cheap bags of chicken legs, you
know? Chicken legs and chicken legs and chicken legs and... want some
chicken legs with that? [laughs] (Nell, May, 2016).

Most of my participants were matter-of-fact about the necessity of buying food of lesser
quality, or having to purchase or serve smaller quantities of food than they would have if
not constrained by tight budgets. Most of them did not have very much to say about those
strategies, and provided, short, matter-of-fact answers to my questions about how they
stretch scant dollars. Brenda was sanguine about her situation.

Yeah, sometimes I can't cook every night; it's gotta be every second
night, so we just have sandwiches or pancakes or something just to
substitute. That's kind of how I plan it, you know what I mean? Like
right now it's getting down there (Brenda, May, 2016).
It was clear from the context of the interview that Brenda’s inability to cook every night was due to lack of available ingredients, not to lack of time. Later in the interview it became apparent that, while ‘clean’ for the past 8 years, Brenda had a history of drug addiction, and had been homeless off and on over several years. I suggest that her matter of fact attitude to only being able to cook every second night due to financial hardship may be relative to a much more precarious existence in the not-too-distant past.

The reality of making do with less food or poorer quality of food has become normalized for some people. This is evident in these refrains that some of my interviewees repeated throughout their respective interviews: "It is what it is, and it was what it was" (Alison); "We did what we had to do" (Nell); and "you do what you can; not what you can't" (Caroline).

In Canada, we expect everyone to be able to manage their household food needs through the market. Most of my interviewees spoke thoughtfully and in considerable detail about the work they do to plan for their household food expenditures for the month. Because insufficient income is the primary reason that people experience food insecurity, minimizing costs and trying to stretch available income is, logically, a key strategy used by all my interviewees in both research sites. Unfortunately, for many, managing food insecurity on a low income is exacerbated by unpredictable events.

Alison is a gregarious woman in her early 60s who has been in and out of poverty throughout her life. She has several health issues including a heart condition and dental problems. Living alone, divorced, and very much involved in the lives of her grown children who live in the region, she lives on disability insurance augmented by occasional
under the table work. Her description of the constant struggle to budget, plan and juggle multiple needs is typical of how my Kingston participants describe managing food insecurity at the household level:

Each month when the cheque comes in, I make a list. I go through all the flyers and I write down, for each store, what's on special and I compare the prices. And well, it sounds like a lot of work, doesn't it? [laughs] And if there's coupons, I get those together. And I make a list of what I need, what I absolutely have to have, and because I only have a certain amount of money, I look at what I need for my staples. I figure out what it's going to cost, and I'm pretty good. I can figure out, almost within a couple of bucks, how much my grocery bill's going to be. And then I look at the specials, and I put down what else I want to get besides my staples, and then with what's left I figure what else I can maybe pay down. [long pause] It doesn't always work out the way you think it will, though! [laughs] (Alison, April, 2016).

Alison understand how she ‘should’ work to manage her household budget, and is proud of her ability to use strict, well-thought-out strategies to stretch her available resources. Her laughter at the end of this passage, though, suggests that she is aware of the impossibility of managing on a low income when unexpected events such as health crises are enough to throw her careful plans into disarray. Similar strategies of careful budgeting and planning were echoed by others:

I go over my budget to plan our food, for sure, and also we built a pantry and bought things in bulk, to put in jars. Really, no matter how low your budget is for food, there's things you can buy, things you can make, healthy things you can come up with, with barely anything. Or you go that day and buy, I don't know, cheap pasta and sauce. We like brown rice pasta, but we usually buy the regular 99 cent wheat pasta (Lesley, April, 2016).

Another woman, speaking about hard times in her past said;

When I was on a tighter budget, I’d go through all the flyers and like I knew if a penny was missing, or a quarter out of my budget, I’d be like “where’s that quarter; that could have been like a part of a loaf of bread”!
I just knew, I was just that diligent with budgeting! And I would find all the sales, and I would do the circle and go to all the stores for the sales so I could make my buck go further (Maxine, May, 2016).

Not only did my research participants indicate that they know the importance of budgeting and planning, i.e. that they ‘should’ do these things, their detailed descriptions of making lists, looking at flyers, planning meals, and substituting lower-cost items for higher cost items suggests that they are experts at this sort of work. These results are hardly surprising, echoing the body of HFI research that indicates that people living with food insecurity in Canada typically use budgeting and careful planning to manage food insecurity (see for example Beagan Chapman & Power, 2017; Dachner, Ricchiuto et al., 2010; Tarasuk, 2001).

Budgeting and planning became even more significant when holidays and family celebrations loom on the horizon, and several of my interviewees explained how they start planning several months ahead for these occasions:

Christmas time puts a big pressure on; you really have to have thought about your table back in the fall. Everything's either marked way up, or I don't have any money because there’s so much else to buy. You try to plan ahead (Alexandra, April, 2016).

I mean, my daughter's birthday is July 4th, and I already have her present, and I bought a ham on sale, oh a while back, maybe right after Easter? Because if I didn't, I sure wouldn't have enough money to get her anything now. And make a cake. And make the whole meal. You always have to think ahead, always have to think ahead (Alison, April, 2016).

In all of these accounts of careful planning and budgeting, it is apparent that there is little room for unplanned-for events. This dimension of precarity and how easy it is to slip into a crisis of food access is a theme that runs throughout my Kingston interviews.
Stories of the extra work involved in navigating food needs for holidays special events demonstrate the extent of planning that must be done to be able to do what many of us take for granted such as host a holiday dinner or throw a birthday party for a family member.

As a part of the strategy of budgeting and planning, interviewees demonstrated a commitment to using other strategies that extend available food budgets, such as regularly shopping the discount bins for reduced produce, “I do go to Loblaw’s, because it’s close, but only to check out the discount section and the sales” (Devynn), or limiting oneself to cheaper grocery stores even though they may be less convenient, “I've become really adept at pricing, price watching. We shop at [Food] Basics for the prices. I never go to Metro even though it’s closer, but if I do, I would never buy anything there that wasn't on sale” (Derrick), and stocking up on sale items to save for leaner times: “I buy produce that's kind of on its last legs, you know, reduced. And I bring it home, prepare it, freeze it. So, I mean I save a lot of money that way” (Alison).

While I think of myself as a savvy shopper, many of my interviewees demonstrated a level of expertise that I lack when it comes to food and household shopping on a budget. Several were able to tell me which day of the week or even what time of day different grocery stores were likely to move produce onto the discount shelf, or when and where to go for day-old baked goods at a discount. Several people mentioned in passing which flyers arrived with which community newspapers, and talked about using online flyer apps such as Flipp to find coupons or to research the best prices in town for food and other items.
Along with shopping at discount grocery stores, some people talked about shopping for food at dollar stores. Food at the dollar store was understood to be of poorer quality than that of regular grocery stores, and shopping for food at the dollar store was seen as a last-ditch shopping strategy.

Times when I have no money, I live on very little. I will live on peanut butter sandwiches for a couple of days, or I'd live on rice. Or I'd have to get food at [dollar store] which is the worst place in the world to get food. I had more than a couple times this winter where I'd go there. You know if you eat [dollar store] food, like, three days in a row, you feel ill. I gained weight over the winter without eating hardly anything, because the quality is so bad. Canned ravioli, canned ham, any of that, the cheapest chips, the cheapest pop […] So I had weeks where I lived on that kind of food and by the end of the month I was so thankful because I could buy real food again (Derrick, May, 2016).

Trina expressed similar feelings:

In the times when I had so little that I had, like $20 for the week for food, you go to the dollar store, and try to get as much as you can for $20. I’m like "I can get 20 items!" but by the end of the week you feel...ugh (May, 2016)

Those research participants who had shopped at dollar stores for groceries recognized that many of the products available were low quality, or were not actually very good deals, as even brand name foods, such as breakfast cereals or pasta at dollar stores are often packaged in smaller quantities. One interviewee was suspicious of the bread available at the dollar store because “it never molds” (Derrick). Research participants who used the dollar stores cited severe budget constraints along with geographical convenience as their reasons for shopping there. All described shopping for food at dollar stores as a last-ditch, stop-gap measure and not a regular part of their food access
strategies, although many relied more often on dollar stores for paper goods, cleaning
supplies and other household items.

5.2.2 The invisible work of self-discipline
As Beagan, Chapman and Power (2017) note, much of the food work people do to
manage household food insecurity is invisible. This includes planning; knowing what is
in the refrigerator; calculating portions; and knowing how to adapt recipes for the
available ingredients. According to my interviewees, in addition to these skills, successful
strategizing also often comes down to the invisible work of self-discipline. People who
were unable to mitigate their food insecurity through budgeting and planning often blame
themselves for having poor organizational skills.

You have to have control, … I find if you make lists, it's very important.
Don't go off list! When I send [husband] to grocery store which is not
very often, he goes off list and it's a disaster. Don’t go off list. Stick to
the list (Lesley, April 2016).

Teresa went so far as to blame herself for paying the ‘wrong’ bills first, before buying
food.
Food problems are usually about poor planning. for me. It's like, if I paid
a bill off that I shouldn't have paid, and I should have waited a bit and
bought food instead. I'm not the most organized (Teresa, May, 2016).

People living with food insecurity are sometimes accused of not being disciplined
enough about budgeting, and well-meaning community programs exist to help people
learn to budget and shop on a limited income. My research indicates that the opposite is
true. Most of my interviewees were more skilled than I am about knowing where and
how to shop economically, and with great discipline. Rather than a function of poor
planning, they told me, their food insecurity is a result of the impossibility of the math -
of trying to stretch severely limited income from social assistance or a cobbled-together
part-time and under-the-table work, far enough to cover food costs- that makes it so very
difficult to manage household food insecurity in Canada.

5.2.3 Careful cooking/recipes/cooking and storage strategies
Alongside careful planning and budgeting skills, most of my interviewees showed pride
in their ability to cook healthy and appealing, or at least adequate, recipes on a budget.
Lenore, an older woman who lives with her adult son in public housing is confident of
her ability to cook from scratch on a budget, and to utilize leftovers:

When I cook a dinner, it’s all from scratch. For example, I'll make a pot
of rice, and I’ll have maybe rice, chicken and veggies. And after dinner
I'll look at it and I’ll say “ok, there’s left over chicken, there's left over
veggies, there's left over rice. “So, the next meal becomes something that
uses that all up. I mean, I don't throw out leftovers, let's put it that way. I
use up what I have in the fridge (Lenore, May, 2016).

Nell, also in her 60s, also talked about a friend of hers who she considered to be an
excellent cook on a low budget: “You know [name of friend], well, a lot of times she has
had nothing, and she's an excellent cook, you know, and I think she’s just worked around
ingredients she could afford, to make really good food. I mean really good, like restaurant
good” (Nell).

This confidence about food preparation skills was not limited to older women.
Despite the common rhetoric that “young people today don’t know how to cook”, several
of my young interviewees, particularly mothers with children, also showed creativity and
confidence in their ability to cook on a budget. Teresa, a lone mother in her early 30s
says: “Oh, usually I make things like stir fries, casseroles, soups, and yeah, still pretty
cheap and simple but really good you know? Healthy? And very, very inexpensive, I
know how to do that, I have to know how to do that.”
Lauren, a young university student with a child says similar things;
We had chili last night for dinner; we eat a lot of vegetables and fruits, and a lot of tofu, lentils, that sort of thing. What else do we eat? I think a few days ago we had shepherd’s pie with lentils - those black lentils. It’s not over expensive and its pretty good. (May, 2016)

Food skills may also be used as symbolic capital. In my research, some Canadian mothers consciously used the symbolic value of sending a nutritious, homemade vegetarian meal with their child to school to communicate class standing and ‘good’ parenting, despite the food preferences that the child might express. In a very different use of symbolic capital around school lunch provision, one single mother occasionally delivered KFC to her children at school in order to fortify their prestige among the other children, if not with nutrition-conscious teachers or other parents.

Most of my interviewees spoke with confidence about their ability to cook well and frugally. Only one of my research participants, a man who had recently separated from his wife, expressed doubt about his ability to cook, and even he felt that he could cook well enough for his and his son’s needs. Among my interviewees, having confidence in their food skills did not consistently protect them from the experience of food insecurity. This reflects the findings of research done by Engler-Stringer & Berenbaum (2005) and Huisken, Orr & Tarasuk (2016) that shows there is little evidence that a lack of food skills is correlated with food insecurity in Canada. People are not food insecure because they lack food skills. On the other hand, my research participants did express that the food skills that they possessed, including skills for planning, shopping, and cooking, were important tools that helped them to avoid food insecurity in their households most of the time, and also allowed them to help others who were food insecure. This suggests that food skills, and confidence in those skills, while not
protective against food insecurity, may be important for keeping a household from falling even further into a food insecure situation.

5.3 **Strategies as cultural capital**

If cultural capital is the accumulation of knowledge, behaviors and skills that one can tap into to demonstrate competence for navigating within a particular field, we can consider the above strategies as evidence of a form of cultural capital specific to people living on low incomes and with the threat of food insecurity. The cultural capital my research participants demonstrated is learned, not through formal education, but within families and through formal and informal social networks. This cultural capital consists of learned systems and codes which inform the actor where, when, and how to shop frugally; how to navigate food insufficiencies within the family and among peers; what services are available and how to access them; and how to juggle available resources to keep the heat from being turned off and the cupboards from going bare.

5.4 **Social dimensions of managing food insecurity**

People in poverty sometimes mobilize social capital to manage or avoid food insecurity. For most of the people I spoke with in Kingston, food practices, including the work of procuring and preparing meals, happens within a social network at least some of the time. For many this network is constrained to the immediate household; for others, this social network reaches to extended family, friends, co-workers, community organizations and social workers and others representing the interests of the state. Social capital derives from durable networks of social connections that can help us to achieve our goals. Thus, the social networks people use for managing food insecurity can be
considered a form of social capital. The locus of social capital for managing food insecurity may include extended family, friends, neighbours, acquaintances, colleagues, and others (see for example, Ahluwalia, 1998; Green-La Pierre, Williams et al., 2012; Kempson et al., 2003).

5.4.1 Social strategies: Relying on friends/family
While compromising the quality and quantity of food, and the careful management of household resources are common strategies for managing household food insecurity, my interviewees provide much more detailed and animated stories about the role that friends and family and other relationships play in managing food insufficiencies and related needs. Michalski (2003) notes:

Outside of the immediate household, the informal web of social relations may in fact be the most pervasive source of support for most households, including family and extended kin relations, friends, neighbours, and even co-workers (p. 277).

In the notes I took during my interviews, I noted that my research participants were more enthusiastic when talking about how they used food to give and receive care and to build and maintain social relations, than when talking about budgeting and shopping strategies. Most were gracious about receiving food from trusted others, and at the same time generous about providing food to others in need when they were able to do so. Family and friendship connections were used to not only deal with food shortages, but to reinforce important social relationships, to lessen the drudgery and isolation of day-to-day food work, and to demonstrate care. For some interviewees, it was evident from their descriptions of cooking and eating with others that food organizes friendship and family as much as friendship and family organizes food.
Food shared is so much better than food eaten by yourself. I mean when you're cooking it and you know you're sharing it with somebody, I don't mean to sound corny, but your love goes into it, when you know that you're preparing it for somebody else (Alison, April, 2016).

This quote is characteristic of how several of my research participants talked about engaging with their social networks in relation to food access.

**5.4.2 The other Old Stones of Kingston**

Kingston, Ontario is known as the Limestone City, and people whose families have lived here for several generations sometimes call themselves *Old Stones*. This moniker is usually reserved for the wealthy or moderately wealthy residents of this town - those who may actually live in the limestone houses the city is famous for. Four of my research participants were the poorer versions of Kingston's Old Stones. Their family histories were in Kingston, they had grown up here, they had extended family and friends in and around the city, complex histories, and social networks that included friends from childhood, and long-standing family connections. Most described their upbringing as working class or middle class. The extensive networks provided by these generational relationships seemed to be important to how these research participants managed the everyday work of providing food for the household.

There were a couple of times of prolonged unemployment, and I have to say, that it was my oldest friends that would, well, not give me food exactly, but invite me for dinner or bring me take out, or potluck when they could, and I’d always leave their places with leftovers (Debb, April, 2016).

The people I interviewed who had long-term social and family connections in Kingston spoke freely and warmly about these social relations as a source of various forms of assistance - food, but also child care, borrowing money, finding casual work -
than did more recent arrivals to Kingston. These relationships tended to be presented as reciprocal for the most part, with stories of helping others interspersed with stories of receiving food help.

Alison often has people over for dinner or goes to friends' houses to eat. Her oldest friend, another interviewee, is someone she's known since elementary school. During a recent health crisis, Alison relied extensively on the generosity of her friends for help with food sufficiency as well as for many other supports. She was very clear about the important role of long-time friends.

I don't have a whole lot of friends, but the friends that I have are long time, and are very integrated. They are family. I have [names 4 people]. I only have a few, and I’ve known them forever. I know what all their favorites [referring to food] are… but I count on them, I really do. For food and everything else. And they count on me (Alison, April, 2016).

Alison also credits her grandmother with showing her the value of helping others when you can.

In the winter time, she would always cook one of those big kettles of oatmeal, she would do a whole bag in this big kettle, and kids in our neighbourhood, because ours was a poor neighbourhood, kids would come, and they would come through the store and her kitchen was right through the back of the store, big old country kitchen. And they'd come in through the store and they'd sit at the table, she'd give them a bowl of oatmeal and a piece of toast, and she couldn't afford orange juice, so it was a glass of tang. But I mean, she gave that to kids who had nothing because she always believed you couldn't learn on an empty stomach. And she used to knit mitts for them, and scarves, and I can remember lots of times she'd be sewing up ski jackets or whatever for kids. I mean that's where it came from, that’s where it started for me. I mean food became a priority when I was very young. My grandmother made it a priority, and she made it a priority by being social. Had she not been social I might not be as generous as I am (April, 2016).
One aspect of food work that many of my research participants were quick to identify as onerous was preparing meals for a household every day. Several professed to enjoy cooking certain dishes or enjoyed preparing food for special occasions, and most felt that they were adequate cooks, but when I asked people to talk about the difficult aspects of food work on a limited income, many talked about the grind of day-to-day meal preparation. Some young lone mothers found relief in sharing the daily grind of preparing food with others:

I have other friends with kids and we get together and cook pretty often, like once or twice a month or something. There’s three of us. We just eat cheap, what the kids like, like rice and easy things like soup, but it’s nice, it’s better because I care more about what I make for them so I put in other things, healthy things too (Teresa, May, 2016).

Some of the women in this friendship circle have begun to garden in one of their yards. Ironically, the woman whose house has the yard suitable for gardening is uninterested in participating herself, but is happy to have her friends use her space, and she is happy that she will get to enjoy the produce too.

Others found that cooking with others expanded their cooking repertoire and introduced them to new foods or new approaches to cooking. Lesley shared a story about two other young mothers in the neighbourhood bringing her food when she had her second child, and then teaching her how to make some of the dishes. She credits that experience not only with helping her through a difficult time, but with turning her into a ‘foodie’, and talks about becoming one of the food providing group when another neighbour had a child a couple of years later.

The above social experiences of food sharing and teaching have an element of reciprocity. In the case of the group of young mothers getting together to cook, each was
contributing to the meal in whatever way they could. In the case of Lesley, after receiving assistance from her neighbours, she was later able to join the group as a provider of food to young mothers, passing along what she felt was a valuable service.

Many of my research participants placed a high value on using socially networked solutions for food insecurity and other deprivation. While I heard several inspiring stories involving reciprocated food sharing, in other cases, it seemed that having to rely on informal social networks for food assistance was a source of stress or shame. This was particularly the case when the help with managing food insecurity and other deprivation came through relationships with friends and family who weren’t living in poverty.

In the case of Derrick, social capital accrued from a combination of family and old work-place connections, including people who were not living in poverty.

I'm still a privileged person. And the reason I'm a privileged person is I have parents who can send me money. They’ve probably sent me $500 over 5 months. And I have friends who I owe maybe $1000 to a bunch of them, and that helped during the worst times. So I'm rich in friends. And I have the privilege of the way I'm seen in the community, and people don't look down on me (May, 2016)

However, Derrick goes on to say that he is reluctant to ask friends and family for any more help even though he is still in need, and that he is determined to find steady work that will allow him to pay back what he owes.

Madeline’s affluent ex-partner provides some help to see her and her child through bad times: “He’s still very supportive, in that we share resources and his vehicle and stuff like that especially when things get tight, he really cares about [daughter]”. Still, despite this help, her determination to not be in his debt has sent her into credit card debt which causes a lot of anxiety; “but I guess because of my guilt and my pride, that first
“year of living on my own, I went even into more debt and I've been trying to dig my way out of that for, well, for years now.”

Several times during the interview Madeline expressed her determination to manage food and other day-to-day costs without having to ask her ex for more help, even though she characterized him as someone who would help when asked. Despite having these supports from her ex, Madeline believes she should be able to manage without that help, choosing to go into debt rather than be more indebted to others.

There was a difference between the stories of those who relied on social networks where help was reciprocal, and where it was not. People who shared food costs or preparation with others living in similar circumstances, or who were able to give as well as receive help of some sort were less likely to express shame or reluctance about calling on these networks in times of need. Those who found themselves asking family or friends for help, but who couldn’t reciprocate expressed their reluctance to keep asking for assistance. This aligns with some food insecurity research that demonstrates that people living in poverty are not always comfortable asking for help within their social networks (Ahluwalia, 1998; Hamelin et al., 1999).

Vicky Cattell (2001), in exploring the dynamics between poverty and exclusion in the UK, tries to clarify which configurations of social connections confer social capital that is protective of health. She notes that social capital is a “contested and complex concept” within the literature linking it to health outcomes. It is generally accepted that social connections provide positive health and social benefits:

Solid evidence links informal social networks, social activities, and participation in organisations with better health chances (Wolf & Bruhn, 1993; Berkman & Breslaw, 1983; Rogers, 1996). Networks can provide social support, self-esteem, identity and perceptions of control (Cohen &

Cattell’s research asks whether some forms of social network are more protective of health than others, and found that there were significant differences in how well social networks function to enhance health, based on dimensions such as homogeneity, longevity of connection, and neighbourhood characteristics. Overall, however, she found that despite the buffering effects that social capital may have on the effects of poverty under some conditions, “the concept is not wholly adequate for explaining the deleterious effects of poverty on health and well-being.” (p. 1501).

While my sample is small, my research suggests that for my research participants in Kingston, reciprocity is an important dimension of informal social relations, and that the ability to reciprocate makes it more likely that people are comfortable relying on social networks to manage the threat of food insecurity. I also note that interviewees described a high degree of homogeneity within the informal social networks they were comfortable turning to for help. A good example of this is Alison. She and the close friends she regularly turns to are all ‘old stones’ - but from low income families that have lived in or around Kingston for several generations. I interviewed two of her friends as well, through chain referral sampling. The women in this group are all in their 50s, have known each other for decades, live in identifiably low income neighbourhoods, and present as working-class women. Each is, or has been, on social assistance; each has worked under the table to make ends meet. The foods they talk about preparing and enjoying included chicken, beef, turkey, potatoes, spaghetti, lasagna, chili, and other food that can be characterized as ‘typical’ or ‘ordinary’ (white) Canadian fare, based on my
own history and observation. In a very different example, each of Esther, Lesley and Lauren are young mothers of young children who live in a rapidly gentrifying neighbourhood, have some post-secondary education, and present as middle-class, despite their low incomes. Each of these interviewees identify as vegetarian, at least some of the time, and talk about a preference for local and organic food, even while acknowledging that they can’t usually afford to buy it. The friendship groups that each describe seem to consist of other young mothers who share these characteristics.

Because of the homogeneity of each of these social networks, the social capital that these research participants draw on at times for managing food access is tied closely to the cultural capital they possess, marked by education level, taste in fashion and home décor, and preference for certain foods among other things.

5.4.3 Food as care
The recurring theme of turning to others and relying on a strong intimate network of friends and family reflects an ethic of care that emerges around food and food work. Although I was interviewing people who were at risk for food insecurity themselves - based on income - the stories I heard were not only about counting on others for help with food, but about providing food for people outside the immediate household who were in need.

Oh, I always have something, don’t you worry. I can always feed another body so when my son brings home his friends, I say “don’t worry we have lots”. We just make do, we’re not the worst off. (Lenore, May, 2016)
and

The part of cooking that I really enjoy is that I can do something for someone else. I’m driven to do things for people, for sure. And it is something that feels good when I'm doing it, and doesn't take the kind of mental and emotional energy that other kinds of helping take. (Madeline, May, 2016)

Madeline goes on to say

My friend is a single mom with a kid, and works, and doesn't have a lot of money, so well, she's worse off than I am. And so she comes over, and I just love it. We don't really set times, but once a week or so she comes by. If she pops over on the weekend, and I'm cooking, then I'll pack up a bunch of stuff for her to take with her, or she'll just eat it out of the pot in the kitchen.

In a slightly different scenario of reciprocity, Teresa explained her "half husband" - a friend who does occasional handy-man work for her, and whom she feeds several times a week.

I have a friend who I cook for almost every day. Well, not cook for exactly, but he just joins us for meals most days. He takes care of the house, maintenance, small repair stuff, and our friendship works out that way. It’s sweet, really (May, 2016)

Penny van Esterik (1999) notes “Women's identity and sense of self is often based on their ability to feed their families and others; food insecurity denies them this right” (p. 225). I was surprised and intrigued by the willingness of many of my research participants to feed people outside their family. As I hadn’t anticipated this trend, I did not prompt for this conversation during the interviews, thus these stories were shared spontaneously in the context of other questions. Talk about feeding others generally happened near the end of interviews, suggesting that after an hour or so of talking about how difficult it can be to manage their own food needs, people wanted to share a different aspect of their relation to food and to other people. While my interviewees with were
obviously proud of being able to help others, they also presented it as a normal and regular part of their lives.

Normative expectations of parenting, especially mothering, include showing care through food (see for example, Beagan, Chapman & Power, 2017; Devault, 1994; van Esterik, 1999). The care-taking dimension of food work was even more apparent in my interviews when people talked about their children. It was important to the parents I spoke with to not only feed their children well, but to protect them from the feeling of, or having too much knowledge about the level of deprivation in the household: Derrick and his ex-partner share custody of their child, who he has every other week.

So this past winter, when I didn't really have a lot of income I'd stagger things. The week I had him is when I bought food, and the week he was gone I'd live on nothing. Because that's the way you want him to experience it; I didn't want him to experience it the way I was experiencing it (May, 2016)

Teresa expresses concern about the lack of variety in the food she is able to offer her child:

I kind of feel like I want to cook better for [daughter], she's young enough that the lack of variety doesn't bother her, but I'd like to be the kind of parent that shows love through food a little bit more (May, 2016).

Lauren echoes this sentiment regarding the food she feeds her child. Not only does she want to feed her child a healthy diet, she is aware of the social judgements her daughter might encounter at school if she brings food that is considered ‘poor food’. “It's always been important for me to make sure I have healthy good food for [child]”, and later in the interview she goes on to say, “We definitely have enough to eat. Partly it’s just as a result of careless spending and enormous debt, but food has always been a priority because of
[daughter]. I don’t want her to be judged for having poor food”. When Lauren says the phrase ‘poor food’ it is unclear if she means unhealthy food, or food that marks her daughter as living in poverty. She may have meant both. In Chapter Seven I discuss in more detail how a discourse around healthy food emerged in many interviews as participants talked about their aspirations for providing food for their families.

5.5 Interacting with food assistance programs: Shame, resignation, and normalization

While relying on intimate circles of family and friends was one way that most of my interviewees manage food insecurity, many also reflected on times that they have used food banks or other food assistance programs. Of the 21 people I interviewed in Kingston, 14 of them had visited a food bank one or more times as an adult. Considerably fewer - only five- had attended hot meal programs. All five of them became volunteers in meal programs, while continuing to receive food assistance as clients. Eight interviewees had accessed student nutrition programs for their children, at their schools, through after-school programming, or in school-readiness programming.

Most of the literature on household food insecurity and food bank use in Canada describes feelings of shame, or loss of dignity in using food banks (Loopstra & Tarasuk 2012; Hamelin Beaudry & Habicht, 2002; Williams et al., 2012). While this was true of many of my interviewees, it was not universal. Interviewees expressed a range of opinions and feelings about their need for food banks and meal programs, and recounted different experiences of using them. People also framed the use of different kinds of food assistance programs as quite distinct from one another. Each model of food assistance
program was understood differently, and people presented rationales for using or not using one or another type of service.

5.5.1 Shame
In the Kingston region, 95 schools in both the public and catholic school boards receive food from the Food Sharing Project, a local charity that provides light lunches, snacks and breakfasts in local schools. The food is intended for children at risk of food insecurity, although in an attempt to de-stigmatize the program, the food is usually available in classrooms to any child who seems to need or want it, and many classrooms offer open access to the basket of snacks and lunch items. For the parents I spoke with, the idea that their children may be accessing this food was something they struggled with. They were concerned that it might identify their child as being in need and thus mark the parents as bad parents.

I've definitely had Fridays where kid goes to school with crackers and a granola bar or just a banana, and I say “sorry, that's not very much” and he says “that's ok I'll just take something out of the snack bin”. And to me, I was mortified when I first heard that, you feel embarrassed as a parent, it's like, what will the teacher think that he has to go to the snack bin? But then I thought they're all like 11 years old, and voracious, so I betcha that they all just are looting that snack bin like demons. (Derrick, May, 2016)

Madeline echoes this concern:

There have been days where I've been busy and broke, and just haven't gotten groceries, and I go to throw something in the bag and I think "oh jeez, I don't know, I hope there's not going to be a red flag going up (May, 2016)

Both interviewees are well-educated, and carry considerable middle class social and cultural capital despite their current situations living on limited income. On the other hand, Trina, a lone parent who has lived most of her adult life on ODSP and is raising
two teenagers and has no post-secondary education, was adamant that her children had
never, and would never, use such a program because of the stigma: “There is absolutely
no way my kids would go and use something like that, showing them to be… nope. Not
gonna happen”.

Some of my interviewees expressed that they would never (or never again) use
the food bank:

I went to the food bank once, and I have never felt so ashamed, and I have
never gone back. There have been times when things have been really, really
tight. And I've been without milk, and... well all sorts of things. […] No, I'd be
hard pressed to go back to the food bank today. (Alison, April, 2016)

“The food bank? Oh, no way. I can’t eat that food and I won’t eat that
food. And I don’t want to be part of that system anyhow.” (Duncan,
May, 2016)

One interviewee was very grateful for the help he received from the food bank:

Out of the 5 or 6 months I was struggling so bad, I went to the food bank
twice...and it was a really easy process, considering I was nervous. And
what I got from the food bank was incredible. It helped us so much that
month. Just having all the pasta and canned spaghetti and beans and
things, where all I really had to worry about buying was a little bit of
ground beef if you want to put that in something, which I do, and fruits
and vegetables for the kid. (Derrick, May, 2016)

Despite his gratitude for the food from the food bank, like Alison above Derrick
expressed anxiety about being recognized from his previous workplace. “I was very
nervous that someone would be like, ‘oh, you're the guy from [workplace]’ you know?
Like I didn't want to go, and I didn’t want to be recognized, but I had to.”

Similarly, when it came to the idea of using a hot meal program, Alison, who had
worked in the health care system before an injury left her permanently unable to work,
was concerned that she might be recognized by a former patient if she were to eat at a meal program:

> Who I am prevented me from using it. Because a lot of the clients that use Martha’s Table, St George’s, and the others, I've dealt with as patients. And I could not bring myself to go there as a client knowing that I was a caregiver for so many years with them. I mean that was a real hurdle for me. It's what stopped me from going a lot of times. (Alison, April, 2016).

For some people, the very idea of using the food bank versus a meal program represented a dividing line between coping or not. Debb, reflecting on a recent period of homelessness stated: “I had a recent period of homelessness, and I might have done the food bank, but I wouldn’t have done the meals, I've never done the meal programs.” Derrick echoes the sentiment that using meal programs would reflect a level of deprivation he couldn’t accept:

> It's one thing to go to a food bank, you just go in and get out. I'm not such a proud person, but I don't want to go eat soup with people who are street people, because I felt like I wasn't at that place. […] It struck too close to home, and the idea of needing the same things that they did, was terrifying. Because I was only a missed rent away from being there myself (May, 2016).

Several of the people I spoke with are reluctant to use a food bank or a hot meal program, but are happy to receive food assistance through other programs or agencies they interact with. Of the 30 non-governmental agencies providing food to food insecure clients in Kingston in 2016, the majority of them are not stand-alone food providers (Kingston Food Providers, 2016). Instead, they are churches, health clinics, educational support services, immigrant services, parenting support classes, and so on. These are agencies that have identified that their clients are at risk for food insecurity and have
decided to provide a range of services, from snacks and light meals, to groceries or grocery gift cards. Typically, food provision is not part of their mandate, and many of these programs are run ‘off the side of a desk’. When I asked Esther, the lone mother of a toddler, if she ever used a food bank, she scoffed “I don’t need to do that”. However, she expressed enthusiasm and gratitude that the subsidized school-readiness daycare program her son attends feeds the children, and often offers bread and other foods for families to take home. “It’s a relief I don’t have to shop for lunches; it’s one less thing to buy, you know? So there’s that much more left over for other things”. Trina, also set against using food banks, and quite sure that her children would not use the lunch program at school because of stigma, talked candidly about waiting til the last minute to pick them up from Boys and Girls Club when they were younger “So I had two less mouths to feed three times a week! It was great!”. The fact that parents pay a small fee for their children to attend the Boys and Girls Club may create a sense that their children have an entitlement to the food provided, even though these fees are minimal and do not cover the costs of running the after-school programs or the meals they offer. This may account for this parent’s willingness to utilize the food services of Boys and Girls club, though they were unwilling to use free food charities such as food banks.

5.5.2 Resignation
In a study of senior women’s’ experience of food insecurity, Green-LaPierre et al. (2012) found that in contrast to previous work that had been done by the research team, the shame often assumed to be associated with food insecurity and accessing food banks was not apparent in the set of interviews they conducted. Likewise in my research, while some people express shame or resistance at the idea of using food banks and/or meal
programs, other interviewees speak as if they have become resigned to needing to use food banks on occasion, and they do not express shame about it during the interviews. Some speak about food banks or school feeding programs as just one thing in a long list of things that had to be dealt with. Alexandra spoke frankly about her history piecing together social assistance, under the table work, and community services including the food bank. “There were a few months there where we were always at the food bank”. When asked how she felt about that she said: “It was ok. No surprises; you always knew what you were going to get”. Likewise, Maxine, who has been in and out of homelessness, spoke freely about using whatever community and social services were available in order to get through a particularly difficult time when she was homeless and pregnant.

I was living in a tent for, I think it was 5 months, working a full-time job. Sometimes sleeping on a concrete floor next to the dryers at work when it got too cold to be in the tent. No one knew. No one had any clue. I used many resources similar to this one [the food program agency she currently works at]. I wouldn't use the shelters ‘cause they scared me, but I worked really hard to use all the other services I could find, food banks, hot meals, clothing, you name it, because I needed to get my footing before the baby came. I worked hard, got myself off the streets in that 5 months (May, 2016).

These interviewees frame using a food bank or other food assistance programs as stop-gap measures, used as needed to get through difficult times, even if those difficult times are recurring or cyclical as they were for Alexandra. There was no indication that they particularly enjoyed the experience of using a food bank, however, in their logics of practice, the food bank was a free, known resource that could provide what they needed, and they saw no reason not to take advantage of the food it could provide. Likewise, Lesley, in talking about her time as a single mother of a baby, spoke frankly about being
a “member” of the food bank. She just shrugged when I asked what that felt like for her, and said matter-of-factly, “It wasn’t bad, you know. It was close-by and easy”.

5.5.3 Normalization
In addition to the above cases of people who seemed resigned to needing to use food banks occasionally, I also interviewed several people who spoke quite positively about using food banks, having normalized the use of food banks and other forms of food assistance as a regular part of their lives. These people show no indication that they considered the use of food assistance to be shameful, or even merely a stop-gap measure.

Maria, an older woman living on her own, has for years regularly used several food assistance programs in the city, including at least two meal programs and three pantries/food banks. She visits the food banks according to a fixed schedule, and together they provide her with the bulk of her groceries, as well as giving structure to her days.

Well I’m signed up so I can go to the [primary food bank], I’m allowed to go every three months for an update, a little bit of rice and tea and a few things...[pauses], quite a lot of things really. And it’s nice, they’re nice. And then here [at smaller food pantry at which interview took place], it’s nice here too because every two months you can update here; they only give you what you need. They give you what the form says you can have. Like here you have a choice for canned meat of tuna or chicken or salmon but you only get one, so for me, that would be the tuna. And then you have a choice of a vegetable which will be peas or carrot or corn or bean. And then if I need to, there’s the [name of another pantry] which you can only go to if you go to [primary food bank] first and run out (May, 2016).

Brenda and her husband who live on social assistance (OW) also use a variety of food assistance programs in the city each month. They combine a meal program that they attend four or five days a week, with two food pantries, a church outreach program, discount groceries and convenience store shopping to meet their food needs. Brenda
admits that she prefers some programs over others “because of the people”, but overall, she seems content with the arrangement that she and her husband had worked out for providing food for the household.

When I asked Caroline, a middle-aged woman who lives alone on Ontario Works about using food assistance programs, she happily stated:

I go to Martha’s table, I go to St Georges, I go to Salvation Army, I go to St Vincent de Paul’s. I go to them all! And the food bank too, bless them. They’re people. We're all people! (May, 2016).

Caroline is unequivocally enthusiastic in her praise for the quality and quantity of food provided in the programs she visits, as well as for the people she encounters there. Using food banks and meal programs does not seem to be a source of shame for these three interviewees. Interestingly, each of them had become volunteers in at least one of the programs that they frequented.

5.5.4 Cultural capital for navigating food programs

One way of thinking about the slate of knowledge and skills one needs to participate as a client in food assistance programs is as a form of Cultural Capital. Cultural Capital is needed to understand how to perform as a ‘good’ client of a food bank, how to read and integrate into the normative practices of a given meal program, how to navigate among multiple programs - they are all different - and how to move back and forth through the boundaries of client/volunteer positions. Having been a visitor at meal programs and food pantries in Kingston, I realize that I did not automatically know the codes - could you sit with others? Do you converse? What about? Do you talk about the food? Do you offer to help with clean up? How much does my privilege show and how do others read me? It took a long time to become comfortable sitting down to eat at
meal programs; it became infinitely easier when I began to work as a volunteer within one, giving me a clear role to play.

5.5.5 Differences among food assistance programs
There were notable differences in interviewees’ experience of and opinions about different kinds of food assistance programs. Some, like Alison above, would be “hard pressed to go back to the food bank”, while others were resigned to the need for them, or had even normalized the use of food banks and meal programs. For some, the difference between a food bank and a meal program seems to hold symbolic meaning as a marker of how far you have fallen.

When it came to differentiating between kinds of food assistance, some interviewees said that they would seek out help for their children, but not for themselves. Milk vouchers from local churches, a snowsuit fund, back to school supplies funds, and the Salvation Army Christmas hamper program were all mentioned as acceptable forms of charity, even for those interviewees who initially expressed that they would never use a food bank or meal program. Trina, for example, initially insisted that she would never use a food bank or “any of those things”. Later, however, throughout the interview she mentioned several charitable food assistance programs that she and her children have used including the Salvation Army Christmas Hamper (which they continue to use), milk vouchers from a local church when the children were babies, and at the time of the interview her teens were receiving weekly grocery gift cards as participants in Pathways to Education, a program that works with low income youth to provide supports to keep them in school.
Among my interviewees the different attitudes that interviewees expressed about using charitable food assistance seem to align with particular life experiences. While my sample is too small to draw conclusions from, it is interesting to note that those who told me that had first entered ‘the system’ as addicts, homeless, or with mental health challenges, were the ones who had normalized the use of food programs, and ultimately, to have found a kind of family there. Maria, Brenda, and Caroline, Maxine and Devyn each talk fondly about some food programs as a source of social support and care. Each of these interviewees went on to become volunteers and/or find employment in one or more food programs. In each of their cases, their introduction and integration into food programming was brokered by someone in a position of authority; a social worker, clinician, or a staff person in a food program. I identify this as a unique form of social capital, different from that that emerges from informal social networks. I call this Formal Social Capital.

5.6 Formal Social Capital

The importance of Formal Social Capital for managing food insecurity goes beyond what we might think of as typical social networks or social capital based on friends and family. Formal Social Capital is accrued through institutional relationships with social workers, counsellors, probation officers, program managers and so on, and can be a significant element in how some people deal with food insecurity. The formal or institutionalized aspect of this form of social capital differentiates it from the informal social networks I described earlier. While in the case of informal social capital I hypothesize the importance of reciprocity and homogeneity, Formal Social Capital is characterized by the
power differential between the parties, and so neither reciprocity nor homogeneity are attributes of these relationships.

Identifying the phenomenon of Formal Social Capital was troubling, considering the research documenting the negative aspects of these kinds of relationships of surveillance and control that people living in poverty have with social workers or others in positions of authority (Little, 1998; Maki, 2011; Power, 2005). I found the stories amongst my interviewees to be mixed, with several people speaking about the important role that someone in authority - their social worker, counsellor, or a program director - had played in helping them find food assistance they needed.

Several of the people I interviewed people referred to their ‘worker’ as a resource; “My [OW] worker helps me by telling me about things, like programs I can take, or places I could go to get things free. Like dog food, and fruit and things” Brenda goes on to talk about how, after her first visit, she almost didn’t come back to the meal program she now attends every day (and at which she volunteers). Her worker encouraged her to return, and contacted the director of the meal program to make sure that Brenda would feel welcome.

Another interviewee stated

When I go to the parents group, you know at Weller [referring to programming at [a community health centre], they always have food there. They are really nice and there are muffins and fruit, and sometimes food to take home too, like meat or bread and things. I am really close with the teacher there, so she kind of looks out for me (Lisa, May, 2016).

Devynn who had been in and out of the justice system and in recovery from addiction, gives two examples of drawing on Formal Social Capital. First, her addictions counsellor helped her connect with the food programming she needed in the early years
of trying to get clean: “I would have starved without my [addiction support] worker!” She also speaks enthusiastically about her Ontario Works worker from a later period of her life when she was in recovery and housed:

She really had compassion, I mean for a worker. She was paying for some things that were not typical. And she really personalized my situation. And she said, “ok, how can I help you stay on this road?” So she paid for a freezer, for things so I could take care of my food needs, so that I didn't have to go to places that might be precarious for my recovery (April, 2016).

To my knowledge there is no research exploring how face to face human interaction makes a difference in people’s engagement with, and experience of food assistance programs. Research into people’s experience with food assistance programs in Canada primarily focuses either on the nutritional adequacy/inadequacy of the food being provided, or on barriers to participating such as geography, shame, and so on.

Social services and food assistance programs are delivered by people, and the face to face relationships may be an important dimension of social support that is crucial for helping to manage food insecurity in some cases. Further, for those interviewees who reported that their workers were a key support, their perception is that their ‘worker’ was often going beyond the formal requirements of the relationship. They spoke as if their worker was doing them a personal favour, because they cared.

Formal Social Capital can exist in relationship to agents of the state, and also with agents of the charitable sector. My interviewees talked about welfare case workers, probation officers, and even police officers being key contacts that helped them find services they needed. In these cases, in addition to recommending programs, the fact that these connections were initiated by people in positions of authority may have served to
legitimize the use of charitable food programs for these people. Surely anyone would feel more entitled to receive services when your social worker is making calls on your behalf, or comes with you to the agency and introduces you to the program director and other clients and volunteers, as happened in the case of two of my interviewees.

A variation on Formal Social Capital appears in relationships that people may form within the food programs with key staff or volunteers. Some people talk about being asked to help out at the programs they attend.

I like to keep busy, right? So they asked me to help at [name of meal program], and so I might as well eat, right? Cause I’m there? The food’s there, so I don’t bother to buy stuff at the end of the month because I’m in the kitchen at [meal program] anyhow and they let you take leftovers home too. There’s always something you can have (Lenore, May, 2016).

Lenores’s assertion that ‘they asked me to help’ legitimizes her participation in the organization and allows her to fulfill multiple needs. She gets to ‘keep busy’, as she says, and because of the help she provides, she feels she is entitled to receive food, including leftovers to take home, thus finding a dignified solution to food insecurity, at least for one week a month. Working as a volunteer in a meal program may also bring with it some status in other parts of her life. Alison, who early in our interview had been adamant about her refusal to use any food charity, shared a similar story. She volunteered in a meal program at the recommendation of her counsellor as part of her recovery from an opiate addiction:

Part and parcel was I got fed those two nights a week, and the other part was that when there were leftovers, you got to take some leftovers home. So I, um, I supplemented my food budget. And it was healthy, and a way of working. (Alison, April, 2016)
Alison understood her work at the meal program to be something that was prescribed by her counsellor, and therefore it legitimized receiving food from this program, something she states she never would have done otherwise.

These stories about relying on state agents to legitimize and facilitate access to charitable food programs are thought provoking, but they sit in an uneasy relationship to the body of research about the controlling and surveillance roles state agents often play in the governance of the lives of people living in poverty (Little, 1998; Maki, 2011; Power, 2005). It is interesting to note that in some cases, positive relationships of care between ‘workers’ and social assistance clients do exist, and can facilitate access to charitable food assistance when needed. It is troubling, however, that agents of the state in Canada deal with the issue of household and individual food insecurity by referring people to the charitable sector, effectively offloading responsibility for well-being from the state to the private charitable sector.

I have identified a number of strategies that the people I interviewed talked about for managing food insecure households in Kingston, Ontario. In Canada, household food insecurity is generally managed through careful allocation of limited resources so that they stretch to far enough to provide food through the market, though food needs are always balanced with other needs. In addition to these strategies, people rely on the social capital available through family and friendship networks and sometimes, Formal Social Capital that may be accrued through institutionalized relationships that provide access to, and legitimacy in, accessing food assistance. These relationships are understood by the clients as relationships of care based on trust, although they happen in a context of unequal power and authority. In the next chapter I look at parallel themes that emerge
from my field work in Havana, and identify some key differences in how food insecurity is framed and experienced.
Chapter 6
Logics of Practice: Findings in Cuba

As discussed in Chapter One, household food insecurity is not monitored in Cuba the way it is in over 140 other countries in the world (FAO, 2016). Because of the central role food work plays in day-to-day life in Cuba, however, Cuban studies of poverty, deprivation, and growing inequality often itemize the day-to-day problems encountered when attempting to procure and prepare sufficient food and describe strategies used for managing insufficiencies (Añé Aguiloche, 2005; Espina Prieto, 2008; Zabala Argüelles, 2010). It is useful to consider how dynamic configurations of social, cultural and economic capital shape access to food in Havana today.

*El Cubano no puede olvidar pensar en la comida. Todo gira alrededor de que coma. Que haga. Como se resuelva.*

The Cuban cannot stop thinking about food. Everything revolves around what you eat, what you do, how you resolve it (Sofía, Sept, 2015).

Managing household food insecurity in Havana involves even more work than it does in Canada. It takes more time, and multiple members of the household are usually involved in food acquisition at multiple locations. According to my interviews, every-day food work in Havana requires an intricate knowledge of state, private and illicit market resources, budgeting, planning skills and creative cooking skills, and a complex network of reciprocal social and institutional relationships. There is no charitable food sector in Cuba, and so the emergency fall-back is family, friends, and others in one’s social network. Like my Canadian interviewees, my research participants in Havana
demonstrate mastery over the visible and invisible work they must do to put food on the table, although in Havana there was a louder chorus of complaints about the cost and work involved in providing a household with food.

People in Havana frame their food insecurity, as well as the strategies they use to manage it, in ways that emerge from particular shared experiences of the country’s socialist history. This historical legacy combines uncomfortably with a deep sense of uncertainty about the future in an increasingly neoliberal world. Cuban’s have experienced household food security as precarious since facing the food shortages and price increases of the special period. With the opening of the private sector, and the rollback of state guarantees of jobs, housing, and other aspects of livelihood, precarity is increasingly a defining dimension of food insecurity in Havana.

As in Canada, each of my research participants in Havana are adults who bear the primary responsibility for food work in their households, however food work in Cuba looks different than it does in Canada. As discussed earlier, a crucial black or ‘shadow’ market in food and other goods and services exists parallel to state food entitlements, state run markets, and privately run food markets. Two official currencies, each used in different types of stores, complicate the work of finding and affording the food needed. In addition to navigating different locations, for most people in Havana, feeding the household is not possible without relying on a complicated web of reciprocal social relationships.

The households that my Havana interviewees lived in were varied in composition (See Appendix). There were partnered couples living on their own, several three-generation households including grandparents, children and grandchildren; and partnered
adults with school age children. In three cases, adults lived alone, at least most of the time, which each of them spoke about as a luxury. Two of these adults regularly rent a room or their entire apartment to foreigners. The other bounces back and forth between renting a place on her own when she can afford it, and sharing with others, or moving back to her parent’s apartment when she is broke.

Multigenerational households are common in Cuba. One family I know consists of three sisters who live together; one has a young teenager; another has two adult children, one of whom has a husband and a toddler who also live with them. Everyone is working or attending school. The apartment was originally a three-bedroom apartment but over time, they have reconfigured it, building rooms within rooms to accommodate the changing and growing family. In addition to a long cultural history of multigenerational living, a severe housing shortage in Havana means that this kind of situation is not often choice, but a necessity for many (Bastian, 2016).

6.1 Who was interviewed in Havana?

Neighbourhoods in Havana, as in Kingston, are understood to have a class aspect. Some neighbourhoods are understood to be where middle-class people live; some are wealthy, and others are poor areas, or are in transition to being gentrified. These notations are imperfect in any place, and doubly so in Havana where employment and educational status do not map onto income level, and where mobility between neighbourhoods has until recently been very limited.

Here I have marked each neighbourhood with a class indicator;
MC = Middle Class, indicating a high number of professionals and artists, and some foreigners. These neighbourhoods tend to have good transportation networks, and easy access to services (banks, shopping, etc.).

WC = Working Class neighbourhood, with a high number of people working for the state in trades and technical positions. These neighbourhoods tend to be less centrally located, but still with functional transportation networks. The commercial areas tend to be limited.

UC = Upper Class, indicating a high number of government dignitaries and foreign residents (diplomats, international business people, etc.).

Table 2. Havana Research Participants Profiles (Aliases)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n</th>
<th>Alias</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CU</td>
<td>Alicia</td>
<td>F Key Informant; Retired from state job, informal sector work helping tourists find apartments, lives with son and daughter in law.</td>
<td>Vedado MC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU</td>
<td>Paloma</td>
<td>F State employee; lives with partner and adult son</td>
<td>Vedado MC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU</td>
<td>Marta</td>
<td>F Key Informant; Retired from state job; rents out room in apartment</td>
<td>Cerro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU</td>
<td>Berta</td>
<td>F Runs a café from home; lives with Violeta</td>
<td>Playa UC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>F Works in state job as radiologist; lives with Isabel; occasionally works in informal sector making and selling food; cares for terminally ill daughter and grandchildren</td>
<td>Playa UC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU</td>
<td>Telma</td>
<td>F Retired; working at another state job teaching at a vocational school; lives with husband and rents rooms.</td>
<td>Centro WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU</td>
<td>Graciela</td>
<td>F Retired; care taker for grandchild who lives with her part time.</td>
<td>Cerro WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU</td>
<td>Eduardo</td>
<td>M Works in informal sector as mensajero (paid to pick up and deliver rations for 25 households). Lives with partner Victor.</td>
<td>Cerro WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victor</td>
<td>M Works in state job as a nurse. Lives with Eduardo.</td>
<td>Cerro WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU08</td>
<td>Imelda</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marcela</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU09</td>
<td>Beatriz</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irena</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU10</td>
<td>Abril</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manuel</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU14</td>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Daughter and Son in Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU15</td>
<td>Melba</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU16</td>
<td>Mariana</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Son and Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU17</td>
<td>Erika</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU18</td>
<td>Luis</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU19</td>
<td>Lucas</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lucia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU20</td>
<td>Mariposa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU21</td>
<td>Manuela</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU22</td>
<td>Sofia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Luz</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU23</td>
<td>Martina</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU24</td>
<td>Josue</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elena</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2 “No es facil” - It’s not easy

Almost to a person, when asked to describe a day in relation to food work, my interviewees used the phrase “no es facil” - it’s not easy. Daily life in Cuba is characterized as a ‘battle’, as economic hardship, and a series of problems to be solved. Typical phrases that peppered my interviews as well as my everyday life in Havana include: “Hay que luchar cada día” - “You have to struggle every day”. “Todo en la comida” - “Everything goes to food” and “Trabajamos para sobrevivir” - “We work to survive” (from interviews and field notes).

Food work in Cuba includes the tangible daily work of shopping and cooking, as well as the invisible work of tracking food availability through multiple sources, planning, inventing, managing school and workplace lunches, and, always, standing in line. Together the visible and invisible work takes an inordinate amount of time. “En la cocina es tiempo” - “in the kitchen/cooking, is time” as one of my interviewees stated.

Davidson and Krull’s (2011) research on the gendered nature of food work in Cuba found

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>26</th>
<th>CU</th>
<th>Ofelia</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Informal sector tour guide; lives with parents formally, but often stays with friends</th>
<th>Alamar WC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>CU</td>
<td>Dalia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Student at University; lives with partner and partners parents</td>
<td>Vedado MC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>CU</td>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Professor at University who studies poverty and inequality; lives with her son.</td>
<td>Cerro WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>CU</td>
<td>Maricela</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Technician for state enterprise; lives with her parents and sister.</td>
<td>La Lisa WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>CU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14 The phrase “no es facil” is so ubiquitous in Cuban conversation that it is now featured on a line of t-shirts produced by an independent Cuban design company.
that women spent just over 4 hours per day on food work. Shopping for food took up just over 2 hours, and cooking, just under 2 hours.

Within the general sense that ‘it isn’t easy’ is a uniquely Cuban discourse of what is involved in feeding a household. When coding my field notes, three verbs kept appearing when Cubans talk about the work involved in acquiring and preparing food for the household; resolver - to resolve; inventar - to invent; and luchar - to battle. Many other researchers have noted and analyzed the use of these words in day-to-day conversation in Cuba, often, but not exclusively, in relation to food (see for example, Alfonso, 2012; Andaya, 2007; Bastian, 2016; Weinreb, 2009; and Powell, 2008).

6.2.1 Resolver

In the context of food work in Cuba, resolver means to solve a problem, usually by ‘working around’ it. It doesn’t refer to a permanent resolution, but rather a short-term solution to one problem. Resolver usually infers participation in the informal economy or using an otherwise socially-networked solution. When Telma discusses a complicated illicit supply chain that nets her the milk she desires but doesn’t receive through her rations, it’s difficult to follow the series of steps and relationships she describes. She ends her convoluted explanation with “...pero Bueno, que al final resuelva un problema asi” - “but fine, at the end a problem is solved in this way”.

In another case, Imelda, when asked how she manages to supply herself and her grandchild with sufficient food while living on a state pension of approximately 200 pesos per month, the equivalent of about eight dollars, begins her explanation with: “Siempre la misma; resolver” - “Always the same; we resolve it”. She goes on to describe a combination of state entitlements, trading with people, family sending food
from the countryside, and favours from neighbours and friendly vendors that help her resolve the problem of food procurement on her limited budget. To ‘resolve’ food issues in Cuba almost always involves other people, and I discuss the complex network of reciprocal social relations necessary for the day-to-day management of food insecurity in more detail below.

6.2.2 Inventar
When it comes to work in the kitchen, the word *inventar* inevitably arises. As I was told many times during my research, “*los Cubano inventan!*” - “Cubans invent!”. Cubans famously ‘invent’ creative solutions in many areas. According to Rosendahl (2001), in Cuba *inventar* “[...] refers to all activities and transactions in which people used their imagination to find solutions to the lack of food, clothing and other necessities.” To Inventar covers a vast array of activities, possibly the most iconic being the ability to repair classic American automobiles without access to factory made spare parts. Inventar, like resolver, also refers to finding ways of participating in the informal market, and in this way, it’s use is similar to the word resolver. In the case of food work, however, people in my interviews used the word inventar to mean substituting ingredients in a recipe or combining foods in a new way. For example, when visiting a friend’s house in Havana in 2004, I was offered crackers with a spread that tasted vaguely like paté. When I asked what it was, I was told ‘*un invento*’ - an invention. It was hotdogs and cooked spaghetti blended together to create a meat paste. Boniato, a sweet potato that prior to the special period was primarily used as animal feed, became a staple root vegetable in most homes. It remains a staple, and fried boniato appears in homes and on restaurant menus alike. Boniato is also often prepared as a dessert called *boniatillo* stewed with sugar syrup
into a kind of pudding. The idea of ‘inventar’ as a strategy used in the home is closely tied to food-stuff substitutions in state food entitlements, and so ‘inventar’ is tied into the revolutionary project. Dried, boniato became a source of flour used in baked goods and remains a common substitute or extender for wheat flour in state bakeries, ground meat rations are always extended with soy protein, and chicharro - ground dried peas - are used to extend the coffee rations. Cuban’s express a mixture of pride and ruefulness about these inventos - both the homemade and the state provisioned.

The phrase “la necesidad es la madre de la invención” - ‘necessity is the mother of invention’ - is as common in Cuban Spanish as it is in English. The word inventar appears in accounts of Havana culture and society before and immediately after the revolution, and is considered part of a historical notion of Cubanidad or Cubania - Cuban-ness (Butterworth, 1980). During the special period, inventar took on new significance as day-to-day survival became dependent on it. While the special period is over, the word inventar remains significant as Cubans continue to use creative solutions to navigate the complexities of food availability and shortages in the new Cuba¹⁵.

6.2.3 Luchar
The overarching word to describe how Cubans manage day-to-day existence is luchar - to battle or struggle. As one of my interviewees stated, “Realmente, vivir es una lucha aqui” which translates directly as “Truly, to live here is a battle”, but it the vernacular meaning, might also translate as “Truly, to live here, you have to work the system”. As one of my key informants explained patiently to me “The word luchar has a thousand

¹⁵ During interviews, several people remarked that the special period has never really ended when it comes to food.
meanings”. Often, on the street Cubans greet each other with “¿oye, como anda?” -“hey, how’s it going?” and will respond with “voy pa’ la lucha” - “I’m going to the battle” or simply “luchando”- “battling”. In this case, it may mean that they are simply going to the bodega for rations, or to the market for fruits and vegetables. But it might mean other things as well, including illicit activities. Victor, in his 50s, grew up in the countryside, and now works in the informal economy in Havana. He talks about his ‘lucha’ for food procurement in this way; “you go to work, you battle; go to the countryside and you battle some more; go to the market and battle again”. In her ethnography of contemporary small town in Cuba, Weinreb notes;

To a certain extent, everyone is luchando [battling] in the current regime, whether by pilfering goods from the state warehouse, working without a license, evading taxes on income or avoiding state services through a black market network (2009, p. 67)

Below I explore in more detail the sum of strategies - la lucha - within the informal economy, that Cubans use to ‘resolver’ food insufficiency and other deprivations in Havana.

6.3 “No Alcansa”: Strategies for managing at the household level

As in Canada, much of the work done to manage household food insecurity in Havana happens within the household sphere. Most people survive on very low incomes. The state intends that people use a combination of entitlements (monthly rations, workplace meals or meal allowances, school meals/snacks) and their earned (legal) incomes to fulfill their household food needs, however this is a challenge for most Cubans. Cuban research on poverty and inequality in Havana (Espina Prieto, 2011, Garcia & Cruz, 2011; Zabala Argüelles, 2010) along with ethnographic research by non-Cubans (Bastian, 2016;
Davidson & Krull, 2011; Garth, 2014; Weinreb, 2009; Wilson, 2014), outline the impossibility of managing solely on income, food entitlements, and the legal market. Of course, the ration system is not intended to fully satisfy nutritional needs, however many people noted that what is still available on the rations is worth less and less to the household. As Emanuel states emphatically when talking about the rations, “Lo que nos dan no resuelva nada!” “That which they give us [through the rations] doesn’t solve anything!” On the other hand, according to more than one of my interviewees, many believe that some Cubans do manage to survive only on the state subsidized rations, though no one understands exactly how: “Hay personas que viven con la libreta y nada mas, que viven, no se como, pero viven!” - “There are people who live on the rations and nothing else; they live, I don’t know how, but they live!” (Carla).

6.3.1 Compromising quality and quantity
Within the household in Havana, budgeting, careful cooking, and allocation of duties among family members are common strategies for managing food insecurity. However, as in Canada, in Havana no amount of careful planning and budgeting can compensate for the reality of insufficient income for an adequate diet, even in a highly subsidized food market. When I ask what the main problem is with putting food on the table, I hear “no alcanza” which translates simply as “it doesn’t reach”, a reference both to limited incomes that never stretch far enough to buy all that is needed, and to the rations that don’t stretch far enough to feed the family. Interviewees vacillated as to whether food prices were too high, or salaries were too low; most mentioned both. Either way, there was consensus that “everything goes to food” (Marcela, Paloma); or a commonly expressed sentiment; “I/we work to eat” (Amanda, Berta, Imelda, Luis Marta).
The necessity of compromising food quality due to lack of income was a common thread throughout my Havana interviews. Most people’s complaints referred to having insufficient meat, or the lack of affordable fish. Many Cubans (like many Canadians) equate protein with meat or fish, and so although the Cuban diet tends to include rice and beans, and/or eggs every day, several of my interviewees complained about the lack of protein in their diets. The primary meat available to Cubans in the free market is pork, which is available fresh at the larger agricultural markets. Occasionally you can also find lamb and even rabbit, which was promoted as an economical meat source in the earlier days of revolutionary Cuba. Beef, other than the ground beef available through the rations, is usually only available in convertible pesos through supermarkets. This is very expensive for the average Cuban, with prices comparable to Canadian supermarket prices for beef. As one interviewee said;

   It’s [steak] hard to find anyhow, and expensive, at least for Cubans, at maybe nine dollars per kilogram. Nine dollars! And my pension only brings me eight! So what does that leave me? Less than nothing! I don’t know, but I think that would be expensive for anyone, no? (Marta, November, 2015)

Another states:

   Yes, but it’s a very poor situation, the problem with protein. It’s all the shopping [in convertible pesos], and we just can’t do it. And in Cuban pesos, it [beef] doesn’t exist. There is only pork (Victor, September, 2015).

   In Havana, any discussion about protein inevitably turns to talk of eggs. Eggs have long been an affordable and palatable source of protein. They also hold symbolic importance for many in Cuba. Several people recounted times during the Special Period when the only animal protein available was eggs, garnering them the nickname
salvavidas - lifesavers. Eggs remain a complicated commodity in Havana. Each citizen receives 5 eggs per month through the rations at the subsidized price of one Cuban peso per egg (approx. 5 cents). You can purchase more through the same outlets, ‘por la libre’ - at supply and demand market prices - at 15 cents/egg. There are also often eggs on the black market for a range of prices, and if you are lucky, you may be able to work out a deal with a neighbor who has hens. Cubans continue to rely on eggs as an affordable source of protein, although some have a love-hate relationship with them: “The Cuban has eggs and bread for breakfast, eggs for lunch and later, eggs for dinner - we’ve had it up to here with the damned egg!” (Berta). Despite this, she remarked that she still prefers eggs to what she called “productos estrategicos” - “strategic products”, a reference to food such as the ground beef extended with soy protein, or the soy yogurt available to children through the rations. In one interview, when I made a casual comment about not being able to find eggs in my neighbourhood, I ended up leaving with four eggs carefully wrapped up in paper and plastic, despite my protestations. I should have known better - many times when I have mentioned my difficulties in finding eggs to my friends in Havana, they have shown up with the eggs the next day, as if by magic.

When asked about the typical Cuban diet, my interviewees considered Cuban cuisine extensive, at least in theory. At the same time, they complained about the monotony of food in their own household because they can’t afford a diet with variety;

I’ll give you one example; the meat that we eat is only pork. And mostly in thin steak form. Now I am so bored with always having pork steak. And so I’d like to eat other things, but our money doesn’t stretch to afford it (Manuela, September, 2015).
Many people I spoke with claimed that the Cuban diet includes a wide variety of foodstuffs. These claims are based on the idea of a national cuisine which is imagined and promoted through popular cooking television shows and widely distributed Cuban cookbooks, and not necessarily through the lived reality of Cuban mealtimes. The everyday reality is much more constrained by price and availability of ingredients, as well as by habit formed over years of shortages in the market. People are aware of the dissonance between the promoted image of the Cuban diet and what they feel they are actually able to procure. People told me about many dishes that they knew about, or remembered from a special occasion, but the actual household diets that were recounted to me were universally narrow in scope, with only minor variations. The most often mentioned foods prepared in the home were rice, black beans, other beans, root vegetables, plantains, fried pork, chicken, eggs, tomatoes, cucumber, spaghetti, and for households with children, hotdogs. Seasoning depends almost exclusively on readily available garlic, green pepper, lime, bitter orange, cumin, oregano and salt because “that’s what there is in the market; to find other things you have to look further and pay more and quite likely, they still won’t exist” (Melba). Only one interviewee, Lucas, a professor in his 40s who is married and has two children, spoke disparagingly and matter-of-factly about Cuban cuisine. “Aquí en Cuba, se comen dieta de esclavos - arroz, frijoles, carnes, vianda. Muy poco variedad” - “Here in Cuban we eat the food of slaves - rice, beans, meat, root vegetables. Very little variety.” He says that his family is able to find the food needed to survive, but not necessarily the food they would choose to eat if they had more choice.

6.3.2 Managing food prices
Food prices are a preoccupation for everyone I interviewed in Havana. As discussed in Chapter Four, the rations provide less than half of average caloric requirements for adults (Lam, quoted in Togores & García, 2004) and these calories are concentrated in sugar and rice. The remainder must be purchased in the parallel state market, private sector markets, or in the black market. In order to get vegetables and fruit, people visit the agro-mercados - the fruit and vegetable markets in which everyone must shop, as vegetables and fruit are not distributed through the rations. Over the duration of my field research, prices of produce in Cuba steadily increased. All of my interviewees were preoccupied with these rising prices, and very aware of different prices in different outlets around the city. Their strategies for dealing with high food prices relative to income include travelling to shop at markets outside their neighbourhood, waiting for large monthly centralized agricultural fairs, and knowing how to avoid being ‘cheated’ by staying aware of reasonable prices.

6.3.3 Choosing or not choosing where to shop
Grocery items are, or might be on any given day, available through several different outlets in Havana. While some foods, such as fruits and vegetables, are available only in the agricultural markets, other things such as rice, beans, cooking oil, vinegar, pasta, meat, and so on are available in different qualities, at different prices at the state-run bodega, in unsubsidized Cuban peso stores, in convertible peso outlets, or through the informal market. Knowing where something is available, of what quality, and at what price, shapes how Cubans decide where and when to shop for food. My interview

16 Generally my interviewees claimed the rations provided fewer than half the calories they consumed; I heard estimates of from 10 - 30%, and many claims that the food from the rations lasts no more than a week.
transcripts are peppered with my questions asking for clarification about how these decisions are made.

Some agricultural markets in Havana are state run, while others are part of the private sector. There are markets in all neighbourhoods, and all sell their produce in Cuban pesos, but there are significant price differences, particularly between state run and private markets. Many interviewees in Havana name specific state run markets that are well known for having a good variety but lower prices, notably the markets at Tulipan, and at 17 and K - as being worth the bother of making a special trip to, despite the fact that for many people it involves a long and complicated excursion. The market at 17 and K is located in a relatively well-to-do neighbourhood, and is known for having good quality produce and low prices, even compared to other state run markets. One interviewee explained that both the market at Tulipan and at 17 and K, are projects of the Ejercito Juvenil del Trabajo - the youth workers’ army comprised of youth fulfilling their military service by participating in the operation of this market. When I asked why this model wasn’t replicated for other markets in the city, no one had an answer.

One woman, who lived close to the market at 17 and K talked about her household’s proximity to this market as key to their being able to solve food problems relatively easily. They said they could keep an eye on prices and buy ‘in the moment’ when they needed things. In another case, the members of a household located in a more upscale neighbourhood claimed that they couldn’t afford food in the nearby markets, and always had to travel far to find state markets to buy food they could afford. They expressed frustration that the low prices weren’t available to everyone in Havana;

I have to travel so far just for one thing, one little guava, one little pepper, and why? Why do they think that only rich people live here, who
can afford these high prices? I know plenty of people who are like me (Carla, September, 2015).

Travelling between neighbourhoods can be costly and time consuming. Some people said that because of travel, they had to choose between sticking to their work schedule and accessing cheaper markets which, in Havana, are only open during working hours.

There are various products a little less expensive, like you see at Tulipan Market or at 17 and K, and so on. Those products are very good, and of all kinds - they sell agricultural products, vegetables, meat, corn meal, and so on. Everything you need. And they are much cheaper, but one can only go if one doesn’t have to work, because of the hours (Telma, September, 2015).

Another strategy mentioned by several people was to attend the large monthly agricultural fairs that are held in rotation among different neighbourhoods in Havana. Beatriz explained them this way;

They hold them once a month, or at least, they are supposed to be once a month [laughs]. This is something that’s gone on for many years, and these days I think they even are a little better. For us it’s the third weekend of the month. It’s not always that the prices are so much better, sometimes they are about the same as in the market or just a little bit less, but the real advantage is that they have almost everything you are looking for in one place. Not only vegetables. There’s meat and cleaning products, and spices, corn flour for tamales, you know? So you can do all your shopping for a week or more. Of course agricultural products aren’t very durable, but you can buy things such as beans at a good price, or squash or boniato, or even meats (September, 2015).

Several interviewees referred to these agricultural fairs. In each case what made them attractive was the savings in money and time. With these monthly agricultural fairs, there is an opportunity to save time by purchasing a week or more’s worth of food at once. Typically people in Havana spend a lot of time going to several outlets throughout the
week to get the food they need. I talked about this with several of my key informants, and asked why people didn’t buy more in each trip to their regular markets, and so make fewer trips, explaining the more common Canadian habit of less frequent trips with larger grocery purchases. The answers varied, but it usually came down to available financial resources.

We have to look for the best deals; tomatoes might be 4 pesos today and 2 pesos tomorrow so why should I buy them all today?” or “I have to go to so many places to get things of good quality that I can afford; I can’t do that all in one place, all in one day (Marta, November, 2015).

Another commonly cited reason referenced lack of transportation, another problem tied to lack of financial resources.

Food [from the fruit and vegetable market] is so heavy! And I have to walk, always walk, usually on my way home from work, and how can I carry all that I need? If I go to the [agricultural] fair my brother-in-law will drive because they go too, and so I can bring home much more. But every day? No, it’s not possible, I would need a taxi or something![laughs]” (Mariposa, September, 2015).

There may also be historical or cultural reasons for shopping more frequently for smaller quantities, as is common in many places in the world. However, it is interesting to note that none of my interviewees cited cultural reasons, and instead expressed that their inability to shop in quantity was a hardship which was based on limited financial and time resources.

In the Havana interviews there was a preoccupation with the prices of different foods. While people in Kingston might remark that some food items were unaffordable, in Havana I often heard long, itemized lists of what things cost, along with where and when those prices were encountered. This happened during interviews, but also in
everyday conversations with friends and acquaintances. I had the opportunity to interview
a retired couple who had been *bodegueros*; for 30 years they managed the bodega where
people came to purchase their rations in their neighbourhood. Almost the entire two-hour
interview was a recitation of prices, comparing subsidized and free market prices over 30
years.

The price of food occupies an important place in the minds of my research
participants in Havana. People often cited me a price they had encountered, then sat back
looking incredulous, assuming I would understand how unreasonable it was: “At that
market a green pepper, one green pepper, costs you 8 pesos, for one!” or “The guava,
sometimes I have to buy it for 5 pesos per pound. Five! Can you believe it?” A keen
awareness of variations in food prices allows Habaneros to know when and where they
are encountering a good deal, and when they should look elsewhere for what they need.
In the absence of the ubiquitous grocery store flyers we encounter in Canada, word of
mouth plays a similar role of keeping people up to date about where they can find the
best prices for the products they need. This reliance on word of mouth is one of the
reasons that food procurement is such a common topic of day-to-day conversation
among Cubans. I discuss this in more detail below.

Closely tied to talk about food prices, research participants in Havana frequently
warned me about the importance of being vigilant in the market to avoid being taken
advantage of by unscrupulous market vendors who would short-change you on the weight
of meat or produce. While at first this seemed paranoid, the more I came to understand
how money is made in the shadow market by skimming off from the formal market, the
more sense it made that a vendor may indeed try to take advantage of customers by selling short weights or intentionally giving incorrect change.

During interviews people reminisced about food prices in Cuba during the 1980s, when the rations provided more food items, in larger quantities, and of better quality, and when affordable imported food products from the USSR were available in the markets. People spoke about canned meat and canned vegetables with nostalgia, as affordable time-saving conveniences that are missing from the stores shelves in Havana today.

Discussion of food prices in Havana inevitably turn to memories of the special period during which food prices skyrocketed and many items disappeared from the market altogether. While there were many stories of deprivation during the Special Period, some people are quick to assert that today, one can get anything in Havana if you have the money. One small business person told me that if their business prospered, they would be able to buy food ‘destined for tourists’ to improve the variety within their household diet. Others, like Victor, however, disagree. He notes:

Among the products that you see in the shopping [stores in convertible pesos], there is little variety. 7 different jars of mustard? 13 types of pasta? Why? Olives, yes, sure, but other products? They don’t exist. No tomato sauce, for example, no cheese, nothing (November, 2015).

My observations in the market support what Victor describes. On multiple trips from 2004 - 2016, I have never found it to be the case that with money you could buy ‘anything’ in Havana. The supply of many items, even in the ‘dollar’ stores, is unpredictable and limited. In addition to the unpredictable availability of eggs as noted above, I have encountered shortages of many other staples. For years, potatoes were only

---

17 In Cuba, the term ‘el dollar store’ spoken in English, refers to stores that price food and other goods in Cuban Convertible Pesos, more or less equivalent in value to US dollars. They are also known as ‘el shopping’.

250
available in the shadow market, and then only occasionally at any price, although now they are again available through the rations after a decade-long absence. On one visit, I spent several days looking for mayonnaise, usually a staple in the high-priced grocery stores, but for some reason, not available at that moment in any of the several stores I frequent on my ‘rounds’. On another visit, vino seco - cooking wine, a key ingredient in many Cuban dishes and usually ubiquitous in the grocery stores was unavailable in my neighbourhood. I came across it in another neighbourhood by chance, and I saw only three bottles on the shelf. National brands of pop, beer, cheese, butter, ground meat, cans of tuna, and many other staple items appear and disappear from the market without apparent reason. For Cubans, though, compared to the scarcities of the special period, the air-conditioned grocery stores with their relatively full shelves (even though one aisle may contain nothing but bottles of cooking oil), must seem like sites of abundance and limitless choice, out of reach for the average Cuban.

While most interviewees in Havana complained extensively about having to compromise the quality of the food they ate because they couldn’t afford a better diet, I heard very few stories about compromising the quantity of food they ate. Hannah Garth, an anthropologist studying food practices in Cuba’s second largest city, Santiago de Cuba observed a similar dynamic:

The response many of my research participants gave to the initial explanation of my research, a study of household food acquisition and consumption practices, was - “Aquí no hay comida!” [here there is no food]. But even as these discourses of scarcity circulated widely, I was observing families sitting down to heaping plates of rice, beans, pork, yuca, salad, fruits, fresh squeezed juices, followed by homemade desserts and coffee (2014, p. 232).
Many of my interviewees were quick to share stories of deprivation they suffered during the special period, a time during which Cubans were forced to sacrifice food quantity as well as quality. I suggest that the shock of sudden food deprivation experienced in Cuba during the special period continues to shape the habitus of Cubans today when it comes to food sufficiency.

While the special period represents a particularly difficult time of deprivation in Cuba, many of the conditions that marked that era continue today. The early 1990s marked the beginning of a steady retraction of state food entitlements. The introduction in 1962 of measures to ensure equal access to food for all was an important symbol of the commitment of the new Cuban government to the wellbeing of the people. The roll back of these entitlements also holds symbolic weight in the minds of Cuban people. While many of my interviewees were well informed and realistic about the cost to the state of continuing universal programs, not knowing what might happen in the future seems to be cause for some anxiety for many. When asked what changes in they might anticipate on the horizon for access to food, most answered with a version of “no se, no se; Cuando yo lo vea te lo hare saber” - “I don’t know, I don’t know; When I see it I’ll let you know.”(Marta)

On the other hand, by the end of interviews, many people expressed cautious optimism that regardless of world events or changes in internal policies, ultimately Cuba will be able to ‘resolver’, on a national level, the problem of food insecurity for the people. Erika doesn’t expect much change in the short term, but has confidence that changes will bring better days in the long run: “The experience that we have had, at least for my generation [in her 60s], until today, is that it always takes a long time to see a
change. But in the end? In the end I know we will be fine. Above all, we are Cubans!”.

Cubans are aware of, and proud of their exceptionalism in the global imagination. Having resisted US imperialism and achieved admirable human development milestones including universal health care and education they are justly proud, despite the challenges they now face, of what Cuba has achieved. Just as the hangover from the special period creates a sense of precarity and anxiety about food sufficiency, some of the legacies of the revolution such as commitment to the collective good, and a sense of engagement as citizens in the national revolutionary project, continues to resonate in the confident answers that people gave me about the hope of addressing food insecurity in Cuba. As Amanda says after a long discussion of changes afoot “a probar lo que somos” - “It will be a test of who we are as Cubans.”

6.3.4 “It’s difficult, if not impossible, to plan”
Careful planning and budgeting do not emerge as strategies for managing food insecurity in Havana the way they do in my Kingston interviews. In Havana, my interviewees speak as if supply and prices are so unpredictable that there is no way to plan. Instead people plan *al momento* - in the moment, when they are on the street or at the market

    The problem is, that to find food, you can think today, that you are going out to find ground meat. That’s your plan. And you go all over the city to find it. But in the stores that you go to, there isn’t any ground meat, not today. So you have to go further, or else change your plan. And in place of the ground meat, you find, I don’t know, chicken viscera, … and so, you change your idea from ground meat to chicken viscera. And then what will you have with that? You have to change everything. That’s just one example (Marta, September, 2015).

This lack of advance planning, (or framed differently, an enhanced ability to plan on the fly) is a hallmark of Havana culture and is often attributed to the unpredictable supply of
basic foods in the market as well as things such as inadequate and unpredictable public transportation, the breakdowns of cars and other equipment with no capacity to repair them quickly, and frequent blackouts and water and gas shut-offs make planning anything difficult. Among my interviewees, Cubans do not tend to frame their inability to stick to a plan to manage household food needs as a personal failure in the way that the Canadians I interviewed tend to, as there are so many things beyond their control in everyday life.

**6.3.5 Supplementing income legally and illegally**
Incomes in Havana, particularly those from state sector jobs, do not cover the cost of living. Most people who work in these jobs have to find a way of supplementing their incomes. For some, the extra comes from family members who live abroad and send remittances. For many others, income can only be supplemented by taking on part-time work in addition to one’s regular job. In some cases this work is legal, and in others it is not.

‘Todo tiene su lucha’ - everyone has their battle. In my case, I rent part of my apartment, off the books, without permission [without a state license for renting], and for this I receive a small amount of money in CUC [convertible pesos] which helps me make up my income for my monthly costs. Not to buy myself clothes, or electronic equipment, or furniture, or anything special, only for food and household supplies. This, my dear, is my lucha (Marta, September, 2015).

Among my interviewees were seven people who had retired from state sector jobs, collecting a pension of 200 pesos per month which is equivalent to approximately 8 US dollars. While the monthly subsidized food rations for one person costs the equivalent of less than 50 cents (approximately), this accounts for only a small percentage of the diet. The other 65-90% including all fruits and vegetables, beverages, and most meats,
must be bought on the free market. A pound of pork costs about a dollar for the cheapest cut. A pineapple also costs around a dollar. There are no longer subsidies for clothing, shoes, or household cleaning products (field notes, November, 2016).

Three of the retirees I spoke with received family remittances from outside the country which they admitted significantly supplemented their food budgets or ‘relived the pressure’. The remainder had devised various ways of making money in order to make ends meet - what many referred to as un part-time. I am sure that I never heard the whole story about extra-legal market activities in my interviews, even from people I know well. As I discussed in Chapter Three, despite the measures I took to preserve anonymity and build trust with my interviewees, it is likely that many illicit activities would have been kept from me, or couched in vague references to luchar, resolver, or inventar.

Women in Cuba officially retire at age 60, meaning that there are plenty of educated, healthy women willing and able to continue in the workforce long after they retire from their state sector job. One of my interviewees had recently taken on a new full-time job, working in an educational program in the trades for youth who were not bound for formal technical training or university. When I asked if she enjoyed it she said “It’s fine. I don’t mind it but really I do it more out of necessity that for enjoyment” (Telma). Telma lives with her husband of many years who is also retired, although I assume, from some veiled references in my conversation with her, and from several loud phone calls he made and received while I was in their home, that he also had some income generating activity going on. He owns a motorcycle, which gives him what Cubans refer to as posibilidades - an asset that could be leveraged for earning money by running errands or transporting people.
Skills, assets, social capital and cultural capital accrued through a lifetime are mobilized to generate income, before and after retirement, in order to help with household costs including food. Most of these retired interviewees I spoke with piece together their monthly income from a combination of retirement pensions, help from family, and engagement in other informal sector activities including sewing, cooking for other people for special occasions, helping tourists find rental apartments, taking in laundry, doing childcare for a neighbour, renting rooms in their house, and working under the table for someone else’s private business. In addition to these income generating activities, many referred to small regular acts of trading and selling portions of their rations in order to resolve food needs throughout the interviews. After conducting several interviews I realized that the ubiquity of the informal sector in the Havana household economy is such that those activities are more likely to appear casually in conversation about all aspects of daily life, than as answers to specific questions about sources of income or strategies for food procurement.

While opportunities for legal self-employment in many fields have opened up in recent years, countless Cubans continue to work in the informal sector illicitly in order to make enough money to pay for necessities including food. The bureaucracy involved in registering, reporting, and paying taxes discourages many from registering their business activities. One common form of self-employment of particular interest to me is that of mensajero, someone who does the work of collecting rations for other households. People in Havana tell me that this job has existed, for the most part illicitly, since the libreta was introduced back in 1962. Victor acts as a mensajero for 23 households. He is unregistered, although this is now one of the job categories for which one can obtain a
license. As a mensajero he goes to the bodega with a stack of rations booklets and several plastic bags, each labeled with the household and details. He says he makes three or four trips a month to get the dry goods because it’s too much to carry, and besides “otherwise, people don’t like to stand behind me in line!” In addition to these trips, he lines up each and every day to get bread rations for all 23 households. Several times a month he has to go pick up other portions of the rations - eggs, chicken, yogurt and milk for children, and various items available for special medical diets - and delivers them all by bicycle to their respective houses. Listening to Victor’s account of tracking the food entitlements of 23 households brings home to me the tremendous volume of food work in Cuba. Having visited his house several times for interviews, it became common to see piles of eggs, and plastic bags full of rice, beans, sugar and other items piled near his door, waiting for him to deliver them. Because most people who pay a mensajero do so because they work and can’t get to the bodega and other outlets to pick up their rations, his deliveries have to be timed for when people are home to receive them. For this work he is paid a small amount in pesos and with so many households, it provides him with a living. Sometimes he is invited to keep portions of the rations as part of his payment which he can then sell or trade for other goods and services. When I asked other interviewees about mensajeros, all agreed it was an important and useful service, and not ‘really’ part of the black market, even if unlicensed. Marcela’s comment was typical: “We call it ‘informal’, not the black market; it has nothing to do with the state, no one is robbing anyone, no one is doing anything incorrect, it’s just resolving things and giving someone a job.”

Because of the necessity of engaging in the shadow economy to meet food needs, many Cubans frame different kinds of illicit activities differently. In this way people
discursively managing food insecurity so that it doesn’t conflict with people’s sense of themselves as good people, or as revolutionary citizens. Wilson (2012) has written extensively about how the Cubans in her ethnographic research created and managed ‘everyday moral economies’ that included luchando in the informal market economy. Like the people she encountered, my interviewees expressed a combination of both resignation and indignation at the state of the Cuban food economy.

While formal and informal private sector work is providing more and more Cubans with the extra income they need to survive, the emergence of so many small cafes and restaurants is having an unanticipated negative affect on food security for many in Havana. Without a wholesale system for purchasing goods for resale, café and restaurant owners, bakers, people renting rooms including meals, and other new independent businesses source their food from the same markets that everyone shops at. Often striking private deals with market vendors to set aside large quantities of the best quality produce, meat, juice, and so on, these new businesses are blamed for the unpredictability of product supply in the market, as well as for driving prices up. The same problem exists with other supplies such as toilet paper, soap, and cleaning products. “There is nothing worse” stated one interviewee, “than standing in line for eggs for an hour and then the man in front of you takes them all. All of them!” From the other perspective, a café owner I interviewed complained about the lack of wholesale market that could offer what she needed at a good price without her having to “compete with all these people who want just a little of this and a little of that”. The state has not created a wholesale market sector - the role of the ‘middle man’ who makes money from both producer and vendor is held for the state on principle, and in this case, the state is not providing. While there are
rumours of a wholesale market on the outskirts of Havana, lack of transportation, no way of knowing what they have on hand, and the small-scale of most private enterprises in Havana make it prohibitive to use. More and more of the more new businesses strike deals directly with farmers, bypassing the market and system all together. This re-direction of food that would otherwise be destined for public markets is seen as an unfair practice by many Cubans.

In 2016 I visited the first Organoponico that was established in Havana. This is what I noted in my field notes:

We arrived at Organoponico #1 in Miramar just after 8:00 in the morning just as it officially opened. I had hoped to view the garden, talk to some workers, and then purchase some fresh produce - some as a gift to my guide, and some to take home. There was virtually nothing left by the time we arrived, perhaps five heads of lettuce. There were a few customers waiting so we didn’t bother lining up. The young woman at the counter told us that restaurant buyers come while they are harvesting in the morning and buy the lettuce, herbs and arugula that are in season before they even make it to the shelves “Maybe a few people who come early who are long-time customers, maybe they get to buy some too”. Now, she says, she has to sit here until noon with empty shelves, because that is her job. I don’t know if this is happening at all the organoponicos, but it’s troubling (Field notes, 02/2015).

Organoponicos were created to provide urban Cubans with affordable sources of fresh produce. The new Cuban economy is unintentionally disrupting this, at least in some neighbourhoods.

6.3.6 State sector jobs and posibilidades
Many of the people I interviewed worked in state sector jobs. By and large, people spoke proudly about these jobs which included nurses, cleaners, a radiologist, professors, teachers, bookkeepers, office administrators and more. No one claimed that the income from these jobs was adequate to pay for household needs, including food. Increasingly,
though, state-sector jobs offer *un stimulo* ‘stimulus pay’ - extra pay, often in Convertible Pesos, based on workplace productivity. Some interviewees spoke about other benefits their jobs offer, such as occasional gifts of food or other household goods. Some jobs, primarily in the health care sector, still offer mid-day workplace meals, while others offer an allowance with which to purchase lunch. Importantly, the salary and benefits from state sector work provide a steady income, unlike many jobs in the private sector. Despite the typically low incomes, then, maintaining these jobs remains an important source of income for food as well as a source of food itself. Additionally, as state-sector jobs still account for 71% of officially registered jobs in Cuba, skimming from state-owned supplies is the primary source for black market goods (ONEI, 2015).

Stories of *busqueda* - finding ways to skim things from the state - are legendary in Havana. One of my key informants tells me that it is common for people to weigh the relative merits of different jobs based on the possibilities of acquiring items to use or sell rather than by comparing salaries. Not surprisingly, no one I spoke with offered stories of their own experience skimming from the state, although many people alluded to other people’s practices of ‘liberating’ goods from their workplace. Marcela works in the office of a theatre at which Cubans and foreigners are charged in different currencies, with Cubans paying 20 Cuban pesos (around 80 cents) and foreigners paying 20 convertible pesos (or 20 dollars)\(^\text{18}\). Marcela says that some people in her workplace make money selling Cuban peso tickets to foreigners by splitting the difference, charging 10 convertible pesos (10 dollars) for an 80-cent ticket and pocketing the difference. “It’s not right” she says, “but no one gets hurt, so maybe it’s not the worst thing”. Again, we see

\[^{18}\text{It is a common policy and practice among state run theatres in Cuba, to charge two different prices, making cultural events accessible to Cubans while being able to recoup operating costs from tourists.}\]
Cubans actively constructing a moral code that bridges the formal and the informal sectors.

One woman who had retired from the health care system claimed that the food in the workplace cafeteria was always so bad that no one would eat it. She believed that the kitchen workers did this intentionally so that they could earn money by selling the inedible food as pig food to people raising pigs in the city. I have on occasion, joined friends using work connections to secure a work vehicle and driver to act as a ‘taxi’ for a special occasion. Researchers who have explored the moral economy of illicit activity in Cuba note that most Cubans differentiate between illicit activity that hurts no one (except the state) such as paying for a work-based car and driver under the table, and that which deprives others in significant ways (Weinreb, 2009; Wilson, 2014). Behaviour that is more likely to be frowned upon usually involves such things as short changing people on food weights or volumes, or ‘liberating’ medical supplies and selling them on the black market (Weinreb, 2009; Wilson, 2014).

6.4 Relying on others: from familia to socialismo

Food work in Cuba relies on social networks in and outside the household. In Cuban households, everyone who is able to, plays a part in food procurement. Households are often multigenerational, including children, parents, grandparents and others. While many complain about the critical lack of available and adequate housing in Havana, one benefit of the intergenerational household is that there are often extra hands to share at least some of the food work. While planning food and cooking food remain highly gendered falling mostly to adult women in the household, the work and the cost of food procurement tends to be shared. This is at least in part because so many sites need to be
visited to procure all the needed food for a household. For example, it is common for a retired member of a household to take on the work of standing in line for the household’s daily bread rations. In fact, during one interview a young family member passed through, mentioning that she was on her way out to collect bread rations and stated that she had to “go wait with the old folks [laugh]”. Another adult in the household can often be counted on to pick up hard-to-find, or less expensive items from an outlet closer to their workplace on their way home, another common practice.

Larger families mean more food in the house, as rations are allocated per person in the household. Many people related that the sheer amount of rationed food that accrued from having many family members, particularly if that number included children and/or people with special medical diets, allowed for more flexibility in planning and preparing meals. Somehow 30 eggs for six people for the month seems less of a deprivation than 5 for one person. It also allows for the possibility of more trading or selling of rationed goods.

Another way that family connections play a role in managing food insecurity in Havana is through rural food remittances. Several of my interviewees had family in the countryside within a couple of hours of Havana, and received regular bus parcels of food. Parcels primarily consist of various root vegetables, coffee, spices, squash, and fruit. In exchange, urban relatives send back items that were harder to find in the countryside, such as toothpaste, toilet paper, clothing, and cooking oil. One of the reasons this system works is that, at least as of this writing, there is no fee for sending parcels by bus throughout Cuba. One simply addresses the package and lets the bus driver know what’s in it and who will be picking it up.
In Cuba we have a system, different from other places I think? You can go to the bus terminal and tell the bus driver, ‘I need you to take these packages to ‘Fulana en la Habana’ and so he puts them on the bus. Then you call the person to tell them what time the bus is getting in with the package. When the bus arrives, they go and look for the right bus, and tell the driver their name and show their identification. That’s all you do! (Graciela September, 2015)

There are strict prohibitions against sending meat or seafood this way. According to one of my interviewees, however, it happens all the time, with frozen meat or fish well wrapped in newspaper. In the case of sending something prohibited, you would pay a passenger travelling on the bus who was willing to claim the parcel as part of their own luggage, rather than leave it to the driver to handle.

6.4.1 Family remittances
Estimates of global flows of family remittances are notoriously inaccurate. In the case of Cuba, at the mercy of US trade sanctions limiting legal mechanisms for sending money to Cuba for decades, it is even more difficult to pin down a reliable figure for remittances. Rough estimates for remittances to Cuba in 2016 range between one and three billion dollars from the US alone. All agree that this flow of money into Cuba contributes significantly to household economies as well as to economic activity in the country in general. I didn’t ask my interviewees about specific amounts of money provided through remittances as it would have been seen as an inappropriate question, and I don’t believe I would have received accurate answers. When I asked people about their source of income, people at first only told me their official job, whether state or private sector. Few

19 ‘Fulana’ and ‘Fulano’ are common stand-in names in conversations in Cuba, similar to the way ‘Buddy’ is used in the province of Newfoundland, or the way one might substitute “so and so” for a name in other locales.
volunteered information about extra-legal activities or family remittances that also formed part of their income. Information about those activities tended to trickle into the conversation through oblique references, the meaning of which I would later confirm with key informants.

Outside of interviews I am able to have more frank discussions with friends in Havana about remittances. They talk about receiving money, as well as desirable food items such as olive oil and chocolate, and other consumer goods. Clothing, cell phones, computers, and so on, all arrive, often with family, friends and professional contacts who live off the island. Like me! The more intimate my own relations have become with Cuban friends, the larger the ‘gift’ portion of my suitcase becomes when I travel, with my personal belongings relegated to a small corner. The gifts of food I bring don’t address everyday needs for nutrition, but rather provide my Cuban friends with much desired variety as well as proof of social and cultural capital, embodied in foods and other consumer items that aren’t available in Cuba (Field notes, 11/2015).

Increasingly I heard stories of remittances sent within Cuba as well, usually from someone operating a successful business in Havana and supporting aging parents, or sending money to relatives in the country. One of my interviewees made reference several times to “when my son sends me money”. In conversation with a key informant afterwards I learned that this son lives in another neighbourhood in Havana, and not in Miami as I had assumed. This key informant believed it was quite common for people to send remittances within Cuba. She even claimed “They say that there are rich Cubans now sending remittances to Miami!”. This was a story that I heard from more than one person. Whether true or not, it has achieved the status of urban legend in Havana.

6.4.2 Word of mouth
As discussed earlier, food items may appear in different outlets, in different degrees of quality, and at different prices, and decisions about where and when to shop
must be made. As an outsider, one of the key questions that arose for me was “how do you know?” How does one know when something disappears from one outlet and appears in another? Where the cheapest source of good rice is this week? Whether there are eggs and where? Word of mouth, sometimes referred to as Radio Bemba is the key (Dubinsky, 2016; Powell, 2008). While a local newspaper, la Tribuna, publishes the official schedule of when rationed item will be available at the bodegas in each neighbourhood, most people rely on the advice of a neighbour to tell them that the eggs are in, or that the powdered milk for children has been replaced this month with a chocolate flavoured drink mix. Victor, the mensajero explains the importance of having social relationships:

People will see me on the street and yell, “hey the eggs are here” and I will pass it on to others. Or they will say “Listen, I saw something good at the butcher.” You have to know people. You have to know the neighbours (September, 2015).

While this seems like it might be an unreliable way of sharing information, Beatriz explained it as a plan de aviso - an ‘advisory plan’, explaining that while you might mention what you knew to someone on the street, you would always make sure to call and tell the people who were relying on you for information about food arriving in the market. This was borne out in another interview in which Alisa suddenly paused during our conversation; she had remembered that she wanted to make a phone call to let a neighbour know about a particular item she saw at the local bakery before it was ‘too late’. She made the call and we continued our conversation.

In my Havana field notes I wrote:

If you pay attention during group conversations in Havana, even at a party, you can hear people sharing information about the availability of
various food and other items. [Name] just told [name], for example, that there are potatoes in Old Havana at a particular intersection ‘por la izquierda’ or in the black market. And [name] is telling everyone that will listen that there is only one store in this neighbourhood carrying a good brand of tomato sauce (Field notes, 12/2016).

This observation was confirmed by Sophia in an interview a month later; “It comes up in every conversation; not only in conversations with foreigners, yes, with you too, but in conversations among ourselves, among Cubanos, we share information everywhere, even at a party!” Word of mouth, Radio Bemba, is the first and most audible layer of the social networking necessary for managing food insecurity in Havana.

6.4.3 SocioLismo and reciprocity
As mentioned earlier, along with one's extended family and neighbours, a complex network of business-like, reciprocal social relations are the key to managing food, along with many other needs in Havana. Because so much of the Cuban economy plays out in the informal economy, these social relations are often barely visible to the foreigners eye. Some relationships may connect you to institutions, while other are only de la calle - a common Cuban term for things that happen outside of home or of formal institutions (Powell, 2008). This phenomenon, socioLismo, is discussed and analyzed at length by many researchers studying contemporary Cuban culture and society (see for example Bastian 2016; Powell 2008; Weinreb 2009).

We can think about these networks as formations of social capital marked by historically and culturally specific forces. The most notable characteristic of this manifestation of social capital is the complex and overt element of reciprocity. In Havana this Reciprocal Social Capital combines with other forms of capital and increasingly defines access to income, food and other critical goods and services.
My interviewees spoke frankly about sociolismo (Reciprocal Social Capital), and described various incidents to me in an attempt to illustrate it. While the far-reaching nature and significance of these social networks can’t be captured accurately in single incidents or relationships, these stories help to illuminate some of the dimensions of this system.

Mariana told me how she sold a portion of the sugar she received through the rations to a neighbour woman who was operating an unregistered bakery from her home, supplying a couple of local cafes with tarts. She sold the sugar to her, she told me “a un precio muy bueno” - a very good price. My interviewee wasn’t in the least interested in the sweets that this woman could have provided her with, as I had first assumed. In fact, she was a diabetic and avoiding sugar, and so had no need for the large quantity of sugar she and her husband received on their rations. But the baker had a brother in the country who raised pigs, and for the past two years had been able to provide the pork roasts she liked to prepare for New Years at a more reasonable cost than the butcher. By helping the baker ‘resolve’ her sugar supply, she ensured her family’s access to an otherwise unaffordable item of food.

Other stories I have recounted in this chapter also point to examples of links in the chain of sociolismo - the workers intentionally preparing workplace food so that it was inedible and thus available to siphon from the system to sell to someone as pig food; the ticket seller illegally selling cheap tickets at the theatre - in that case, surely others besides my interviewee were aware of, and perhaps even profiting from this activity. Virtually no transactions would be able to take place in the shadow economy without
reciprocal relationships of trust operating outside the formal relationships governed by
the state. From my field notes:

In different situations before embarking on my research, Cuban friends
have helped me and my family find our way along the margins of
sociolismo, although as visitors we are more often protected from
navigating these waters ourselves. Instead a Cuban friend will act as
interlocutor, negotiating the terms of a deal on our behalf. In 2008, for
example, when trying to rent a car for a week in a fully saturated market,
a trusted Cuban friend was somehow able to free up a car from a rental
agency for a few days, despite the assurances from every rental desk in
Havana that “no hay” - “there are none”. We don’t know who he knew,
or how he negotiated the deal, but we do know that we were to show up
at the rental agency and speak only to one person, to whom we were to
hand a bottle of high quality rum. We were never made privy to how our
friend was connected to this rental agent, indeed he didn’t seem to know
him personally at all. Most likely it was a case of “I know a guy who
knows a guy”. We also don’t know the legacy of this particular
transaction - who stood to benefit from it downstream at another point in
time (Field notes, 01/2015)

Sociolismo is sometimes framed as a variant of socialism, as a form of solidarity
with the collective that has been part of the Cuban consciousness since the revolution
(Burchardt, 2002). Throughout my Havana interviews people identified ‘helping
neighbours’ as a key explanation for how people manage on low incomes. This was often
framed as a fundamental characteristic of ‘Cubanism’, and not as an individual act of
charity. Paloma, in her 50s proudly said “Los cubanos comparten lo que tienen” -
“Cubans share what they have” to explain why she and her partner regularly bring meals
to an invalid neighbor. I heard similar things from others about the importance of sharing
in Cuban culture; “somos así” - “We are like that” (Amanda).

In addition to sharing among near-by family and neighbours, social capital for
Cubans often includes connections to people afuera la isla - outside of the island. In
addition to reliance on family remittances, connections through family, friendship, and

268
work networks to people who live outside Cuba can be important part of the supply chain for hard to find goods.

There is a small but growing ‘cosmopolitan turn’ in discussions of food access in Cuba that can be attributed, at least in part, to connections with people from off the island. Connections with foreigners, opportunities to travel, and the new arrival of Spanish cooking shows on Cuban TV combine to create a new awareness of foods outside the typical Cuban palate. This turn is affecting how some people frame food insufficiency in their household.

Cosmopolitanism is “a disposition and an aptitude to embrace cultural differences across national borders” (Cappeliez & Johnston, 2013). Beagan, Power & Chapman (2015) add “The connoisseur mode of cosmopolitan eating, which tends to be associated with upper classes, is marked by food adventurousness, openness to any kind of cuisine, emphasis on esoteric food knowledge, and prizing authenticity”. In Cuba, in addition to a desire for food from different cultures, cosmopolitan eating is also related to the food that is marketed to, and consumed by tourists. As Ofelia hypothesized “I think that loving food, eating new foods in the tourist restaurants, although it is expensive, is a way to be a new Cuban in the new society.”

Cappeliez and Johnston (2013) propose that certain types of cosmopolitan food knowledge are often used as markers of status and class. Several of my interviewees were keen to share their knowledge about cosmopolitan foods. Some spoke about certain herbs and spices that are difficult or impossible to find in Havana, (such as curry, rosemary, cayenne), or professed the enjoyment of spicy food which is not at all typical of Cuban cooking. Others talked about restaurants in Havana that serve sushi, or middle eastern
food. Interviewees who had never visited these restaurants enthusiastically recited the cuisine, along with menu items and prices as they understood them. While clearly proud of having cosmopolitan food knowledge, these conversations typically ended in a lament that “*aqui, no se puede comer así*” - “here, you can’t eat like that”. The foods are either unavailable altogether, or are very expensive, putting them out of reach for most Cubans. A growing awareness of what isn’t available or affordable for the average Cuban exacerbates the sense of food insecurity for many in Havana who struggle just to acquire the basics for their households.

Reciprocal Social Capital, or sociolismo, is often about food but never only about food. While the procurement of food is a central theme in every day Cuban conversation, and so figures heavily as a goal or a means in most networks of Reciprocal Social Capital, Cubans don’t separate food from other livelihood concerns. Like my Kingston interviewees it was difficult to keep conversations focused on issues of food insecurity and most stories spun off onto other topics like transportation, housing, childcare, emigration, and so on.

Reciprocal Social Capital can be understood as the contemporary manifestation, or perhaps, mutation, of what Hope Bastian (2016) describes as Revolutionary Cultural Capital. Bastian asserts that in the years following the revolution, a system of stratification emerged based on political attitudes, commitment to principles of social solidarity, and education. One didn’t have to work within the political structure to accrue and mobilize this type of capital; it was theoretically available to any Cuban citizen who could demonstrate, through work, social activities, and other activities, demonstrate their loyalty to the revolution. The primacy of this form of capital was shored up by access to
free health care and education, along with a relatively robust system of food entitlements. While Revolutionary Cultural Capital could sometimes be converted into jobs, travel, access to other luxuries and special privileges, it didn’t have to be. During the 1970s and 1980s, economic capital in Cuba played only a subsidiary role in ensuring livelihoods and wellbeing. For loyal Cubans during that era, Revolutionary Cultural Capital could secure you and your family the status of being known to be good, loyal, revolutionary subjects.

While Revolutionary Cultural Capital was dominant in Cuban social and cultural relations throughout the 1970s and 1980s, during the special period it began to decline, and Economic and Social capital became more important. As state entitlements, including access to food through the rations, workplaces, and schools, declined in quality and quantity social inequalities began to grow and become more evident. The special period set the stage for the rise of Reciprocal Social Capital which is intricately tied into economic capital.

Revolutionary Cultural Capital “continues to circulate in dialectic coexistence with newer configurations of capitals specific to the current economic conditions in Cuba” (Bastian, p 156). It is still very much in evidence, particularly among older generations of Cubans, who value adherence to the principles of the revolution while at the same time, participating in the shadow economy of Cuba in order to fulfill their everyday needs. One interviewee, an Afro-Cuban woman who was in her late teens at the time of the revolution in 1959, said proudly to me “Before the revolution, I was a servant; after, never again”. Her job didn’t change in any fundamental way with the revolution; she continued working as a cleaner, but after 1959 she cleaned buildings as a revolutionary worker, not as a servant. There is still respect for the revolutionary
generation in Cuba, though certainly not as much as there was. Still, I regularly call on my ‘Cuban Aunties’, a cadre of women now in their 70s, to help me navigate housing, food purchasing, travel, and more when I’m there.

6.5 Charity in Cuba

To the best of my knowledge, there are no food-assistance charities in Havana. There are stories of some churches that distribute clothing and medical supplies, however, none of my research participants believed that they distributed food.

In each neighbourhood in Havana there is at least one _comedor_ - the unofficial name given to the dining halls operated through the System for Family Assistance. They offer two meals each day at a nominal price (one Cuban peso - approximately 4 cents) and the food can be eaten there or taken home if you bring your own container. Everyone I spoke with was aware of these services, and knew where the nearest one was. Some had helped acquaintances gain access to them. One of my interviewees was quite familiar with some local comedores, having overseen placements of students training to work in them. She talked about one with table cloths, a nice atmosphere, and food so good that she laughingly stated that she hoped she could become a regular there when she gets older. For the most part, however, people understood the food quality in comedores to be _regular_ - similar to the workplace meals that they had been accustomed to receiving until the phasing out of workplace meals in most industries in 2009.

Intended to provide food to those who have no other recourse, at first glance they seem to operate similar to a hot meal program in Canada. There are a couple of key differences, however. First and foremost, comedores are funded and operated by the state, not by independent charities. The other important difference is that you must register and
be assessed as being in need of the assistance before you are entitled to use their services. Registration is done through the department of social services, and like most bureaucratic processes in Cuba, takes time and effort. While comedores have become an important service for elderly people with no one to cook for them, as well as for other vulnerable people in Havana, they do not operate as a fall back for people who have unexpectedly run out of food during the month, thus it is not comparable to typical hot meal programs or food bank in Canada.

It was interesting to talk to Cubans about the idea of food charity. Several of my interviewees had heard of food banks in other countries, and some had heard of hot meal programs. Most people thought they were a wonderful idea, although a few were noncommittal. For people accustomed to a universal, state subsidized ration system, enthusiasm for this idea makes sense. The idea of centralized, free programs that are available when you need them, seems a reasonable and humane response to food insecurity, and there is no discernable sense of shame when talking about the idea. Cuba has no domestic charitable sector, and little of what we would term civil society - institutions operating independently from the state, other than religious institutions. As a country, Cuba receives development assistance in the agricultural sector, as well as relief assistance after hurricanes. It also, however, famously provides medical assistance around the globe, mitigating any sense of being only a recipient of help and never a provider. As inequalities grow in Cuba, and the influence of the state rolls back, plans to eliminate the rations system will likely leave a gap in food access for many people. It seems likely that non-state charitable organizations such as food banks will be allowed to
emerge in Havana as they have in so many parts of the world.\textsuperscript{20} It will be interesting to see what the effect of several generations of state subsidized food entitlements has on how food charity is organized and experienced in Cuba.

\textbf{6.6 Urban agriculture}

Despite the high profile that Havana’s urban agriculture system holds internationally (see Altieri \textit{et al.} 1999; Murphy, 1999; Koont, 2004, 2011; Premat, 2012), none of my interviewees in this research project were involved in urban agriculture. In a self-funded research trip to Havana in 2012 prior to beginning my PhD, I visited several urban agriculture sites ranging from large-scale organoponicos to small back-yard ‘patio’ gardens. On that trip I encountered many people who were engaged in growing food for themselves as well as food to sell. In the research for this project, however, I did not. At first I was surprised at the lack of interest in growing food among the people I interviewed for this project. When asked some associated growing your own food with the special period; “we don’t need to do that now”. Others cited lack of suitable space, lack of time, a certainty that neighbours would steal, or simply, a lack of interest in growing food.

Indeed, in my visits to Cerro, the neighbourhood in which the majority of my interviews took place, I saw several abandoned overgrown gardens in public spaces, and near schools and daycares. While large scale organoponicos continue to thrive in many parts of the city, providing some neighbourhoods (and private businesses) with good quality, reasonably priced fresh produce, in Cerro there are few if any of these projects.

\footnote{Food banks were originally a first world invention, however this response to food insecurity has spread around the world. Founded in 2009, the Global Food Banking Network supports food banks in 76 countries.}
In a similar vein, there are many people in Havana who keep chickens, primarily for meat. While I have been awoken by roosters in Havana more early mornings than I can count, none of my interviewees kept chickens, though some admitted that they had done so for eggs and for meat, during the special period. “Today”, claimed Eduardo, “only guajiros (hicks) from the countryside would keep hens in the city.” When I shared my stories of early morning roosters he shrugged, smiled and said “yes, well, you know there are a lot of guajiros here in Havana” pointing to himself.

6.7 Conclusion

In Havana, people talk about day-to-day food procurement in relation to a food supply that is unpredictable, unreliable, and unaffordable. In Cuba, as in Canada, people use multiple strategies to manage household food insecurity including stretching available dollars, and taking on extra work, mostly in the informal sector, to earn sufficient money to meet household needs, including food. As the state withdraws from the realm of food entitlements, individuals and households are left to navigate a complex formal and informal market based on a complex system of Reciprocal Social Capital. Cuban’s speak with pride about their inventiveness and ability to solve their problems through the informal sector. While it attests to the chispe (spark) that is a dimension of proud Cuban-ness, and which draws on Cuban and/or socialist values of community and solidarity, it also represents a tacit acknowledgement that the state can no longer be relied on to ensure fair or sufficient distribution of goods and services. Today, despite the continuation of food entitlements and price controls, unstable incomes, extreme weather events, and unpredictable supplies of foods in formal and informal markets, combine with the
historical memory of deprivation during the special period to create an awareness of access to food as precarious.
Chapter 7

Parallels, Divergences and Analysis

This chapter presents a deeper analysis of some themes I discussed in the two previous chapters. First, I look at the dimension of ‘stability’ in food security, and how precarity in the labour force and elsewhere is a core dimension of the experience of food insecurity. Second, I look at social networks, and the increasing and problematic reliance on social capital for managing food insecurity and the emergence of informal policies for addressing food insecurity in both Canada and Cuba. Third, I look at the multiple roles and limitations of food assistance charities in relation to food insecurity. In each section I connect my analysis to neoliberalism, and explore how neoliberal forces and discourses shape the experience of food insecurity as well as 'normal' individual, societal and governmental responses to food insecurity in each site. I compare how constructs such as ‘healthy eating’ and ‘good food consumer’ are framed in each site.

My field work explores elements of the experience of food insecurity in Kingston, Ontario and Havana, Cuba that are not typically captured in studies of household food insecurity. I chose to look at Cuba and Canada in the hopes that an examination of dimensions of food insecurity under such different systems would shed light on state and societal structures as they shape the experience of food insecurity and our responses to it in each site. My interviews were with individuals relating their specific experiences of food insecurity, and each tells a unique story. But these stories take place in historical, social, and political contexts. In Canada, the experience of and societal responses to food
insecurity are shaped by the history of the welfare state and the emergence and dominance of contemporary neoliberalism as it shapes the material conditions and the discourse through which we currently understand poverty, charity, the market, and the state. In Cuba, the experience of and response to food insecurity are shaped by revolutionary socialist history, its successive reconfigurations, particularly since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1990, and an emerging and uncomfortable relationship with capitalism within a context of global neoliberalism.

While the underlying cause of income-related food insecurity in both Canada and Cuba is poverty, the experience of food insecurity is shaped by cultural, social, and political forces along with dimensions of personal history. I found commonalities and differences among all of my interviewees in their responses to my questions about the work they do to manage food insecurity. And while there was considerable diversity of experience within each research site in how food insecurity was framed and managed, I noted larger differences between the sites. Some key themes emerged that illuminate something about neoliberalism’s effect on the relative roles of the state, the market, and civil society for the experience of food insecurity. These themes include precariousness, understanding food insecurity within a wider framework of deprivations, and the role of social capital in managing food insecurity.

What can we learn from similarities and differences in the experience of and response to household food insecurity in countries that sit in such different relationships to global neoliberalism? And what do those similarities and differences tell us about how neoliberalism has shaped appropriate and ‘normal’ governmental, societal, and individual responses to hunger in different places?
7.1 Precarity and food insecurity

Precarity describes both the structural conditions under which food insecurity exists, and the subjective experience of food insecurity. In other words, food insecurity arises from precarious conditions, and is also experienced as uncertainty or insecurity. In this section I look at the relationship of food insecurity to precarity in both research sites. I describe how political-economic state models that sit in differing relationships to neoliberalism create precarious conditions and structures that shape food insecurity. While neoliberalism gives rise to particular social structures and systems, it also shapes individual subjectivities. The neoliberalization of everyday life demands adherence to principles of self-sufficiency, competition, and consumerism. This creates dissonance for economically marginalized people who fail to engage as good neoliberal subjects. This form of neoliberal governance shapes and frames the experience of precarity and food insecurity in different ways in Canada and Cuba.

Precarity arose as a common dimension and determinant of food insecurity in interviews in both sites. Small and large shocks can tip people from being able to manage their household food needs into sudden food insecurity including worry about food shortages, and compromising the quality and quantity of food in the household. These shocks, whether due to macro-economic trends such as rising unemployment in the labour market, or individual problems such as health crises, are experienced and managed at the individual and household level. Interviewees in each site recounted different incidences of precarity but the effects seemed to be the same. In Canada, the effects of precarious work, of losing housing, and the impact of sudden health crises affected people’s ability to manage the work and cost of putting food on the table. In Cuba, an
increasingly precarious labour market economy and deteriorating entitlement system creates uncertainty about the day-to-day cost of living. Further, uncertainty about Cuba’s political economic system colours most conversations about the future and creates uncertainty about food supplies and prices. In both sites, unpredictable events that should be occasions of celebration can also cause anxieties about food sufficiency in the household. A teenager has a growth spurt producing new food and clothing costs; a high-school graduation (in Canada) or *quinceañera*\(^{21}\) (in Cuba) comes with unanticipated costs (dress, hair, gown rental, event tickets, and so on); a child makes a sports team and suddenly there are fees to pay and equipment to purchase; a couple move in together and the household economy is turned upside down. All of these situations can all throw carefully managed food planning into chaos.

The shocks described above illustrate the effect of precarity on the lived experience of food and livelihood insecurity at the individual or household level. The fact that people living in poverty are so easily tipped into food insecurity derives from precarious structural dimensions of political, economic and societal forces that are manifest structurally in the labour force, in the delivery of social services, and in the charitable sector.

Both discursive and material conditions shape and limit the understandings and actions of people living with food insecurity and of societies ability to respond to food insecurity. While structural manifestations of neoliberalism create the conditions, such as precarity, that shape food insecurity, another dimension of neoliberalism is the inscription of neoliberal norms of competitiveness, individualism, and consumerism onto cultures.

\(^{21}\) The *quinceañera* is a party thrown to celebrate a girls (and increasingly, boys) 15th birthday in many countries in Latin America. In Cuban families this party is traditionally more lavish and costly than a wedding.
and bodies. The effects of precarious material conditions are experienced and managed in particular ways under neoliberalism, and in quite different ways under the transforming hybrid political economy of Cuba. Polzer and Power suggest that a governmentality perspective is appropriate for understanding the various ways that neoliberal governance manifests itself in realms outside the economic sphere such as in relation to health (2016). Quoting Gordon (1991), they explain: “From the perspective of governmentality, the notion of government refers to the “conduct of conduct” or, more specifically, to “activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons” (p. 5).

Household food provision, like health, is framed within neoliberalism as an individual pursuit. Consequently, food insecurity is understood as a failure at the individual level and thus strategies for managing food insecurity are similarly understood to be primarily the responsibility of individuals.

A governmentality perspective can also be used to understand how Cuba’s transitional political economic system manifests itself in the everyday lives of its citizens. Within Cuba, food insecurity is understood as a shared social condition, problematic to be sure, but not usually identified as individual failure. Because the Cuban state has explicitly taken on the project of ensuring access to at least basic food provisions for all, food insecurity there is easily framed as a failure of the state to make good on its promise to the people. This inclination to blame the state is tempered somewhat by durable revolutionary ideals of self-sacrifice for the good of the collective, and by discourse surrounding the ongoing US embargo against Cuba. By understanding the effects of socio-economic ideologies as both material (structural) and discursive (cultural), we gain
a way to understand the impact of forms of government beyond the sphere of economics and ‘big P politics’ in both Canada and Cuba.

As discussed in Chapter One, stability - the opposite of precarity - is a dimension included in most definitions of food security, i.e., in order to be food secure, people must have the means to access adequate food ‘at all times’ (World Food Summit, 1996). A full understanding of food insecurity requires that we recognize the dimension of stability, i.e. that food remain accessible over time regardless of household or external shocks (Coates et al., 2006; Maxwell & Frankenberger, 1992; Gundersen & Gruber, 2001; Gross & Rosenberger 2005). Of course, consistent access to food is first and foremost a function of a stable food supply, but stability in the food supply in urban markets is never a concern in Kingston, Ontario and only slightly more of an issue in Havana, Cuba. My research participants were more concerned about the stability and predictability of their access to the abundance of foods in the market, along with their confidence in, and comfort with their ‘fall back’ strategies, whether social networks or food charity, to cope with inevitable shocks that challenge their ability to manage household food needs on low incomes. Given the increasingly precarious nature of work in both research sites, particularly for those in low income jobs, it is important that we continue to develop a nuanced understanding of the relationship between precarity and food insecurity. The significance of precarious conditions and structures, along with the effects of the lived experience of precarity for people living with food insecurity, suggests that policy designed to address food insecurity must address precarious determinants and outcomes of food insecurity.
While stability and precarity are key to food security, it is impractical to confine this analysis of the determinants and dimensions of food insecurity to food matters alone. The interrelatedness of food insecurity with other forms of insecurity and deprivation is widely recognized within food insecurity literature (Chambers, 1988; Davies, 1993; Frankenberger & Coyle, 1993; Gross & Rosenberg, 2005; Hamelin et al., 2001; Hamelin et al., 2011; Maxwell & Smith, 1992; Tarasuk, 2001b; Tarasuk et al., 2013). It was while sharing their stories about precarity and vulnerability to shocks that the people I interviewed strayed the furthest from talking solely about food insecurity and into broader livelihood issues. The effects of, and anxieties about losing a job, falling ill, and other shocks, have tangible effects on food security and also have implications for household livelihoods beyond food insecurity. People living with food insecurity may be more financially constrained than others when trying to adapt their purchasing and food practices in order to be able to meet these multiple needs. Nonetheless, their needs are not reduced to those of nutritional sustenance. My research suggests that anxieties felt by people facing food insecurity are not exclusively about food. Rather they are about how to fit their food needs into complex lives with competing needs and desires on a limited and often uncertain budget.

There is nothing natural about food insecurity. In Canada food insecurity is intricately wound up in the structures and discourse of neoliberalism. It is not a coincidence that the intensification of neoliberal policy and ideology in Canada during the 1980s was paralleled by a rising demand for emergency food assistance (Riches, 1986). In Cuba, the process of shifting from a command economy to an as-yet-undefined hybrid economy generates new social and economic relations, rising inequality, and with
this, renewed anxieties about food security at both the national and the household level. In both sites, the experience of food insecurity mirrors the precarity of the structures and forces underlying it.

Food insecurity and precarious social structures make sense within the neoliberal Canadian and neoliberalizing Cuban contexts described in Chapter Four. Precariousness is a fundamental dimension of contemporary neoliberalism which inscribes precarity structurally and discursively onto culture and social relations. First, the logic of neoliberalism demands a flexible work force which is by nature most precarious for the people in the lowest paid, least secure jobs. Second, the dismantling of state social safety mechanisms (the ‘nanny state’) has unraveled much of the safety net for vulnerable people, creating even more precarity for those at the bottom. Additionally, the experience of and the possibilities of response to food insecurity is shaped by the market logics of neoliberalism that penetrate all aspects of private and public life. Consequently, the condition of food insecurity is understood and managed as the failure of individuals to thrive in a competitive (but fair) free market system, not as a failure of the system itself and its structures (Connell, 2010; Song, 2006). In Canada, people living with food insecurity, like people living in poverty in general, are thus understood as “depraved not deprived” (Bauman, 2001).

7.2 Precarity as a determinant of food insecurity in Canada

Neoliberalism demands labour market flexibility in order to minimize the costs of capital accumulation, creating a workforce of part time, casual and temporary workers (Connell, 2010; MacEachen et al., 2016; Vosko, 2005). The implications of this on food security for low income workers is obvious. Unpredictable incomes, work schedules, and
the lack of benefits create precarious conditions that make it nearly impossible to plan and budget confidently for food sufficiency in a household. Food costs are flexible costs, though, so among the slate of livelihood concerns, income precarity is more likely to affect food security before it has an impact on other necessary expenditures. Costs for other core expenses such as housing, utilities, and transportation tend to be fixed, there are few fallback services to call on when those bills aren’t paid, and the consequences of missing those payments can be immediate and dire. Food is different. First, food prices in Canada are volatile, making it hard to budget and plan. Second, as was evident throughout my interviews, one can, up to a point, purchase cheaper food or consume less food to free up cash to pay other bills. And in Canada when those strategies fail, there are food banks and meal programs to fall back on.

For people living on social assistance in Ontario, the legacy of unreasonably low rates of social assistance, and the constant reconfiguration of social assistance rules creates precarious structural conditions which contribute to food insecurity. Changing eligibility guidelines, adjustments to rules about earned income, shifting regulations and processes for access to supplemental programs such as free or subsidized transit, subsidized dental care, subsidized community sports and leisure facilities, subsidized childcare, and so on, creates a structurally precarious situation for people on social assistance. People living in poverty are not always sure what they are entitled to, or how to access it, or they live in fear of having their benefits cut or reduced. As one interviewee expressed about her own situation, a double-bind results when people are reluctant to question their case worker about benefits to which they might be entitled because they are fearful of the increased surveillance that might trigger, thus jeopardizing
illicit income sources they might be relying on. According to one of my research participants, food banks and meal programs seem relatively straightforward compared to the processes for accessing many of these subsidized or free entitlements.

Structural precarity in the labour force and in the welfare state system often pushes people into informal sector work which may also be illegal. This kind of work is itself by nature precarious, often with pay below the minimum wage, dangerous working conditions, and no legal recourse when things go badly. Additionally, people on social assistance worry about getting caught working under the table, and fear losing their benefits altogether. During an interview, Devynn told me about a landlord of student rental properties in Kingston who hires people from a nearby social housing project on a casual basis to haul garbage, clean and paint his rental units between tenants. He pays $40 for an eight-hour day and many people are, in her words “desperate enough to take it”. Other research participants also talked about working under the table in jobs, ranging from providing childcare, to cutting hair, to selling drugs. While informal sector work may bring in much needed cash allowing people on social assistance or working precarious jobs to put food on the table and pay bills, it also brings an added level of risk to health and finances, and adds legal risks and psychological stress to an already precarious existence.

A final way in which neoliberalism creates structures of precarity in Canada is by encouraging increased reliance on the charitable system to provide social goods. By rolling back state responsibility for providing assistance and encouraging the emergence of the charitable food sector, neoliberal regimes encourage those who cannot get their food needs met through the market to turn to charity for assistance. Charitable food
assistance programs are themselves, however, notoriously precarious. Relying on donations and operating (often with a perverse pride) on a shoestring budget on the backs of volunteers and poorly paid staff, food banks and meal programs face a serious problem when demand for their services outpaces the supply of food they have available. For food banks, their only recourse in the short term is to limit food distribution, usually by reducing the size of hampers, tightening eligibility rules so that fewer people can use their service, and/or changing their distribution cycle (e.g. from every month to every two months) (Food Banks Canada, 2011; Tarasuk et al., 2014). Derrick talked about being turned away from the food bank at one point because they had ‘run out of food’. From my observations, food banks in Kingston regularly engage in all the above practices to manage food shortages. What does it mean to someone already living with food insecurity when the prevailing ‘fail-safe option’ fails?

7.3 Precarity in Cuba

Cuban science-fiction writer ‘Yoss’ (José Miguel Sánchez Gómez) explains the difference between socialism and capitalism this way in the documentary film El futuro es hoy (Gomez, 2009): Each system is like a big room. Under socialism the room has a solid floor with few holes in it - you can’t fall through; but the ceiling is low and you can’t rise to another level no matter how hard you work. Everyone is constrained and there are few options. Under capitalism the ceiling has openings that let you climb, but the floor is full of holes and it’s easy to fall through. The official ideology of socialism has endeavored to create a safe floor for Cuban citizens, albeit at the expense of many individual civil liberties. The safe floor is now becoming treacherous (my synopsis).
While neoliberalism generates precarious structures that are coherent with unfettered accumulation and neoliberal ideology typical of Western democratic states such as Canada, precarity is by no means limited to neoliberal regimes. Precarity in Cuba is doubly constructed by policies of the Cuban state and by forces external to the island including those imposed through global neoliberalism. A rapidly changing socialist state operating within a (mine-) field of hegemonic global neoliberalism generates structures of precarity that shape the experience of food insecurity there.

Cuba has the additional burden of susceptibility to extreme climatic events such as hurricanes and cyclones, creating another level of uncertainty. With destruction of crop-lands, homes, businesses, etc., these events, happening more frequently than ever now, create even more precarity for food production and distribution, and can plunge whole regions, or even the country as a whole into food insufficiency and severe food insecurity (Davidson & Krull, 2011).

Since the end of the Special Period, the Cuban state has been struggling with the tension between a commitment to maintaining socialist principles and structures, and on the other hand, modeling trends in neoliberal global political economy in the interest of pursuing trade with other countries and addressing shortages within its borders. Downsizing the state workforce, increasing labour flexibility, and creating conditions favorable for foreign direct investment are three key ways in which Cuba is exhibiting a trend towards neoliberalization. This is in turn building new precariousness into the labour force and into other aspects of Cuban social and economic structure (Báez, 2004). As the Cuban state implements policy changes driving towards market liberalization and
facilitating self-employment - in effect creating a more open ‘ceiling’, the ‘floor’ on which people are standing becomes less and less reliable.

As I described in Chapter Four, problems with public transportation, the deterioration of buildings and public infrastructure, and the contraction of the rations system and other entitlements create precarious conditions in everyday Cuban life that make it difficult to plan household food procurement and preparation. As the Cuban policy pendulum swings from idealist to pragmatic and back again, it creates uncertainties on a macro-economic level that is reflected in the day-to-day lived experience of Cubans. These conditions are manifest and magnified in both the state and the private sector labour force, as well as in the rapid rise in the informal economy labour force. As in Canada, a shrinking system of social assistance makes everyday life even more precarious for those outside the formal labour force, as unsatisfactory wages and working conditions in the formal labour market drive more and more economic activity into the informal market.

State sector jobs still comprise more that 72% of the labour force in Cuba (ONEI, 2015). While existing state sector jobs offer stability and a regular paycheque, income from these jobs is insufficient to cover every day costs of living, including food. Despite recent salary increases and the introduction of ‘stimulos’ (productivity bonuses) in some state sector jobs, the consensus among the Cubans I spoke with is that “no alcanza” - state salaries still do not reach far enough to cover the costs of food and other household needs. Adjusted for inflation, average wages in Cuba in 2011 had the purchasing power of 25% of their late 1980s levels (Mesa-Lago & Pérez López, 2013) and the average real salary in state sector work fell by 73% between 1989 and 2011. This means that in order
to survive, households have to supplement their incomes streams, typically achieved by working or selling in the illegal informal sector.

Along with low pay, workers talk about the deteriorating conditions of facilities at their workplaces, problems with infrastructure such as plumbing and electricity, and supply chain difficulties that result in a lack of necessary supplies and resources to do their work. Entering any state-run institution that operates outside of the tourist or diplomatic sector, one cannot fail to notice this. For example, in 2012 while my family was living in Havana, our 12-year old son fell out of a tree while playing with neighbourhood children. In the hospital where he was admitted there were buckets catching drips throughout the halls, cracked tiles in the hallways, evidence of mold and mildew, broken chairs, crumbling walls and tired-looking equipment. The side rails spontaneously detached themselves from the bed our son lay in. The toilet in our room had to be flushed with a bucket of water collected from the constantly dripping shower. We brought our own towels, food and water. The staff were friendly and competent, instruments had been carefully sterilized, and the outcome of the care he received was excellent, but the institution showed severe signs of the limited resources available within Cuban state institutions. This was actually a hospital that non-Cubans were routinely sent to, and so was actually in better condition than most state hospital facilities that Cubans experience.

Precarious structural conditions and shifting economic policies in Cuba also exacerbate the uncertainty of private sector work. While opportunities to start small businesses have expanded, for many occupations there are few opportunities to practice outside the state controlled labour market. This is particularly a problem for well-
educated professionals. There are no private sector lawyers or engineers for example, and accountants and teachers cannot obtain a license for private sector work if they also work in those professions for the state. Still, there is a tremendous appeal for many Cubans in joining the ranks of the half a million licensed (and many more unlicensed) small businesses that encompass 201 official job categories. “As people are obliged to live and work in a marketized world they find pleasures and possibilities there…” (Connell, 2010, p. 28).

Despite the appeal of entrepreneurship with its possibility for making money beyond what a state salary provides and freedom from the constraints of state-sector labour force, many entrepreneurs in Cuba do not earn enough money through self-employment to be free from food insecurity. Reliable statistics about earnings from self-employment in Cuba are impossible to obtain, but according to the ‘cuenta propistas’ (self-employed workers) I spoke with, self-employment comes with its own problems of precariousness, and many do not earn enough to keep the business going. This is also evidenced in Havana streetscapes by the rapid appearance and disappearance of small cafes, pizzerias, and other home-grown businesses. Unpredictable shocks to income make it difficult to predict monthly income, a problem recounted to me by several people working for themselves. It is often difficult to predict how much money is available to spend on food. With entrepreneurship often comes new unexpected expenses that directly impact your ability to earn a living. One interviewee whose family had just opened a small cafe explained one difference between working for the state and working for themselves;

When the motorcycle broke down before, fine, it was annoying, and I took the bus to work. What a pain! But we could take our time to fix it,
you know? Now, though, we rely on Papa to go by moto to pick up the supplies every day; he goes all over town, everywhere to get what we need. If he doesn’t go, we don’t have anything to sell. We would be finished (Amanda).

This interviewee admitted that the family hadn’t anticipated the added stress and expenses of relying on unreliable supply and delivery chains in order to make the café profitable.

Trading in a relatively secure pay cheque for the promise of entrepreneurial success is risky business anywhere. While self-employment sometimes brings higher incomes for Cubans, typically long and/or unpredictable work hours, managing erratic supplies of inputs, and dealing with cumbersome state bureaucracy all within the context of a rickety Cuban infrastructure, may mean that food insecurity continues to be a problem for self-employed Cubans, even when higher annual incomes are realized. Severance from the formal and informal support systems that work-places often provide also limits the resources one can draw on in times of crisis, as well as the possibilities for pilfering goods from state enterprises for resale. Difficulties in procuring licenses, gaps in supply chains, bureaucratic red tape, strict regulations and (the perception of) overly-heavy taxation rates mean that many people who work for themselves also work partially or completely in the illegal informal sector.

The number of people trading and earning income in the informal economy in Cuba is unknown, but the black market is widely understood to be integral to virtually every aspect of life in Cuba. Informal sector jobs are even more precarious than legal private sector or state jobs. In addition to problems of supply chain, unexpected costs, infrastructure and bureaucratic inefficiencies, informal sector jobs are subject to
surveillance and periodic crack-downs along with the threat of hefty fines. The informal sector relies heavily on relationships of Reciprocal Social Capital to function, but those relationships present another dimension of precarity. Transactions are based on a moral economy functioning through verbal contracts, cash transactions, and delayed reciprocity, i.e. goods or services are often provided ‘free’ with the unspoken understanding that a reciprocal and roughly equivalent favour is now owed. As the net of relations under ‘sociolismo’ extends further and further from trusted circles of family and friends, the potential for fraud and corruption in this informal economy grows. I explore the pitfalls of reliance on the informal sector more thoroughly in the section on Social Capital later in this chapter.

Similar to the conditions I describe in Canada, structural changes to social assistance that appear as a result of drastic cuts, changes in eligibility criteria, and in delivery methods, create precarious conditions exacerbating income precarity for Cubans. Reductions in social assistance along with cutbacks in entitlements such as workplace lunches, the quantity of subsidized food available through the rations, the declining quality and availability of health services, and new regulations requiring families to support family members previously receiving social assistance, adversely affects those living in poverty or who are most at risk for poverty. These changes disproportionately affect Afro-Cubans and women. These are groups who are more likely to live in poverty to begin with, to be highly dependent on social assistance and entitlements, and to be tasked with the work of looking after incapacitated family members who lose their social benefits. In Havana these changes tend to have a greater impact on people living in neighbourhoods with fewer services and less access to dollars generated through tourism.
These problems are magnified in peri-urban and rural parts of Cuba (Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López, 2013).

As hegemonic as food banks have become in parts of the western world, the phenomenon is relatively new to developing countries. Previously the domain principally of religious and aid organizations, formalized domestic food banks and food bank networks have appeared in many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean over the past five to ten years. In Cuba, however, there are no food banks and no space within civil society for them to emerge. I discuss the structure and implications of the role of Cuban civil society for food insecurity below.

Structural precarity in the labour force, in social services, and within civil society shape the experience of food insecurity in both Cuba and Canada. In both sites people describe anxieties and practices that emerge in response to precarious material circumstances. The experience of food insecurity that arises in relation to them is framed differently in each site, as different relations to neoliberalism produce different discourses.

My Canadian research participants overwhelmingly understood their food insecurity as a result of individual misfortune or mistakes they had made. Even those who expressed a sophisticated analysis of poverty as a structural social problem framed their own food insecurity as fundamentally a result of individual bad luck (health problems, job losses) and bad choices (substance use, relationship choices, poor budgeting decisions). Consequently, the only solutions they could imagine for dealing with food insecurity were based on a practice of self-discipline that includes making better choices,

---

22 Because of my chain referral sampling method, several of my interviewees were connected to each other through anti-poverty politics and possessed a structural analysis of income inequality.
seeking individualized solutions through better budgeting, planning, job seeking, and working to earn more income, even if within the informal sector.

Framing social issues as individual problems is what Meg Luxton (2010) refers to as a “perverse form of individualism” (p.172). Neoliberal hegemony demands that individuals take responsibility for their failure to compete successfully in a free market economy that severely curtails their ability to participate. Leveraging the language of freedom, fairness, competition, and choice, neoliberalism brings the logic of markets to all facets of socio-cultural life. The logic of markets is understood to be impersonal and fair, thus failure to thrive in the system is experienced as a personal failure and not evidence of systemic injustice. Neoliberalism demands that people use their ‘freedom’ to make ‘choices’ while simultaneously constraining available options for people living with limited resources (Luxton, 2010; Polzer and Power, 2016). People who cannot use their freedom to make appropriate consumer choices are marginalized. This is evident in how many of my Canadians research participants talked about their experience of food insecurity as they strive to make ‘good’ consumer choices about food - food that is healthy, pleasurable, and sufficient - despite inadequate resources. This dissonance between the expected performance of consumption, eating, and feeding and the precarious material conditions in which this work is to be done, creates a pervasive sense of uncertainty which mirrors the precarity of the structural conditions that give rise to food insecurity.

Research participants in Kingston recognized the structural precariousness that limited their ability to get ahead, and that their lack of financial resilience for managing unexpected shocks create impossible conditions for those living on the brink of food
insecurity. Despite observations that “something always comes up” to throw careful planning and budgeting out of whack, most people didn’t seem to question their core strategies of individual planning and budgeting for managing food insecurity. While I did hear some complaints about the economy, volatile food prices, and ever-changing rules of social service programs, the recognition of these precarious structural conditions did not change how people in Kingston framed food insecurity as fundamentally their own individual problem to be addressed through individual, and where possible, market-based solutions.

One of the ways in which neoliberalism governs subjects is through the discourse of self-discipline, but this discourse also arises under other kinds of political economic structures. Discourse of self-discipline emerged as a theme among both my Canadian and Cuban interviewees and there were significant differences between the two research groups. Canadians are expected to exercise self-discipline in planning and budgeting as the most appropriate, and morally respectable strategy for managing in the face of deprivation. Cuban Socialism animates the discourse of self-discipline in a very different manner; instead it is located in patriotic notions of sacrifice for the “patria” - the nation. Self-discipline for the sake of the revolution remains a core, if slightly tattered, value of the Cuban people. Among Cubans, the discourse of self-discipline arose to describe what Cubans must do to endure in the face of the ongoing US embargo, and in support of the country, but not as strategies for managing food insecurity at the household level. In Cuba, blame for the precarity of economic and social structures is laid squarely at the feet of US imperialism. Shortages in fuel, medical supplies, food, and other consumer
products are often understood by most to be a direct result of US economic policy against Cuba.

In Havana, neoliberal logics are caught in what Mesa-Lago and Pérez-López (2013) describe as the tension between socialist idealism and capitalist pragmatism, and are therefore less central to Cuban culture than they are in Canada. Where they exist, they are contested (Báez, 2004; Bastian, 2016; Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López, 2013). The ideal of the self-disciplined individual figured much less frequently in my interviews in Havana, or at least, figured differently. My research participants typically used “we/Cubans” in conversation about food insecurity, rather than speaking about themselves as individuals or as households. Cuban discourse of self-discipline tended to refer instead to the self-discipline of the Cuban population as a whole in the interest of advancing Cuban society in morally virtuous ways. Correspondingly, when discussing the strategies they use to manage food insecurity, Cubans rarely spoke about what they could and should do as individuals to manage household food budgets and planning at the household level but rather complained about external forces - wages, pensions, and food prices. While this may partially be due to the difficulty of planning food procurement within such an uncertain food market as I note earlier, it is notable that in Cuba socially networked solutions were identified as the most important strategy for managing household food insecurity.

Wilson (2014) posits that Cuban national values, forged through the Cuban history including, but not limited to, the revolution of 1959 and the formal adoption of socialism as the state ideology 1961 has engendered a moral economy that is different from moral economies typical of global neoliberalization. The moral economy of Cuba continues to
foreground principles of social equality that echo and are echoed by the egalitarian principles of the revolution and its social policies and programs including those that ensure access to food for all. During the interviews, when asked about political, social, and economic changes on the horizon, research participants in Havana frequently expressed concern about the conditions of those worse off than themselves, speculating about what would happen to the elderly, rural Cubans, and people with disabilities if the rations were to be eliminated or if the country were to move too quickly towards a free market economy. There was also a recognition and a concern that already overextended family members would be expected to bear the burden of feeding and otherwise caring for people if entitlements disappeared. In Canada, I heard very few concerns about the plight of others outside of immediate family.

While the discourse of neoliberalism is evident in the aspirations and emerging discourses of those Cubans who are turning to self-employment, it is tempered by a historical commitment to social equity and universal entitlements, bound up in a persistent anti-imperialist discourse in everyday Cuban life (Burchardt, 2002). Despite the neoliberal turn that Cuban economic policy has taken since the special period in the 1990s, amplified since Raúl Castro assumed the office of president, it is a mistake to assume that Cubans wholeheartedly embrace individualism in the same way it is constructed in western neoliberal economies (Härkönen, 2014). Cubans recognize and use the discourse of civil rights, and embrace individual agency in many ways, but I have observed that within Cuban discourse about social relations, there remains an acute awareness of the responsibility of the individual to the collective, and this social
awareness textures and tempers the individualistic aspirations of people engaged in business activities in ‘la nueva Cuba’ in important and apparently durable ways.

The Cuban moral economy normalizes universal state entitlements and also shapes the norms of the operation of the informal market, influencing the consumption, exchange and production of food in Cuba to a large extent. It also affects the emerging culture of self-employment in Cuba, in which a mix of free-market economics, cumbersome state bureaucracy, and the incorporation of informal market elements mix with the vestiges of revolutionary socialist ideology to create uneasy business relations that help to meet the needs and desires of Cubans.

The fear of losing the hard-won social equity gains of the revolution at sits alongside aspirations for a better life that many Cubans can only imagine can happen through a further loosening of restrictions on capitalist accumulation. There is no doubt that after years of deprivation, the promise of more and cheaper consumer goods along with expanded control over one’s work life holds immense appeal for many Cubans. Evidence of the neoliberal dream of the possibilities of unfettered means for making money and unlimited low-cost consumer goods is increasingly apparent in Havana. Despite the relative isolation caused by the US embargo, most Cubans, at least in Havana, are well versed in contemporary western consumer culture through US, Spanish, and Latin American popular culture, through personal and familial relations with people ‘outside’ the island, and for some of them, through their own experiences travelling abroad.

Cubans are also aware, however, of the precarity that comes with capitalism, and fear losing the entitlements that, for many, define the successes of the Cuban revolution,
particularly universal health care and free education. While younger generations of Cubans seem somewhat less committed to the ideological principles of the revolution than their parents and grandparents, there is still a living memory of conditions before the revolution. For younger people, universal health care, free education, relatively safe streets, and a still-functioning social safety net are taken for granted.

The question remains, to what extent are Cuban people and the leadership of Cuba willing to trade in the “solid floor” of a controlled economy with all its limitations, for the precarious underpinnings of neoliberal capitalism with seemingly unlimited individual possibilities? The current project of forging a dual economy is an ongoing battle between the egalitarian ideals of revolutionary socialism and the sometimes brutal realities of 21st century neoliberal capitalism (Burchardt, 1999). As the Cuban economic system becomes more and more precarious, many people are anxious for more rapid change. Cuban leaders are slow to implement sweeping reforms, however, and frequently take a decisive step backwards for every tentative shuffle forwards. In January of 2016, for example, in a bid to halt the effects of inflation in food markets, the Cuban government reversed market reforms and reintroduced price controls on fruits and vegetables in agricultural produce markets. More recently, in July 2017 they announced a temporary halt to approving new business license applications until new regulations could be put in place to halt tax evasion and other misconduct. Clearly there is still considerable anxiety among the leadership about the liberalization of the Cuban economy. My research suggests that this anxiety permeates the citizenry as a whole.
7.4 Neoliberal subjectivities and healthy food discourse

A fundamental contradiction shows up between the governmentality of neoliberalism and the structures that are set up to serve it. Precarious conditions created through neoliberalism limit opportunities to act as an ideal neoliberal citizen, even as neoliberal logics demand people act as good consumers. This tension is reflected in people’s anxieties about food work in many ways. One way that several of my Kingston interviewees presented themselves as good neoliberal citizens was through discourse about shopping for healthy food. Devynn, for example, spoke at length about her commitment to healthy eating, and avoiding unhealthy foods.

“for snacks I like good snacks. Like I'll go and buy stuff like raw almonds, and nuts, local veggies, stuff like that. Even though it costs more, it’s worth it. I have chocolate in the fridge for months and the only time I eat stuff like that is like if I wake up in the night, and I have to pee, I'll go by the fridge and I'll, like, take the tiniest little nibble [laughs].

In Havana, healthy eating is understood differently, but is also tied up with ideas of citizenship and was linked explicitly to state-sponsored public health messaging. Many of my interviewees echoed Amanda, who said

I’m always worried about eating well, feeding the family well. Small amounts, vegetables, healthy food, you know? I think I’m a little bit European! [laughs]. I like the shows on television, how the food comes out so nice, how healthy it looks

Others spoke approvingly about the large billboards that some state-run markets have that show the nutritional value of various foods.

The idea of self-discipline for people living with food insecurity extends beyond budgeting and planning. According to Polzer and Power, “Neoliberal styles of governance idealize particular notions of health and citizenship” (2016, p 4). I posit that many of people I interviewed in Kingston attempt to manage their anxieties about the precarity of their circumstances by attending better to their own and their families physical health. In order to
exercise control over their bodies, and at the same time, perform the role of good consumer (and
good parent), people express aspirations for healthier eating.

Among my Canadian research participants I was interested to find that aspirations for healthy eating were usually expressed as the desire to consume more organic, and/or local food, particularly meat and dairy. For all of my interviewees who talked about wanting to eat a healthier diet, this desire was expressed as what they would do, or would do more of, if they had the resources, and did not necessarily represent their current food practices. The desire to consume organic and/or local food was typically expressed in terms of what they would like to be eating, and importantly, what they would prefer to feed to their children. Local and/or organic food was understood to be healthier, safer, and more ethical than equivalent foods from the grocery stores people frequented\textsuperscript{23}. This wholesale embrace of the contemporary Canadian discourse about the nutritional superiority of local and/or organic (sustainably produced, etc.) food surprised me. Despite the relative affordability of the Canada Health Guide version of healthy eating compared to a local/organic diet, these interviewees largely ignore the mainstream public health based messaging about healthy eating instead equating health with local/organic.

While neoliberal governance insists that individuals perform health through dietary choices (Beagan, Chapman & Power, 2017; Polzer & Power, 2016), it also creates the precarious conditions that make this impossible. When healthy eating is equated with

\textsuperscript{23}Some of my interviewees were people I met originally through my work in the not for profit food insecurity sector in Kingston. Due to using a snowball sampling method, many of my Canadian interviewees understood me as someone connected to the local food movement. It is likely that at least some of the aspirations people expressed about wanting to eat more local and/or organic food reflected what they thought I would want to hear about what constituted healthy eating. Still, it is worth noting that the expression of the desire to consume local or organic food was always framed in terms of eating a healthier diet, not as a desire for tastier, more ethical, or more sustainable food.
unaffordable consumption, as it is for the Canadians I interviewed for whom eating healthy was equated with eating organic or local, the inability to achieve this kind of diet further marginalizes people living in poverty. It amplifies the experience of food insecurity, compounding the uncertainty about being able to afford sufficient, healthy food for the household. It seemed to represent one more way in which people felt they were ‘failing’ to be appropriate food consumers or to adequately care for themselves and their families.

Cubans had concerns about their ability to consume a healthy diet in on limited incomes, however the discourse I heard there was in line with Cuban public health messaging, and references to local or organic food did not emerge in our conversations. Instead, people expressed concerns that their diets weren’t healthy enough due to lack of protein because of the unaffordability of meat and dairy products, items historically provided to Cubans through the rations but now in short supply. Other health goals people expressed included eating more vegetables and lowering fat, salt and sugar intake in accordance with what their doctors had advised.

Cubans typically tied their concerns about healthy eating to the precarity of the rations system. In fact, during interviews, of all rationed items, the decline in availability of meat and milk was often mentioned as evidence that the rations as entitlement were becoming more and more precarious. This is an interesting example of what can happen when state entitlements become precarious, particularly when they have been held up as symbols of an ideal. As the state assumed control over virtually every aspect of Cuban food access, failures to provide adequately challenge the legitimacy of the state as
provider, although in the case of Cuba, blame for the inadequacies of all state entitlements is also shared with the US for its trade embargo policies.

Having to manage food insecurity in precarious circumstances can generate an ongoing sense of anxiety that is not always aligned with the material circumstances of the moment. This was particularly notable in Cuba where memories of deprivation suffered during the special period continue to affect people’s sense of uncertainty about food sufficiency. In several of my interviews I made note of what I call in my field notes a ‘special period hangover’. Like Garth (2014) in her research about household food consumption in Santiago de Cuba, I found that in Havana, when people were asked to reflect on their experience of doing food work for the household, many began with the statement “Aqui no hay comida” - “here there is no food”. Only upon further questioning was I able to establish that these particular households were actually well provisioned, and had not experienced serious food shortages in fifteen or twenty years. The uncertainty that characterized food insecurity remained despite changes in material conditions.

In Canada too, I found evidence that experiences of deprivation may have lasting effects on one’s perception of food insecurity. Many of my interviewees reflected on dire situations in their past, such as periods of homelessness or struggles with addiction, that continue to shape their perception of their food insecurity to this day. One research participant in Kingston talked about a continuous state of “panic survival mode that you slip into” as soon as anything happens to upset the delicate balance between income and expenses. She linked this specifically to the challenges of parenting three children on social assistance,
noting that the fear of being judged to be a bad mother by the Children’s Aid Society, particularly when it came to keeping her kids fed, would regularly send her into a downward spiral at the smallest upset (as she now sees it). She claims she never escaped this mentality until her children left home, and that even now sometimes gets worried about how her food habits will be judged. This suggests that not only do precarious conditions shape food insecurity in the moment of precarity, the experience may have longer-term effects, creating worry about food insecurity long after the material conditions have changed.

In Canada, neoliberal structures of precarity along with corresponding ideological demands creates an incoherence in the system, a disjuncture between what’s good for the system and what’s good for the workers or citizens. At a societal level in Canada we applaud those who are ‘spunky’ enough to manage food insecurity and other deprivations through individual self-discipline, while we remain uncritical of the forces that precipitate the precarity that shapes the experience of food insecurity. The more precarious things become, the more self-discipline is demanded, and at the same time, the less self-discipline is able to mitigate problems.

In Cuba, precarity is born of mounting tensions in the development of a hybrid economic structure attempting to bridge socialist ideology and the pragmatism of capitalist economics. People are increasingly disenchanted with the precarity of the existing structures that represent the successes of the revolution, and the idea of self-discipline, recalling the sacrifices people were called on to make in the project of revolutionary socialism, carries less weight with younger generations of Cuba. Rather
than experiencing food insecurity as individual failure, it is experienced as a shared social condition. Blame is laid on the state, no longer able to meet the promises it has made, and at the feet of the US, responsible for trade embargos since 1962.

7.5 Normalization of food insecurity and coping strategies

In both sites, many people live without adequate resources or insurance against the inevitable shocks to livelihoods that occur under precarious material conditions and result in food insecurity. The experience of food insecurity has become normalized for many people in Havana and in Kingston. To normalize food insecurity is to normalize the conditions, structures, and forces that give rise to and exacerbate it, as well as resignation to the anxiety and uncertainty that characterize it.

Davies (1993) distinguishes between coping strategies for managing temporary food shortages and adaptive strategies for managing long-term or permanent conditions of food insecurity. She reminds us that when people are using what we call coping strategies, i.e. juggling assets, going into debt, or relying on charitable sources of food, they are, in fact, not coping with food insecurity in a way that is sustainable, or that will lead to a change in status from food insecure to food secure. Adaptive strategies, on the other hand, connote resignation to the state of food insecurity. Many, though not all, of my research participants spoke as if their food insecure conditions were relatively fixed - they did not see the possibility for change in their circumstances. Still, the strategies they used were really only meant to get them through to the next month. No one was under the illusion that better planning or going to a food bank would permanently ‘resolve’ the problem of food insecurity or other deprivations they faced. Even though they understood their coping strategies as short term, they were resigned to these month-by-month survival strategies. Food insecurity had become normalized.
Many of the Cubans in my research sample have also normalized the food insecurity they live with. One way that this is accomplished is through humour. During my interviews in Havana, several people remarked that it was the Cuban sense of humour that gets them through hard times, particularly when it comes to food insecurity. Again, this is not presented as an individual characteristic, but as a national trait.\(^{24}\)

Humour is an important vehicle through which food insecurity is inscribed and reinscribed as a shared cultural experience in Cuba, rather than an individual failing. The phrase ‘pollo por pescado’ - referring to the substitution of chicken for fish on the rations is, for example, the subject of Cuban street humour, and has come to symbolize both the ineptitude of the state in providing entitlements to Cuban citizens as well as carrying a sexual connotation related to transvestitism i.e. presenting one thing as something else. Humour about the state is even officially sanctioned. Each Monday, Cuban state television airs the show “Vivir del Cuento” — roughly translated as “Surviving by Your Wits” featuring the sketch comedy of Luis Silva’s trademark character Pánfilo, an old man with a shopping bag and a rations booklet who makes jokes about the rations, lineups, and other frustrations of day-to-day life in Havana revolving around food procurement. The show is watched by an estimated two-thirds of the Cuban population each week (Montgomery, 2016). Official endorsement of Pánfilo’s humour was made evident when he was invited to make a humorous video with President Obama prior to Obama’s historic trip to Havana in 2016 (“President Obama gets a Call From Pánfilo”, YouTube, 2016).

\(^{24}\)Several scholars have investigated the role of humour in how Cubans frame tensions between the state and the needs of the people; see for example, Burchardt, 2002; Fernández, 2000; Forrest, 1999; Powell, 2008, and Weinreb, 2009; Wilson 2009.
The dissonance that exists between people’s desires to meet the norms of healthy, adequate, enjoyable eating on the one hand, and the precarious material conditions that continually thwart those aspirations on the other, create the conditions for the emergence of structures and systems outside the private sector market and state-based social assistance. In Canada, the primary societal response to food insecurity has been the emergence and strengthening of the charitable food sector. In Cuba, where there is no space within civil society for charitable organizations, the illicit informal economy based on Reciprocal Social Capital, has flourished to address the needs for augmenting income and for procuring food and other goods and services. This comes at a cost to the Cuban economy and socialist ideals. As Wilson (2012) notes,

Scarcities and daily hardships have blurred the boundaries between morality and opportunity, legality and necessity" - how moral uncertainties created thusly provide spaces for navigating the everyday realities of survival. Because illegality is necessary, [Cubans] find moral ways to resolve contradictions between state and market spheres (p. 7).

Informal economic activities in Canada, while they play an important role for some people who often have to supplement inadequate incomes by working 'under the table', are not part of an organized economic sector in the same was as occurs in Cuba.

Precarious material conditions under any political-economic regime are a determinant and dimension of food insecurity. Though it may be experienced and framed differently in relation to food insecurity in different sites, precarity produces and shapes the experience of food insecurity. As precariousness is an important determinant and dimension of food insecurity, policies aimed at addressing food insecurity must address the structural and material conditions that produce this. When we understand food insecurity not only as a function of inadequate income, but of inadequate insurance
against shocks, it means that effective solutions meant to address food insecurity, whether income-based or otherwise, must also consider how to build in the necessary resilience so that people are not easily tipped back into food insecurity as a result of labour force, social service, or health shocks. It is also important to keep in mind that the experience of uncertainty about food sufficiency that accompanies food insecurity does not necessarily dissipate quickly with changes in economic circumstances. In Cuba, memories of deprivation during the special period continue to colour people’s sense of precarity around food sufficiency. This is reminiscent of how older generations of Canadians carried with them throughout their lives the deprivations and anxieties produced by the great depression.

The C.D. Howe Institute, a centrist Canadian think tank recently produced a report on precarious work. In this report, they identified several of the dangers of precarity for workers including lack of health benefits, employment insurance, and lack of training opportunities for ‘moving up the corporate ladder’ (Busby & Muthukumaran, 2016). In what looks counterintuitive as a neoliberal strategy, the report calls for the expansion of the roll out of state-sponsored solutions to the problems of precarity for the labour force. They recommend that that state take responsibility for mitigating precarious conditions calling for “…solutions that avoid burdening employers with regulations and increasingly focus on a well-designed safety net to cushion against volatile labour market conditions” (p. 13). This reminds us about the nature of the relationship between capital and the neoliberal state. Jamie Peck describes neoliberalism’s ability to “fail forward” - to recover from each apparent crisis with momentum and resilience (2012; p. 6). Despite the common rhetoric of a “smaller state” associated with neoliberalism, this example reminds
us that in reality, neoliberalism demands not that the state shrink altogether, but rather that it redirect policy and resources to, above all else, provide support for capitalism to remain unburdened.

7.6 Social networks and social capital

Initially when I identified the prevalence of socially-networked strategies for managing food insecurity in my data, I felt reassured that people were taking care of each other informally when the labour market and the state failed to do so. Generally speaking, we support the idea of ‘people helping people’. Socially networked solutions to problems like food insecurity are appealing. They suggest a caring society, one in which we are looking out for one another, and they represent an alternative to the stark individualism of neoliberal ideology. While relying on social networks doesn’t actually solve the problem of income-based food insecurity, access to a reliable social network may provide some insurance against the shocks that can quickly upset a household budget, tipping it into food insecurity.

In Canada we like to think of ourselves as neighbourly and helpful. Our media abounds with stories of ‘helping’; from raising money and collecting household goods for refugees, to shoveling the sidewalk for an elderly neighbour, to participating in seasonal food bank ‘blitzes’. When my Kingston interviewees talked about the help they give to or receive from family and neighbours, framed social generosity as an essential personal or family attribute. People told me things such as “My house has always been the place they could come, no matter what” or “My grandmother could never turn anyone away and neither can I.” Often Canadians do help each other, but that’s not the whole story. Because neoliberalism highlights individual self-sufficiency and competition, in Canada
we sometimes frame informal social solutions to structural social problems as more progressive, and as evidence of resistance or alternatives to neoliberalism. This is buttressed by both evidence and hegemony about the dangers of social isolation, and the benefits of social inclusion and cohesion as social determinants of health and of food security (Cattall, 2001; Hamelin et al., 2002; Tarasuk, 2001). Bringing a critique of socially networked solutions to social problems is therefore complicated.

‘People helping people’ strategies are appealing on many levels. Without denying the importance of informal social relations for well-being generally, I suggest that we place too much faith in these strategies to address social problems such as food insecurity, and in doing so there are consequences. First, by celebrating informal social network strategies for people living in poverty we turn our attention away from the role of the state in providing a social safety net. Second, because access to social networks is not guaranteed for all, relying on them can exacerbate the conditions of precarity for some people. Finally, some forms of social capital are structured in ways that further marginalize vulnerable populations, while appearing to be solving the problem at hand.

Given the inefficacy of individualized strategies of self-discipline for dealing with food insecurity under precarious conditions, it is not surprising that socially networked strategies were often mentioned by both my Cuban and my Canadian research participants who were dealing with food insecurity. In Canada, my interviewees talked about the importance of family and friend for filling gaps left by precarious social assistance and labour force structures; some also talked about Formal Social Capital for help with access to food assistance programs. In Cuba people talked primarily about relying on family and friends, and also identified a more structured network of Reciprocal
Social Capital extending to networks well beyond immediate family and friendship circles.

My research participants in both sites spoke warmly about socially networked strategies for managing food insecurity. Despite living in poverty and facing food insecurity themselves, many were especially proud of being able to help others, and talked about the importance of being someone that could be called upon in times of crisis, or of helping others on a day-to-day basis. In Canada, some said they wished they could be part of a more robust social network where people could rely on each other more often. They expressed longing for a life in which they had more time and resources to share, with some wishing they lived in a different neighbourhood that would facilitate this. In Cuba, it was more nostalgic. Many people equated helping others with Cubania - an essential dimension of what it is to be Cuban, and mourned what they perceived as a diminishment of traditional social cohesion in Cuba. Cubans see themselves as a sharing culture. They are proud of their status as a sending nation for medical aid to countries in need around the world, and individual solidarity with the collective is a core element of what it means to be Cuban. As discussed earlier, this attribute is closely tied to the revolutionary project and the story of the nation itself, and many Cubans declared to me that helping out family and neighbours was a distinctly Cuban characteristic. This idea of Cubania or Cubanidad has been noted and studied by many researching Cuba (Fleites-Lear, 2012; Padrón Hernández, 2012; Powell, 2008; Premat, 1998; Wilson, 2009).

As much as we like the idea of help coming through informal social networks, most people prefer to be on the giving rather than the receiving end. While we often applaud informal socially networked approaches to social problems, in my interviews it was
evident in both sites that, while people were happy to talk about the value of sharing what they had with others, they were much less comfortable talking about being on the receiving end of help from family and friends. This was particularly true when they chronically needed help and would not be able to reciprocate. Canadian interviewees spoke about sometimes turning to food banks so they wouldn’t have to rely on family or friends for ‘handouts again’. This finding echoes research by several scholars (Ahluwalia, 1998; Hamelin, 1999; Powell, 2008) although others did not find evidence of this (Swanson, Olson, & Miller, 2008).

In Havana, people also expressed reluctance to be only on the receiving end of help that couldn’t be reciprocated, particularly when it came to managing day-to-day problems like food sufficiency and preferred to stretch available household resources as best they could until more earnings could be gained. Interviewees, comfortable navigating the Reciprocal Social Capital networks that involved give and take were less comfortable receiving help from neighbours that wasn’t reciprocal. The ability to reciprocate in some way was, in both sites, an important factor in whether or not people felt comfortable seeking help through informal social networks.

Luxton (2010) reminds us that privatization, a fundamental preoccupation of neoliberalism, has a double meaning; it means both freeing the private sector and turning to the private social realm, i.e. families and individuals, to manage the increased burden of work that comes as a result of the precarious material conditions that come with a ‘flexible’ labour force and the roll-back of state apparatus. As much as we valorize socially networked solutions, it is important to remember that as neoliberalism deepens, reaching into all aspects of life, it increasingly depends on family and other informal
social relations to take up the slack in care-taking activities when the labour market and the state roll back their responsibilities. We can see this in action in the preoccupation that the Cubans I interviewed showed with the increased workload that would fall to families, primarily women, with the diminishment of food rations and other state entitlements as is predicted in the transition to a hybrid economy that includes elements of neoliberalism.

Informal social solutions to structural problems work well for neoliberalism. They don’t impede or challenge capital accumulation, they help to offset negative externalities of capitalism by providing insurance against precarity, and they shore up the reproductive labour of the private household sphere at virtually no cost. Finally, informal social networks systems don’t demand taxation, and so are no threat to neoliberal capitalism on that front. They are, however, subject to burnout. If we conceptualize informal social networks as forms of capital as Bourdieu does, we can extend the metaphor and posit that it is possible to deplete stores of social capital by over-reliance on it in non-reciprocal relationships. As inequality grows in Cuba, some people’s ability to reciprocate is diminished because they have significantly less access to valuable goods or services to offer. Once the power to reciprocate becomes unbalanced, people with fewer resources are more likely to be excluded from the networks and transactions necessary for navigating day-to-day social and economic life.

In Chapters Five and Six I described how informal social networks sometimes become quasi-formal configurations in both Canada and Cuba, constituting distinct forms of social capital that are sometimes drawn on for managing food insecurity and other deprivations. In Canada, Formal Social Capital is evidenced when people rely on
relationships with people in power to help them access programs or agencies that provide them with food assistance. Formal Social Capital may be in the form of relationships with agents of the state - social workers, or probation officers for example. It may be with directors or key staff or volunteers with a food program, or it may be a combination or a network of these types of relationships. These relationships are characterized by unequal power relations between those in positions of authority and the person in need of food assistance, and typically there is no expectation of reciprocity (beyond agreeing to participate willingly in the program or using the service that was brokered). The brokering of a relationship with a food providing agency is understood by all parties as a ‘favour’ that a social worker or program staff member is offering, and that it goes beyond the call of duty. Because of this, there may be additional pressure on the participant to participate in the program or services offered in order to properly acknowledge the favour that has been proffered. Additionally, there may be an expectation on all parts that the participant will, at the very least, be a ‘good’ recipient or participant in the program, i.e. that they will conduct themselves appropriately according to the expectations of the organization. In the cases I have identified through my research, people are often expected or encouraged to provide volunteer labour in the agency/program they have been introduced to through these formal social connections.

Surveillance plays a role in disciplining neoliberal subjects, as well as in constructing self-disciplining neoliberal subjects. Within the relationships engaged in through Formal Social Capital, charities may also be asked to play a surveillance role on behalf of the state. Gledhill (2004) notes that the obsession with surveillance is one of the paradoxes within neoliberalism. In the interest of shrinking state entitlements, services
such as providing food assistance (in lieu of adequate social assistance benefits) are loaded onto the charitable sector. In order to continue to monitor and control the population, an ‘audit culture’ is constructed, through which state or quasi-state surveillance and intervention can happen (2004). Charities may play a role in collecting information about clients, tracking compliance and ‘success’ within certain kinds of programming. In food programs this might mean tracking reliability as a volunteer, managing addictions or mental health challenges in “appropriate” ways and so on.

Formal social capital used to broker access to food programs blurs the lines between entitlement and charity. When the client in these relationships is introduced to the service/program by someone in authority such as a social worker or staff at the program itself, accessing a charitable service becomes legitimized and moves closer to the realm of entitlement. Rather than walk in the door of a charitable food program with the usual anonymity, the relationship is brokered so that the participant walks in the door as a known subject, and, usually, knows something about the services/programs they are ‘entitled’ to receive through the charitable agency. Consequently, there is permission or even something akin to a ‘prescription’ to participate in a meal program, or to access a food bank.

In Cuba, as many researchers have observed, the economy of everyday life relies on informal relationships of reciprocity, what I have named Reciprocal Social Capital (RSC) in order to capture the transactional dimension of these relations. Reciprocal Social Capital is comprised of complex network of informal reciprocal social relations key to managing everyday life in Cuba. These relations incorporate family friends, neighbours, and socios or personas de confianza - trusted people. RSC is associated
primarily with the illicit or informal economy, however, there are many ways in which the informal economy intersects with the formal private sector and the state sector, and so RSC is used in Cuba to navigate aspects of virtually every sphere of life, including food procurement. This form of social capital relies on a significant level of community solidarity, an ethos that maps onto historical ideals of Cubania forged through the revolution and other moments of Cuban history.25 “These relations of trust, cooperation and social obligations of reciprocity … sustain those networks of relations between family, neighbourhood and community members, and … become particularly important resources in times of need “(Powell, 2008, p. 181). While admirable, and obviously a source of pride for Cubans, reliance on these networks of relations of social solidarity is, “achieved at the cost of immense strain upon the very social relations which compose that solidarity” (Powell, 2008, p. 181). When every day brings new uncertainties for people facing food insecurity, Reciprocal Social Capital becomes essential to the workings of almost every aspect of life. The increasing reliance on informal social networks for addressing everyday problems in Cuba puts extra strain on the traditional familial and community relations of reciprocity that people have always relied on in times of need. “The ability to inventar, resolver, and luchar as part of the daily work of social reproduction - as well as offering opportunities for individual advancement - has become a capacity which is both essential and permeated with anxieties” (Powell, 2008, p. 182). In Cuba, engagement with Reciprocal Social Capital - both as workers and as consumers

25While the Cuban Revolution of 1959 represents an obvious break with the western capitalism that gave rise to neoliberalism, the Cuban people have a long history of fighting for independence from colonialism which continues to be valorized in the formation of an essential national identity, or what is called Cubania. The leaders and storytellers of the historical Cuban struggles for independence were invested in building a new society and the idea of a unified revolutionary populace in opposition to imperialist forces predates the Cuban revolution of 1959.
- situates people in unprotected and precarious circumstances within the informal and illegal economy. However functional the informal economy may be as a short or immediate-term social safety net, it also guarantees the propagation of inequalities, and creates further precarity in the Cuban social and economic system (Centeno, 2000).

There are several problems with relying on socially networked solutions for addressing food insecurity. First, when society relies extensively on informal social solutions to structural problems, we abandon the commitment to the principle of entitlements. The focus on informal, community based solutions for ‘solving’ problems that derive from precarious structures and systems of the state and the private sector deflects attention from what people actually need for food security, i.e. sufficient and stable resources. It overlooks the fact that, while informal social networks may offer feel-good immediate feel-good responses to a crisis, the structures and systems giving rise to the crisis remain intact, and so the problems persist. Neoliberalism, at its core is an anti-communist ideology, and so resists formal collectivist power structures. It does, however, rely on the informal social sphere both for social reproduction, and to take up the slack of care-work that transpires from the retraction of the state (Braedley & Luxton, 2010). As Cuba moves towards a hybrid economic model that incorporates key elements of neoliberalism (i.e. the retraction of state entitlements; privatization of state enterprises; increasing reliance on private sector employment) people’s ability to invent or resolve through informal networks remains constrained by the precarious structures that give rise to the deprivations or threat of deprivation in the first place. “This places much of the responsibility for development on poor communities themselves, and is particularly likely to do so when valorized as a cultural characteristic of Cubania- as indeed many ordinary
Cubans do themselves” (Powell, 2008).

Second, because they are not based on entitlements, informal social networks do not ensure access to resources or services. People have different degrees of access to the social capital needed to address problems like food insecurity. As Janet Page Reeves (2012) reminds us, “not everyone has a network” (p. 22), leaving many people without the capacity to engage in socially networked strategies to help them avoid or manage food insecurity.

A final issue I want to point out is that Formal Social Capital as described here relies on invisible or informal policy - unlabeled government practices that are invisible because they exist outside the language and mechanisms of formal policy (Lawford, 2016). Informal policy, while not made explicit, “remain[s] true to the defining parameters of policy, which include the allocation of resources, material impacts, and reactions to it” (Lawford, 2016, p. 149), and so has significant influence. Informal policy carries the authority of policy because it is implemented through formal offices or channels, and is read as policy by those on the ‘receiving’ end of it. In Canada relationships based on Formal Social Capital are likely to asymmetrically reward ‘good’ social service recipients over others, and access to the benefits that come with these relationships is necessarily piecemeal and dependent on which social worker, clinician, probation officer, etc. you happen to be connected with, which services they happen to be linked to or know about, and how and whether they perceive the client as deserving, tractable, and so on.

Informal policy, in the case of agents of the state referring clients to food programs, represents an intersection between the state and charities that emerge to do the
care-work generated by neoliberalism’s roll-back of the state. In lieu of providing adequate and stable incomes and supports to people on social assistance, agents of the state - welfare case-workers, probation officers, or even police officers - use their positions and their professional and social contacts to connect clients with non-state providers of assistance such as food banks or emergency meal programs. In the case of my research participants, this action was presented as and understood as a favour; evidence of caring, and of going ‘above and beyond’ the usual client/worker relationship. Informal policy is, in this way, understood as ‘informal’ by all parties. However, because of the unequal power relations between the players involved and the authority of the worker making the call, the act is legitimized as if it were formal policy. Further, for the client involved, it confers the sense that, they now have an entitlement to the service being suggested, by virtue of the call or introduction made by the agent of the state.

There is nothing wrong with good-hearted caseworkers using their connections to facilitate their clients getting access to the services they need. These practices were experienced by the recipients I interviewed as positive interventions, however it is important to note that they don’t actually constitute entitlements. No client has a right to these well-intentioned interventions on their behalf, or to the programs or services that they have access to as a result of these interventions. As is true of informal social networks, access to these ‘favours’ conferred by agents of the state is not equally available to all. While some do find help through these formalized social relations, many do not and may even be excluded from this process. In addition to relying on the luck of the draw regarding which case-worker has your case file, for example, these relations are also likely to reproduce pre-existing inequities. People who are judged to be less likely to
be successful in programs may not receive the same level of attention. This may be based on problems with drugs or alcohol or other aspects of perceived ‘fit’ between client and program.

When it comes to food assistance in Canada, the charitable agencies at the receiving end of the transactions are not usually formally partnered with, funded by, or accountable to the state. In some spheres of the public sector charitable organizations are formally contracted to provide services. This configuration, known as a shadow-state formation (Wolch, 1990), is common with homeless shelters and health care provision for street involved people but rarely in food assistance charities. By providing these services, well-meaning non-governmental organizations facilitate state withdrawal by cushioning the effect of shrinking state welfare provisions (Trudeau, 2008; Wolch, 1990). At the same time, these organizations find themselves in an “increasingly semi-autonomous position” (Mitchell, 2001, p.177), linked to state goals through funding agreements and service contracts, but without mechanisms for ensuring democratic governance” (Wolch, 1989). With food assistance organizations in Kingston this is not the case. Apart from one drop-in meal program that receives funding through a federally funded homelessness program, the emergency food sector in Kingston receives no ongoing financial support from the state. Thus, not only does the neoliberal state create the conditions in which charities are encouraged to arise to do the care-work that materializes as a result of state roll-back of entitlements, but through informal policies that facilitate the connection of clients to charities in some cases and not others, the state actively, if informally, participates in how this transfer of responsibility rolls out.

In Cuba the government is rolling back state entitlements and cutting the state-sector
labour force, while taking measures to allow private sector enterprise to absorb the resulting unemployment (Ritter & Henken, 2015). Cuts to the rations system and the pension system have not been compensated with equivalent rises in household incomes, or with efficient and affordable emerging private market options. Instead, this work largely falls to families who must operate within the informal sector, leveraging Reciprocal Social Capital to meet their everyday needs. Cuba lacks a civil society sector that can step in to fill the gaps in social service provision that result from these changes. There is no charitable sector onto which the state can offload care-taking responsibilities, whether through formal arrangements in a shadow-state formation, or informally as is the situation in Canada.

The informal economy in Cuba assumes the burden of providing incomes, goods, and services that are not available through either the state or the licensed private sector. With the retraction of state entitlements, the tacit acceptance of the informal economy represents a form of informal policy as well, albeit one that is sporadically subject to crack downs and penalties (Field notes, December, 2015). Reciprocal Social Capital is more highly structured than every-day social relations among families and friends, but it relies on the same ethos of collective solidarity grounded in revolutionary idealism.

The Cuban state has an uneasy relationship to the informal economy and this reliance on Reciprocal Social Capital. On the one hand, a ‘people helping people’ model maps nicely onto the discourse of revolutionary socialist ideals of collective responsibility and supports the idea of Cubans working together for the good of all. These ideals are continuously reinforced in policy guidelines and through the popular media. It can be difficult to draw clear lines between informal mutual assistance and the illegal black
market and these activities exist on a continuum. Such practices include selling unneeded rice rations to a neighbor for a few extra pesos, preparing food at and selling it illicitly from the front window, stealing flour from a state bakery job to sell to the home-baker, to bribing an inspector, to diverting shipments of lobster bound for the tourist market into an illegal supply chain for and private restaurants. All of these activities are bound together in complex web of Reciprocal Social Capital (RSC) and all are technically illegal, though not all illegal activities are always treated as such at all times.

The reliance on RSC relieves the state of full responsibility for fulfilling day-to-day needs and allows the retraction of entitlements without leaving too many people completely in the lurch. The state recognizes, however, that the resourcefulness and inventiveness of the Cuban illicit economy ultimately relies on goods that are pilfered from the state for resale or reuse. This further weakens the ability of the state to provide the remaining entitlements, as well as destabilizing the legitimacy of the state as provider. Through policies and media statements, the Cuban leadership continues to promote revolutionary ideals of egalitarianism which historically have stigmatized personal wealth (Sagebien & Betancourt, 2014). At the same time, there is strong desire among many, particularly youth, for wealth, consumer goods and the status that comes with successful entrepreneurial activities. The state itself seems unsure how to manage this, executing a one step forward - one step backwards dance when it comes to crack-downs on the informal economy and the implementation of policy affecting legitimate small businesses. Policies are announced and then retracted, revised and rolled out again. This faltering rhythm creates uncertainty among legally licensed small businesses, and in some ways, contributes to the appeal of, and the role of the informal/illicit sphere.
In Cuba, concerns about rising inequality are understood to be linked to market liberalization incorporating both legal and illicit activities (Powell, 2008; Mesa-Lago & Pérez López, 2013. Ritter & Henken, 2015). These effects are exacerbated by the tacit state approval of Reciprocal Social Capital as a central dynamic of everyday Cuban economy. The possession of all forms of capital - economic, social, and cultural - that can be leveraged for participation in the informal market is racialized and gendered. Afro-Cubans and women are less likely to be able to access the economic, social or cultural capital that will allow for profitable participation in the private sector or the informal economy. Within the city of Havana, the neighbourhood you happen to live in, largely dependent on where your family lived prior to the revolution in 1959, determines access to the tourist economy or the emerging Cuban middle class of entrepreneurs. These factors shape the dynamics of the informal economy in which one can easily participate.

It is difficult and a little uncomfortable to critique socially networked solutions to social problems such as food insecurity. If I am to honour the declarations of my research participants, I have to be wary of underestimating the value of these strategies, not only for managing food insecurity, but for building resilience against economic and other shocks, for creating a sense of connectedness, and as a way of expressing care. We tend to applaud socially networked solutions to food insecurity, and there is a substantial literature within food studies, critical urban studies, and other fields extolling the potential for new forms of democracy that incorporate civil society organizations in new relations to governance structures (Levkoe 2006; 2011; Bellows et al., 2016; Marcuse, 2009). As a
solution to food insecurity, however, social network strategies do not have the capacity to address determinants of food insecurity including income poverty or precarity.

The danger lies in asking social networks to do too much. In the example of Cuba, we can see new strain being put on traditional networks of mutual assistance. As the state retracts its entitlement programs, people have to rely on increasingly remote and more highly structured informal relations for meeting every day needs. The valorization of socially networked solutions to social problems that arise from structural inequities diverts our attention from the retraction of entitlements, and ultimately serves to exacerbate unequal access to resources. Not everyone has a social network. The formalization of social networks in both research sites - as Formal Social Capital in Canada and as Reciprocal Social Capital in Cuba - reveals informal policy that further entrench precarious and problematic solutions - charities in Canada and the unregulated illegal, informal sector economy in both sites, but particularly in Cuba.

The celebration of socially networked strategies also helps to explain the rise and durability of charitable responses to food insecurity in Canada, most of which have arisen from small groups of well-intentioned people who ‘just want to do something to help’ in their community.

7.7 Charities and food insecurity

In charities, we can see institutionalized versions of the same dynamics as those outlined in the above discussion of social networks. Food providing charities are similarly resistant to critique about their efficacy. A major difference in the way that my Havana and Kingston research participants understand and manage their food insecurity lies in their different access to charitable food assistance programs. In Kingston, most of
my research participants choose not to use these services, or used them sparingly. But whether they used food assistance charities or not, everyone was aware that these programs existed as a fall back, and had at least a basic idea of how to access them. In Havana state management and control over the structure of civil society does not allow for independent charities to operate. There is no domestic charitable sector in Cuba, and so there is no equivalent of food banks or walk-in meal programs in the country. There are state run comedores as described in Chapter Four, neighbourhood food programs for vulnerable people who have been through a state screening program and deemed eligible to receive assistance. For Cubans who suddenly find themselves short of food, though, here are no emergency fall-back food assistance agencies. Thus Cubans manage food insecurity by stretching available resources, relying on social networks, and engaging in illegal activities in the black market to earn more income. Canadians do much the same; also relying on stretching resources, social networks and engaging in illegal activities, but at the end of the day, when these strategies prove inadequate, Canadians in Kingston can and sometimes do turn to food assistance programs. Looking carefully at this difference in available strategies for managing food insecurity raises some interesting questions about the role of charities and of the state for addressing food insecurity.

While charitable meal programs pre-date the advent of neoliberalism in Canada, neoliberal structures and ideology have contributed to the growth and durability of this approach to food insecurity. As discussed in Chapter One, the roll back of the state social assistance and increased precarity of the labour sector have created the conditions under which charitable responses to social problems flourish. Further, not only are the conditions wrought by neoliberalism favorable to the rise of charities, they are
ideologically buoyed and promoted under neoliberal regimes. Like the socially networked solutions for managing food insecurity discussed above, charitable responses to food insecurity harmonize well with neoliberalism. They don’t challenge capital accumulation, they provide a form of insurance within the precarity of low income existence by acting as fall-back services, and they shore up the state’s ability to provide services at low or no cost. Finally, food charities are funded not through taxation, but by competition among agencies for private donation and grants, thus reflecting neoliberalism’s preference for both low taxes and for competition as a foundational mechanism for creating maximum efficiency and ‘fairness.’

My own experience as executive director of a small ‘food justice’ organization was eye opening. My board and I felt hamstrung by regulations limiting political work we could do, by pressure to remain engaged in ‘front line’ work, to keep administration costs, including wages, as low as possible, and to adhere to downstream impacts without addressing upstream causes. Food assistance charities are limited both from within and from without in their ability to meet short-term needs of their clients, let alone allocate resources for working towards structural and systemic social and political change that could address the upstream causes of food insecurity.

Most people in Canada don’t give much thought to the governance of charities and charitable food organizations such as food banks and emergency meal programs in Canada are assumed to be available to anyone who ‘needs’ them. In fact, though, when it comes to charities, ‘need’ is defined by the organizations themselves, and in many organizations there is clear delineation between the deserving and the undeserving “needy”. Many food programs in Kingston, particularly hot meal programs, have a
relatively open-door policy welcoming anyone who chooses to attend as long as they show no overt signs of being a threat to staff, volunteers or other clients due to intoxication, or mental distress, or the perception of inadequate hygiene. However other policies are subjective and vary from agency to agency. My research and community experience shows that different agencies determine their own policies about banishing people for bad behavior, how to treat people with mental illness, how to eject someone causing a disturbance, how to accommodate dietary restrictions or culturally appropriate food requests, and how to accommodate people with a variety of visible or invisible physical or mental disabilities; all of which are determined by the organization itself. These policies or practices may be executed by staff or volunteers with minimal or no training in these matters.

Charitable food organizations are not part of the public sector. Often tasked with providing services that help to make up a local social safety net, they do so without mechanisms for ensuring that adequate resources are available to provide those services. People who rely on food charities have no real entitlement to the food and services provided, and citizens have no responsibility to financially support them through voluntary donations. While strictly reigned in as to the extent of allowable activities, as I discuss below, charitable food organizations in Canada are not subject to much state authority in their day-to-day operations, except in so far as they must adhere to federal limitations on allowable charitable activities, public health regulations, garbage bylaws, and the like. Neither are they guaranteed access to state-controlled resources - money, facilities, training - that would ensure they can best provide the services they offer. In emergency food programs, there is no guarantee of the quality or quantity of food, or of
frequency of service. It is increasingly common for these agencies to manage the chasm between available supplies of donated food and increasing demand, by limiting the quantity of food provided or the frequency with which people can access the food. In the spring of 2016 the principle food bank in Kingston found itself with a serious shortfall in donations and unable to meet the needs of their clients. Around the same time, in order to manage rising demand for their pantry, the St Vincent de Paul food bank made the decision to provide groceries to clients every second month instead of monthly. The state may regularly send people to these food banks, but they have no responsibility for ensuring that there is actually food available, that the food is adequate in quantity or quality, or that the hours of operation or the condition of the facilities ensure that people have reasonable access to the services offered. Services to clients can be reduced or even cut off at any time, based on internal policies and the circumstances of the organization.

Rules for compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) provides an interesting case in point about the impossible situation charities find themselves in. While OW and ODSP case-workers sometimes refer clients to food banks and meal programs for assistance, the provincial accessibility guidelines do not apply to these charitable organizations in quite the same way they do to publicly funded facilities and programs. While most food charities no doubt want to be fully accessible, the costs of retrofitting the church halls and other older buildings where these programs tend to be held is prohibitive. While charities may apply for grants to build ramps, retrofit washrooms, or install a chair lift, there is no guarantee of receiving these funds, and in any case, these measures may only partially address the gaps in the ability to provide full accommodations for all.
Under neoliberalism in Canada, the roll back of the state has given rise to a large charitable food sector. It is meant to take the edge off the worst effects of precarious and inadequate incomes and social assistance rates, but it does not fundamentally challenge neoliberal capitalism. As I discussed in Chapter One, food insecurity researchers describe in detail the failure of the emergency charitable food sector to address food insecurity in Canada and the US. Poppendiecks foundational book *Sweet Charity? Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement* (1999) argues that the emergency food system in the US has become part of the charitable “safety net” that ensures, at least in principle, that no one will go hungry, thus allowing deepening retraction of state entitlements (see also Tarasuk, 2001; Tarasuk & Eakin, 2003; Power, 2017). As Wakefield et al. (2013) state, “the emergency food system can be seen as a fundamental component of the shadow state” (p. 430), although it tends to operate without the formal contracts that characterize other private and non-governmental organizations within the shadow state. Thus charities remain in a very precarious position and don’t tend to benefit from the resources typically come with formalized shadow-state formations.

While the existing literature primarily focuses on the inefficacy and/or impossibility of food programs for fundamentally addressing food insecurity, much of this research also reveals the difficult conditions under which Canadian charitable food assistance programs strive to meet need in their community. Most of these programs operate on shoe-string budgets, engage underpaid short-term contract staff, rely heavily on volunteer labour and donated food items, are guided by a board of directors with no expertise in food insecurity, and operate out of donated or cheap facilities that make it difficult and sometimes impossible to deliver the services they hope to offer.
Funding agencies demand short term measureable outcomes indicating a high participation rate, low costs, and a plan for continuation of an initiative after the short-term funding (often 1 year or less) has run out. Creative program ideas are massaged to fit granting priorities or the interests (or perceived interests) of private donors and new trends in the food assistance sector. For example, in Kingston, between 2010 - 2014 it seemed that virtually every charitable agency in the city, whether food-oriented or not, was seeking funding for community kitchen programming as a way of addressing the (real or assumed) food insecurity of their clients, despite research showing a) that people living with food insecurity have equivalent cooking skills to the rest of the population and b) that improving cooking skills does not seem to have a measurable effect on food insecurity. By 2011 the ‘community food centre’ model was gained popularity as a fundable model for food assistance organizations, and rumours circulated that Trillium would only fund food access projects based on that model. Projects targeting skill building for children or at-risk youth are generally more fundable than for adults living in chronic poverty.

As we saw in Chapter Six, there is an ambiguous relationship between the state and civil society in Cuba where domestic civil society organizations do not operate truly outside the sphere of influence of the state. The Cuban state directs the structure and role of organizations, such as unions, neighbourhood organizations, and women’s groups that would be considered part of civil society in Canada. Policy about civil society organizing precludes citizens initiating anything like a food bank or emergency meal program, and neither does it seem to be something that the state intends to initiate in the public sphere during this era of retrenchment.
It is difficult to say why the Cuban state has not created openings for community aid organizations such as food banks. Given the enthusiasm I heard from several interviewees, I would be surprised if no one has suggested food banks in Havana. I have three connected hypotheses as to why this has not been allowed to happen. First, the equitable distribution of food was foundational to the principles of equality outlined at the time of the revolution, and has been restated consistently through policies in the years since, including during the special period. Organizations like food banks thus would be symbolic of the failure of the redistributive aims of the revolutionary government, and are also considered symbols of the inequality rampant in the US and other capitalist societies. Second, the state prefers to manage redistribution of resources in a controlled manner and is (rightfully) nervous about opening up opportunities for food charities which would a) need a whole other series of policies for governance, b) exacerbate emerging inequalities and c) fracture the fragile solidarity of Cubans by institutionalizing the “us and them” dynamic of food charity. Finally, the whole sphere of independent civil society is problematic for Cuba as politically opposed groups are emerging around the country to protest the lack of individual civil liberties (freedom of speech; political prisoners; direct voting rights, etc.). The leadership is thus unlikely to open up space for food banks or other “less political” civil society organizations lest they open a Pandora’s box that will be impossible to close.

Many of my Cuban research participants, particularly those with family in Miami, knew about food banks, hot meal programs, and food stamps, and told me that they wished that such organizations existed in Cuba. They expressed that they thought it would be a relief to have free services they could fall back on, and that it would relieve
some of the stresses of food insecurity. Two slightly different discourses about food charities emerged in the interviews. Having heard from relatives and friends in Miami and elsewhere in the US who use food banks, many of whom are probably eager to demonstrate the superiority of all things in the US, some people framed food banks as something that could only be enjoyed by those living in the land of plenty. For these interviewees, the absence of food charity in Havana was evidence of how backwards Cuba still was. For others, though, food charities were imagined as a buffer against deepening market forces threatening traditional relationships of care in Cuba. Unfamiliar with the actual workings of domestic charity, my interviewees seemed to imagine food charity as a robust and free form of entitlement for those who need it, and stated that they would be happy to use food banks if they existed in Cuba. As far as I could tell, there was no stigma associated with eligibility to receive food through the comedores; it was considered a reasonable entitlement for those who could not otherwise provide for themselves. And having spent over 50 years lining up for universal but insufficient rations to meet household food needs, it is little wonder that the Cubans I interviewed did not consider that shame might be part of the experience of using food banks. In my experience, Cubans, despite their isolation, understand themselves as contributors to global aid, primarily through sending medical assistance around the world as well as providing medical training doctors from around the world. While they do receive some food aid in times of crisis, Cubans do not tend to hold the subject position of charity recipient. It is important to differentiate between domestic charity and international aid here; Cuba is a recipient of assistance through the World Food Programme which provides Cuba with food relief during emergencies, such as when crops and food supplies
are damaged as a result of hurricanes. They also receive international assistance for some agricultural projects.

Cuban’s knowledge about food banks, food stamps, and low-price grocery stores in North America is considerable, given that most of the people I interviewed had never left the island. Cuba’s outsider status in the global economy fosters an awareness among the citizens of how their food system is different from those that operate in capitalist countries. In my research and through observation, I would say that Canadians, on the whole, have little imagination for alternative food systems outside of what is offered through contemporary neoliberal capitalism.

Many of the same dynamics that appear with informal socially networked strategies for managing food insecurity are also at work with charitable food “solutions” to food insecurity. On the one hand, food charities enable the offloading of responsibility for ensuring that people don’t go hungry onto a poorly funded, precarious charitable sector. On the other hand, they can be sites of genuine caring and support as well as sites of social engagement and meaningful participation for otherwise socially isolated people. While research indicates that using charitable food assistance such as food banks and meal programs does not have a measurable effect on food insecurity per se, in some cases they can help to fulfill some of those other needs. Those of my interviewees who regularly access hot meal programs talked earnestly about them as places of caring and support as well as sources of food.

Many people have written about the ways in which food is used to show care in families and communities (Beagan, Chapman & Power, 2017; Devault, 1994; van Esterik, 1999). Food-centred acts of care-giving can extend into the relationships that people have
with food charities. Like informal social networks, food charities provide people the opportunity to help others, to feel like you are doing something useful to address a serious social problem. The role of food program recipient versus food provider is often dichotomized, but in reality, many food charities in Kingston rely heavily on their recipient base for volunteer labour.

In addition to receiving food which is ostensibly the primary reason for using emergency meal programs, the five people I interviewed who were regular clients of meal programs in Kingston were also involved as volunteers. Some (though not all) meal programs in Kingston actively encourage people who use their programs to also act as volunteers; helping with meal preparation, loading the dishwasher, cleaning tables, cleaning floors, and so on. The people I interviewed who were engaged in this work found it rewarding. In all cases, the volunteers used the language of the labour force to describe their volunteer work. They called it work, as in “I work at [Meal Program Name] three days a week”. Or “I had to call in sick to work [at meal program]”. They talked about their scheduled hours and job descriptions and the status of different volunteer “positions” within the organization, as in “I started here as a dishwasher and then moved up to working on the meals”. They spoke of being “called in to work” to cover for someone else. At least one of the food charities I am familiar with in Kingston keeps track of the tasks performed, skills learned, and reliability of client-volunteers, and they use this information to write letters of recommendation for jobs or act as references for housing.

While some of my Canadian interviewees felt a real sense of community in the meal programs they attended and volunteered at, none of the interviewees I spoke with who had
used the primary food bank in Kingston had ever volunteered there, suggesting that stand-alone food banks may play a different role for some people living with food insecurity than meal programs do. This makes sense - as my research participant, Derrick, said, “With food banks, you just go in and get out”, while with meal programs people stay longer and generally sit at a table with others. There is more opportunity for making connections, and for expressing and receiving care at a meal program than at a food bank. Another reason for this difference may lie with the specific policies of the primary food bank in Kingston which does not create any opportunities for socializing for the clients who use the food bank.

As we have seen, fewer people in Kingston than I would have anticipated said that they felt stigma about using food charities, though I saw more stigma attached to using hot meal programs than food banks. While several people said they would never use a hot meal program because of pride, others of my research participants were regular attendees at one or more of these agencies and found them to be welcoming places of caring and social connection. That people spoke differently about different kinds of food programs is an indication that we should be cautious about lumping all food charities together. While all play a similar role vis a vis neoliberalism - i.e. filling gaps that shrunken state entitlements and a precarious labour market have created - among them are different models, and they play different roles in the wellbeing of their clients. While there is ample research on the inefficacy of food banks, teaching kitchens, and other community food programs for addressing income-based food insecurity, more research is needed to untangle the factors that make for a better or worse program, and to identify exactly what functions they fulfill for the people who comfortably use them.
The normalization of charitable food programs for some people who live with food insecurity challenges early definitions of food insecurity that included the designation “socially acceptable” or “in a dignified manner”. It is not surprising that, after over 30 years of rapid growth as the most visible response to food insecurity in Canadian society, food banks and other food charities have become normalized for many who use them, as well as for those who don’t. Indeed, Margaret Little (1998) notes, neoliberal policy in Ontario has “restricted the arena upon which [people] can make claims upon the state” (p. 32) meaning that people have to find somewhere to turn in times of crisis. The increase in the numbers of working people turning to food banks, even though we know it represents only a fraction of people facing food insecurity, is a clear indicator of the inadequacy of current government programs when it comes to mitigating the effects of inadequate and precarious income. Government programs offer little concrete assistance, while the food bank offers at least something. The emergency food sector has become so entangled with our idea of state entitlements in Canada, that they are nearly understood as such.

Another reason that stigma seems to be disappearing from the experience of using emergency food services may lie in the changing nature of those services themselves. In Canada more and more food charities are turning to a ‘community food centre’ model of charitable food programming in which food assistance is combined with skill-building, community building, and advocacy programming.26 One of the goals of this approach is

---

26 I use small letters here to differentiate this trend from the model advanced by Community Food Centres Canada, a not for profit organization promoting a model of community food centre with very specific metrics around service delivery and evaluation. While the work CCFC has done has been fundamental in pushing for an integrated food assistance, skill building and advocacy model, I am talking here of a looser trend towards incorporating some, but not necessarily all of the elements of the formal CFCC model.
to ensure that food assistance is delivered in as dignified and healthful a manner as possible, and to embed that assistance within other food-related programs and projects. Other agencies, not primarily food charities per se, are incorporating food pantries, hot meals, gardens and kitchen classes into their programming and budgets. While the community food centre approach is sometimes dismissed as a ‘building a better food bank’ band-aid approach, the jury is still out on the potential for these organizations to create a social good that could go some way to resolving food insecurity (Scharf, Levkoe & Saul, 2010; Levkoe & Wakefield, 2011).

Charities are subject to the same critiques as socially networked solutions to food insecurity but they also hold some of the same possibilities. They provide a kind of insurance in the face of economic precarity; they can be a site for social inclusion and a place for expressing and receiving care. And just as with socially networked solutions to food insecurity, there are theorists who believe that charitable food organizations, existing as they do within the realm of civil society may (may) hold potential to be important participants in alternate forms of democracy that incorporate civil society organizations in new relations to governance structures (Bellows et al., 2016; Levkoe 2006; 2011; Marcuse, 2009).

In Canada, charities are being further depoliticized. Instead, charities and the issues they purport to address are being corporatized, subject more and more to the logics of neoliberalism. Particularly notable among food charities is new pressure to becoming a social enterprise, a profit seeking business that financially supports a charitable mandate. Just as contracting out to profit seeking businesses is promoted as the preferred ‘shadow state’ model for public sector work under neoliberalism, social enterprise is the new
common-sense of the charitable sector. Social enterprises (need one sentence definition). Examples of social enterprises created by food charities include catering, cafes, incubator kitchens, and food hubs. These enterprises typically suck energy out of a small organization and at the end of the day, like most small businesses, fail to turn a profit beyond that needed to keep the social enterprise itself running. But it looks good to other funders and to the public, convinced of the superiority of a market-based income source and the display of moral integrity a charity shows by raising its funds ‘honestly’ in the market, rather than through grants or pleas for donations. Charities, like the people they serve, are made to feel guilty for relying on money that doesn’t come to them through the free market. Neoliberal logic thoroughly penetrates the charitable sector, and through competing on the free market, ‘fixes’ the problems that are often associated with charities, i.e. that their funding models are unsustainable and that they are prone to too much bureaucracy and inefficiency.

In the case of Havana, we can see that the absence of food charities does not signify an absence of food insecurity. An increasingly precarious labour market along with crumbling entitlements creates uncertainty and deprivation resulting in the experience of food insecurity in Havana that seems comparable to the experience of food insecurity in the more than 140 countries in which it is measured (FAO, 2016). The absence of food charities, however, means there is one less mechanism to bridge the gap for people facing food deprivation. When asked about food banks, Cubans imagine something uniquely Cuban. There, food charity is sometimes imagined as a buttress against the too-rapid commodification-marketization of food, and as a reinstatement of traditional social relationships of caring. As Cuba struggles through the development of a
hybrid economy, they have the opportunity to also construct a hybrid civil society which could include mechanisms for addressing the food insecurity that seems to plague the island.
Chapter 8

Conclusion

This dissertation contributes to the understanding of food insecurity through a comparative ethnographic study of how food insecurity is shaped and experienced in two research sites; Kingston, Ontario, Canada, and Havana, Cuba. In this conclusion I restate my goals for this dissertation along with the key insights that have arisen through the course of this research. I identify the limitations of this research and propose further research directions arising from my findings. I end with a discussion of implications for building social policy to support food security in Canada and Cuba.

My research builds on, and contributes to, literature that addresses experiences of food insecurity. Food insecurity has received substantial treatment in academic literature in Canada. Research on food insecurity in Canada often references data collected about income-related household food insecurity through the HFSSM component of the Canadian Community Health Survey. Quantitative food insecurity research in Canada demonstrates the correlation between low income and food insecurity. Recent research also seeks to draw links between household food insecurity and a suite of other variables including health indicators, income sources, housing status, geographical location, and so on. Qualitative food insecurity research in Canada also takes income-based food insecurity its starting point. This body of research articulates the experiences of food insecurity for various low income social groups, as well as assessing the efficacy of societal responses to food insecurity.
There has never been a focused study of food insecurity in Cuba. A handful of qualitative studies conducted about poverty by Cuban researchers, primarily in the city of Havana, explore the theme of food access in relation to poverty and inequality. These studies find that food insecurity is a key dynamic of deprivation for people living in poverty in Havana. The findings of these studies are echoed in ethnographic research carried out by non-Cubans about everyday life in Cuba in general, and Havana in particular.

My research builds on the body of qualitative food insecurity research in both research sites. It adds to knowledge about the forces shaping the conditions that create food insecurity, as well as to our understanding of the experience of food insecurity in both research sites. My primary research goal was to expand the understanding of the intersection of multiple causes and different experiences of food insecurity in Canada and in Cuba by conducting parallel ethnographic investigations in each site. As a neoliberalized first world western capitalist democracy, Canada’s state, market and civil society sectors have been heavily influenced by neoliberal ideology. Neoliberal ideology is largely invisible and unnamed in Canadian culture, shaping not only the political economy, but the culture and subjectivities of people. Cuba, as one of the few remaining self-declared socialist countries, is a third world country that has positioned itself in opposition to neoliberalism. Recent changes towards private sector investment and entrepreneurialism have meant that Cuba must deal with neoliberal capitalism in new ways. New tensions have emerged between the idealism of the official doctrine of Revolutionary socialism, and the pragmatism of a smaller state and increasing reliance on the private sector. Neoliberalism, while certainly not the only force at work in either site,
and countered and resisted in many respects, has embedded itself and has had an effect on
the conditions and experience of food insecurity in Canada and in Cuba, in different
ways. Using a Bourdieuan framework to compare experiences of food insecurity in two
very different socio-political environments, I hoped to shed light on the often
unquestioned ‘common sense’ of individual and societal responses to food insecurity in
both Cuba and Canada.

To achieve this research goal, I developed my project around two key research
questions: First, what can we learn about food insecurity by looking at the similarities
and differences in the lived experience of, and societal responses to food insecurity in
countries that sit in different relations to neoliberalism? I tackled this question by
exploring what people who are at risk for food insecurity actually do to avoid or manage
the experience of food insecurity in each research site, in relation to the state, the market
and civil society. Second, building from that question, how does neoliberalism work with
other dominant ideologies to shape appropriate, “normal” state, societal, and individual
responses to food insecurity in different sites?

8.1 Contributions and conclusions

Global conceptualizations of food insecurity have shifted away from attention to
aggregate food supplies and anthropometric measures of under-nutrition towards a more
nuanced understanding of the dynamics of food access at the household level. The focus
of food insecurity research has increasingly been on measuring income-based food
insecurity, that is, the uncertain or inadequate food supply due to limited financial
resources. This shift towards measuring food insecurity as a function of income at the
household level brings with it new biases. When we measure food insecurity in relation
only to income, we draw attention towards individuals’ lack of purchasing power, or their lack of ability to manage money, and away from the structures and forces within neoliberal capitalist political economy that produce the unequal power relations and economic inequality in the first place. Under neoliberalism, a relentless focus on income-based food insecurity logically leads to income-based solutions, and implies that resolving food insecurity by facilitating full participation in the unfettered free market is the best and perhaps only way forward. My research suggests three dimensions to consider in addition to low income when assessing the determinants and experiences of food insecurity.

First, I suggest that that precarity - not only of income, but of health, social and institutional supports, and other circumstances - is correlated with food insecurity in important ways. Neoliberalism demands an increasingly precarious labour market but it also shapes insecure state structures and charitable responses. Precarious structures and relations are not only evident in fully neoliberalized states, however. Rapid shifts in the roles of the retracting state, the emerging private market and a barely existent civil society in Havana, Cuba, also create precariousness in the everyday experience of putting food on the table. Precarity is not only a determinant of food insecurity in both research sites, but it characterizes the experience of it as well. That is to say that not only is food insecurity produced by precarious structures and social conditions, but it is inherently experienced AS precariousness. Thus, precarity must be considered both as a determinant and a dynamic of the experience of food insecurity in the development of societal responses to it.

Second, this research reminds us that food insecurity is only one of many
dimensions of deprivation including inadequate housing, poor health, and access to health care and other social services. This research adds ethnographic evidence to arguments that we should understand poverty as a function not only of income, but of other material and social deprivations. Policy to address food insecurity should be integrated with strategies for addressing multiple forms of deprivation including, but not limited to, income levels.

Finally, I theorize distinctive ways in which social capital is mobilized in each site for managing food insecurity, noting the importance of social networks for managing not only food insecurity, but other needs as well. In addition to discussing the importance of informal social networks of kin, friendships and neighbours, I describe two unique formations of social capital. In Canada, Formal Social Capital is a form of social capital based on institutionalized or formalized relationships. These relationships facilitate and legitimize the use of emergency food assistance programs for some people, but not others. The existence of Formal Social Capital relationships are evidence of an uneven and unofficial de-facto shadow-state relationship between the state and emergency food providers. In Cuba, Reciprocal Social Capital (RSC) exists in the complex network of informal reciprocal social relations that are key to managing everyday life in Cuba. RSC is used primarily in the informal economy and is mobilized to navigate through virtually every sphere of life, including food access. This form of social capital relies on a high level of community solidarity, an ethos that maps onto historical ideas of what it is to be Cuban. I suggest that social networks are an insufficient societal response for managing food insecurity. However, based on my observations about the role that informal and formal social relations play for managing and avoiding food insecurity in both sites, they
may be important for mitigating the effects of food insecurity for many people in the short term. I suggest that policy solutions in both Canada and Cuba should incorporate and expand on the inclination to engage social relationships in managing the day-to-day work of putting food on the table.

8.2 Limitations and future research

In this section, I outline what I have identified as the major limitations of this project, and present suggestions arising from my research for further research about food insecurity. The limitations I have identified fall into two categories: limitations of research design and limitations of analysis.

This research was an ambitious project for expanding an understanding of food insecurity through an intimate scale of ethnographic research in two sites. At various points throughout this paper I have reflected on how my research approach shaped the outcomes of this project for good and for ill. The snowball sampling method I chose to use, while effective for building trust and gaining access to hard-to-reach populations, has its limitations, including a tendency towards reaching a homogenous population, and operates largely outside of the direct control of the researcher. In each site my research sample was predominantly white (as defined in each culture), and mostly female (as I am). On the other hand, my samples felt ‘fractured’, clustered into small groups of two or three interviewees. This was particularly true of my Canadian sample. In Canada, there were a few single mothers; a few men; a few people who used meal programs; a few middle-class people fallen on hard times; a few people from generations of impoverishment, and so on. In retrospect, I believe this research would have benefited from a more intentional sampling strategy. A MORE homogenous sample in which I
controlled for more variables would have given me more points of direct comparison across the stories of research participants with common backgrounds or experiences; a LESS homogenous sample, in which I intentionally sought out more racially, ethnically, or otherwise diverse participants, might have given me other data I feel is missing from this project, including insights into the intersection of race, class, class trajectory, and food insecurity status. For this research project, I started my “snowballs” where I stood - with friends and contacts I knew. A different project would have emerged had I started the snow-balls in other fields in order to capture more of the experience of food insecurity in relation to race, ethnicity, immigration status, and indigeneity.

Ethnographic research generates very rich, but very specific, data. This deep focus on one place and one group of people (or in this case, two places and two groups of people) generates incredibly rich data based on an intimate knowledge of very specific places and peoples. The limitation of this approach is in using the particular to generalize, a conundrum that has often been addressed in qualitative social research methodological literature. Tracey (2010) offers a conceptualization of the transferability of qualitative research. She suggests that instead of aiming for formal generalizability, “qualitative research achieves resonance through transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) or naturalistic generalization (Stake & Trumbull, 1982) - processes that are performed by the readers of the research” (p. 845). Transferability and naturalistic generalization happen through resonance with the reader. The reader draws a connection between the research and their own situation or observations, and that connection can inform how the reader conceptualizes or acts in relation to similar or related phenomena. Rather than assuming that scientific proof based on large data sets generates a logic that leads to
changes in practice, Tracey argues that changes in practice come from a more complex and emic process. This approach to understanding the interaction of the reader/actor with qualitative research aligns with Bourdieu’s conceptualization of logics of practice and habitus as I discussed earlier.

In addition to suggestions for expanding the body of ethnographic research on food insecurity across different populations, several more specific research opportunities suggest themselves. One research opportunity arises from a gap I have identified in the literature about food charities in Canada. While a significant body of research has grown up about food banks, and there is a growing body of literature looking at participatory or skill-building food programs such as community kitchens and community gardens, meal programs have received very little academic attention (although see Collins, Power, & Little, 2014; Dachner et al., 2009, and Pettes et al., 2016). Meal programs offer social and nutritional dimensions that make them different from food banks. My experience volunteering in a meal program while doing this research suggests to me that these programs vary widely in how they operate and what they offer their participants, and that in some cases, meal programs play an important role in how people manage food insecurity. Further research into the operation of meal programs and functions they play for the people who use them is warranted.

The creation and effects of precariousness is another theme that is undertheorized. Most of the research on precariousness in Canada focuses on precarious employment. If precarity is a significant determinant and dynamic of food insecurity in both Canada and Cuba, further qualitative and quantitative research on is needed to better understand the multiple ways that people are tipped into crisis and what kinds of supports are protective.
against these effects.

Another research gap pertains to the emergent role of civil society organizations in Cuba. While several scholars have described Cuban civil society within the structure of a revolutionary government, civil society in Cuba bears close watching during this time of rapid and uneven political-economic transition. As the Cuban state retracts, it calls on the private sector to take up the work of wealth creation. How long will it be before a charitable sector is allowed or encouraged to emerge to take up some of the work of providing social welfare in Cuba? What forms might non-state food assistance take in Cuba and how might they be different from food banking elsewhere?

**8.3 Implications of the research**

In this section I hypothesize some practical implications of my research. This list of ideas is by no means exhaustive, rather it draws on some of the main ideas that emerged in this research. Most of these suggestions pertain more specifically to Canada than to Cuba, although many of the general principles outlined are applicable to both sites. As an outsider, I am reluctant to suggest direct implications of this research for Cuban social or economic policy. Instead, at the end of this section I frame my thoughts as desires for a country that has intrigued, frustrated, and inspired me for many years.

I found that food insecurity is determined not only by income, but also by precarity. Still, the most immediate and necessary response to food insecurity would be through improved income supports for people living in poverty, however defined. Income supports for people living on any form of social assistance and for those working in low-waged or precarious work would need to be sufficient to provide a reasonable buffer and act as insurance against the worst effects of precarious work and other uncertainties.
A universal guaranteed income would be the most effective income support programs to address precarity. The universality of such a program is key. The current social assistance systems throughout Canada are rife with opaque and shifting eligibility requirements and needs-assessment procedures which create unnecessary uncertainties and stresses. Universal income programs have been shown to have a positive impact on the prevalence of food insecurity among seniors and on families with children in Canada (Ionescu-Ittu, Glymour & Kaufman, 2015; McIntyre et al., 2015). It is possible that in addition to the income these programs have provided, the security of entitlement mitigates against the probability of food insecurity.

It is difficult, however, to imagine that stand-alone income-based policies designed to, at best, lift people above a defined poverty line, would comprise sufficient shock insurance that will keep people from slipping below that line when crises hit. Policies to address precarity in both Canada and Cuba will need to bridge how the labour force, social security systems, and maybe even the charitable sector are structured and linked together to provide reliable and socially acceptable insurance against precariousness.

Precarity can only be partially managed by income supports, and a broad set of robust social and health supports are also indicated for addressing food insecurity and other deprivations. These supports might include expanding universal health care to include dental care and prescription drugs, universal affordable day care, and guaranteed affordable housing, as many Canadian social policy analysts have proposed. Universal social programs, whether directly related to food insecurity or not, are necessary to at least partially de-link the ability to enjoy a quality of life from the vagaries of the market,
and to ensure equality of access.

Another implication of this research pertains to how we conceptualize poverty. Given that there are many people living on low incomes who don’t report experiencing food insecurity, and some who do not fall below accepted poverty lines but who do report food insecurity, we can’t address food insecurity using a purely income-based definition of poverty. A deprivation index approach to defining poverty could incorporate dimensions of income, food insecurity and other dimensions of precarity such as access to adequate housing, social services, and opportunities for social inclusion. In line with this, a generous universal basic income, i.e. one that was available not only to those currently on social assistance, but to all who were at risk for poverty defined more broadly, would capture more people who live with food insecurity and other dimensions of deprivation, regardless of their income. As a pragmatic move, assuming the durability of neoliberalism for at least a while longer, we should reframe ‘expenditures’ on social programs as ‘investments’ that will have economic benefits in the long run, including higher productivity and reduced health care costs.

My final suggestion is in relation to charitable food provision. Within the academic food insecurity research in Canada there has been considerable work demonstrating the inefficacy of food banks for addressing income related food insecurity. The arguments against relying on food banks as a societal solution to food insecurity are well established: questions about the nutritional quality of the food available; issues of stigma and lack of dignity; problems with geographical access; the focus of food banks on the needs of donors and volunteers above those of the clients; and so on. The ultimate argument is that food banks do not demonstrably reduce the prevalence of income-related
food insecurity as measured by the CCHS. In recent years many food banks and other food programs have worked to re-invent themselves to address some of these critiques. Fundamentally, however, they still fail to address income-related food insecurity.

As much as I agree with virtually all the critiques that have been advanced about the traditional food bank model, I find myself unsatisfied with the wholesale dismissal of the possibility of effective civil society responses to food insecurity. In Chapter Seven I discuss how the typification of the food insecurity problem has created common sense solutions. Just as defining food insecurity as a food problem begat ‘food solutions’ in the form of food banks, when we define food insecurity as being solely a result of income insecurity we can only logically suggest income-based solutions. Higher minimum wage rates, higher social assistance rates, and the long-awaited promise of a basic income guarantee will go some ways to addressing the conditions that create food insecurity. More money will allow people to purchase food more easily, and hopefully, to be less worried about it. Mechanisms that increase incomes and make them less precarious will have a positive effect on measured rates of income-based household food insecurity. The amount of money likely to be awarded through these initiatives, however, will not lift people very far out of poverty, and is unlikely to be enough to address all of the problems of precarity outlined above. As several of my research participants mused when we talked about raising the rates, basic income, and other income-based strategies for managing food insecurity, what’s to stop the landlord from raising the rent if they know we have more money? Income solutions to food insecurity are necessary, but I don’t believe they will be sufficient.
Rather than dismiss charitable food solutions outright, I suggest we continue to try different models, leveraging their potential strengths (providing nutrition, opportunities for social connection, and advocacy) and minimizing their weaknesses (including stigma, inaccessibility, poor food quality, etc.). While a whole other dissertation could be (and probably has been) written about how to enhance the capacity of civil society for dealing with food insecurity, I will outline two broad suggestions here. First, Canada Revenue Agency’s (CRA) restrictions on the political activities of charities should be completely overhauled through a transparent legislative process so that registered charities are free to do political work without fear of reprisal. Despite an announcement of the loosening of these restrictions in May of 2017 (Campion-Smith, 2017), the relaxing of restrictions are not yet enshrined in law, and remain unclear. The CRA continues to impose threatening and imprecise limitations on the ability of registered charities to do “political work”. Fear of overstepping this poorly defined line and losing charitable status (and thus the ability to fundraise) is a disincentive to charitable organizations to provide valuable input on policy, to throw their support behind progressive ideas, or to protest against regressive social policies.

Second, research should be done to evaluate whether or not food charities should be brought under an umbrella similar to the model of homeless shelters in Canada in which federal, provincial and municipal resources (funds and expertise) are made available, while continuing to operate at arms-length from the state. While acknowledging the critiques about shadow-state arrangements and informal policies, I still believe that this would be an improvement over what exists as a piecemeal emergency food sector across Canada; i.e. under-resourced while at the same time, called
upon, sometimes by agents of the state themselves, to provide assistance to an increasing number of people experiencing food insecurity.

Finally, I present some thoughts about Cuba. The Cuban state is moving away from principles of universality that have characterized their system of social supports. Despite some resistance to these changes, there is a general sense, expressed in the media and in everyday conversation, that universality is no longer pragmatic in the face of a growing national deficit and crumbling infrastructure. Along with the increase in private sector salaries for some, this turn away from universality is exacerbating growing inequalities and leading to the burgeoning of an unregulated, untaxed informal (and often illegal) economy. Meanwhile public and subsidized services are deteriorating. Without gaining better control over the black market economy, the Cuban state will continue to be left without the tax base needed to improve social benefits and address issues of infrastructure.

As many countries around the world are beginning to look seriously at a guaranteed annual income, it would be wonderful to see a similar conversation happen in Cuba. Perhaps such an idea could reignite the culture of solidarity that has characterized “Cubania” for so long and go some ways to allowing for the formalization of much of the informal economy.

The other question that arises for Cuba from my research is “what would a food bank look like in Havana?” While I am not advocating for the proliferation of charitable western-style food banks on the Global Food Banking Network model, the idea of a food bank or meal program in Havana is one that arose frequently enough in my field work that I don’t dismiss it outright. What role could or should the Cuban state, that has
historically been so central to managing and directing Cuban civil society, play? And are there lessons that could be learned from Cuba about hybrid state/civil society structures that would be useful outside Cuba?
References


Altieri, M., Companioni, N., Cañizares, K., Murphy, C., Rosset, P., Bourque, M., & Nicholls, C. I. (1999). The greening of the “barrios”: Urban agriculture for food security in Cuba. Agriculture and Human Values, 16, 131-140.


Bastien, H. (2016). Adjusting to the adjustment: Stratification and mobility in contemporary Havana. Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences American University. Washington, DC


Carter, A. (2013). Cuba's Food-rationing System and alternatives. Case study #4-6 of the program: Food policy for developing countries: The role of government in the global food system.


Melbourne, Australia: Ocean Press.


Cattell, V. (2001). Poor people, poor places, and poor health: the mediating role of social
networks and social capital. Social Science & Medicine, 52, 1501–1516.

Exceptionalism? Bulletin of Latin American Research, 23(4), 403-413.

P. Brenner, M. R. Jiménez, J. M. Kirk, & W. M. LeoGrande (Eds.), A
Contemporary Cuba Reader: The Revolution under Raúl Castro (2nd ed.). Lanham:
Rowman & Littlefield.


Chenhall, C. (2010). Improving Cooking and Food Preparation Skills: A Profile of


Final Report. Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network. Retrieved from:
http://uakn.org/research-project/winnipeg-research-project/
Cuba Today: Continuity and Change since the ‘Periodo Especial’, New York.

https://foodsecurecanada.org/CHSF2015


Garth, H. (2014). The Struggle for a Decent Meal: Household food Consumption in Santiago de Cuba. (PhD), University of California, Los Angeles.


Gollom, M. (2016). 't's the only way I can survive': Why Cubans take on black-market second jobs Cuba has planned economy, where most are employed by the government but many are forced to do other work. CBC News. Dec 03, 2016.


Koc, M., & Bas, J. A. (2012). Canada’s action plan for food security: the interactions between civil society and the state. In R. M. Abergel & Elizabeth (Eds.), Health and sustainability in the Canadian food system: advocacy and opportunity for civil society (pp. 173-203).


Loopstra, R. (2014). Household Food Insecurity in Canada: Towards an Understanding of Effective Interventions. (Doctor of Philosophy), University of Toronto, Toronto.


381


Page-Reeves, J. (2014). Women Redefining the Experience of Food Insecurity: Life Off the Edge of the Table.


Perez, L. (2016). "Visit Cuba, Before It Changes!". NACLA.


doi:10.7870/cjcmh-2011-0011


Scharf, K., Levkoe, C., & Saul, N. (2010). In Every Community a Place for Food: The Role of the Community Food Centre in Building a Local, Sustainable, and Just Food System. Retrieved from Toronto: https://cfccanada.ca/sites/default/files/.../In_Every_Community_a_Place_for_Food.pdf


World Bank. (1986). *Poverty and Hunger: Issues and options for food security in developing countries.* Retrieved from Washington, DC:


Appendix A
Ethics Approval

September 08, 2015

Ms. Susan Belyea
Ph.D. Candidate
School of Kinesiology and Health Studies
Queen’s University
28 Division Street, Room 206
Kingston ON K7L 3N6

GREB Ref #: GPHE-200-15; Romeo # 6016201
Title: "GPHE-200-15 What Difference Does the State Make? Food Insecurity in Canada and Cuba"

Dear Ms. Belyea:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GPHE-200-15 What Difference Does the State Make? Food Insecurity in Canada and Cuba" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen’s ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. Those changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gill Irving, at the Office of Research Services or jinvirg@queensu.ca for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.
Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c: Dr. Elaine Power, Faculty Supervisor
   Dr. Lucie Levesque, Chair, Unit REB
Appendix B
Ethics Approval Amendment

April 15, 2016

Ms. Susan Belyea
Ph.D. Candidate
School of Kinesiology and Health Studies
Queen’s University
28 Division Street
Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6

Dear Ms. Belyea:

RE: Amendment for your study entitled: GPHE-200-15 What Difference Does the State Make? Food Insecurity in Canada and Cuba; ROME01# 6016201

Thank you for submitting your amendment requesting the following changes:

1) To offer Canadian research participants $20 as compensation for participation in the research;

2) Amended Letter of Information / Consent Form (v. 2016/04/14) to change the paragraph titled “Will there be any benefits to doing this study?” to include the following words: “As a participant in this study you will receive $20 in cash as partial compensation for your time and sharing your experience and expertise with me.”

By this letter you have ethics clearance for these changes.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

John Freeman, Ph.D.
Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c.: Dr. Elaine Power, Supervisor
Appendix C
Letter of Information / Consent

Date:

LETTER OF INFORMATION / CONSENT (Kingston)
Research Participants and Key Informants
A Study about Everyday Experiences of Hunger and the Right to Food

Principle Investigator:     Susan Belyea
School of Kinesiology and Health Studies
28 Division Street  Queen’s University  Kingston, ON  K7L 3N6
belyea.s@queensu.ca  613-547-0763

Faculty Supervisor:        Dr. Elaine Power
School of Kinesiology and Health Studies
28 Division Street  Queen’s University  Kingston, ON  K7L 3N6
power@queensu.ca   613-533-6000 x74850

Purpose of the Study

I am a PhD student at Queen’s University working under the supervision of Dr. Elaine Power. This research is part of the requirements for my degree.

You are invited to take part in this study about the Right to Food, and how people get access to food in Kingston. I want to understand how people who live below the poverty line manage to feed themselves and their families. I want to know what strategies people use and what challenges they face, as well as suggestions for improving access to food. The research I gather in Kingston will be compared to similar research I am doing in Cuba and will be part of my PhD Dissertation.

What will happen during the study?

I will interview you privately. I will ask about your experience of getting enough food for yourself and your family. I will help you to draw a map of the places you go to get food and we will discuss the challenges involved, as well as the strategies you have for getting food. We will discuss which stores you shop at, how you travel to get food, and any food providing services you and your family use (such as food banks, school meal programs, gardens, churches, and so on). The interview will last about an hour and I may ask you for a follow up interview. I will ask you how getting enough food for your household is related to other aspects of your life such as housing, parenting, other expenses, and social activities. I will ask you how you think your situation might be improved. I may also ask you for information about your age, gender, and life experience including sources of income. I may ask you about experiences you have had food banks and meal programs.

Are there any risks to doing this study?

There will be minimal risks to you taking part in this study. You may feel uncomfortable talking about your experience going to food banks or meal programs. You may also find it uncomfortable talking about your income or your life experiences.

You do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable and you can ask to stop the interview at any time. I describe below the steps I am taking to protect your privacy.

Are there any benefits to doing this study?

My goal is to create new academic knowledge and to use that knowledge to influence practice and policy promoting the right to food. In the long run I hope this research will influence government planning to help
people get the food they need. As a participant in this study you will receive $20 in cash as partial compensation for your time and sharing your experience and expertise with me.

Who will know what I said or did in the study?

I will change your name, address, and any other identifying information in my notes in order to make sure that your story remains anonymous. Only my academic supervisor and I will have access to your name. Information kept on a computer will be protected by a password. I will not publish your name or other identifying information in any reports, or use it in public presentations.

What if I change my mind about being in the study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to be part of the study, you can decide to stop (withdraw), at any time, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any information you have provided will be destroyed unless you give me permission to use it.

Information about the Study Results

I expect to have this study completed by September, 2017. If you would like to receive the summary of results personally, please let me know how you would like me send it to you. Information from this research will be included in my PhD dissertation. It may also be used in university courses, and may be presented at conferences or published in academic journals. After removing any identifying information I may also share this research with community organizations that are working to support the right to food.

Questions about the Study

Any questions about study participation may be directed to me, Susan Belyea at belyea.s@queensu.ca
613-547-0763 or to my academic supervisor, Dr. Elaine Power at power@queensu.ca
613-533-6000 x74690

Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair@GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081.

This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen's policies.

CONSENT

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Susan Belyea of Queen's University. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested. I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time. I have been given a copy of this form. I agree to participate in the study.

Signature: _______________________________________

Name of Participant (Printed) ________________________________:

1. I agree that the interview can be audio recorded.
   __ ... Yes  __ ... No

2. I agree to be contacted about a follow-up interview or participant observation, and understanding that I can always decline the request.
   __ ... Yes. How to contact me ___________________________   __ ... No

3. I would like to receive a summary of research results:
   __ ... Yes. Please contact me at ___________________________   __ ... No
Appendix D
Key Informant Letter of Consent

[DATE]

Key Informant Confidentiality Agreement (Kingston)

A Study about Everyday Experiences of Hunger and the Right to Food

Principal Investigator:  
Susan Belyea  
School of Kinesiology and Health Studies  
28 Division Street  Queen’s University  
Kingston, ON  K7L 3N6  
belyea.s@queensu.ca  613-547-0763

Faculty Supervisor:  
Dr. Elaine Power  
School of Kinesiology and Health Studies  
28 Division Street  Queen’s University Kingston, ON  
K7L 3N6  
power@queensu.ca  613-533-6000 x74690

Key Informant Confidentiality Agreement

I have read and retained the Letter of Information concerning the research project Everyday Experiences of Hunger and the Right to Food being conducted by Susan Belyea, PhD Candidate, Queen’s University. In my role as Key Informant for the researcher, I understand the nature of the study and requirements for confidentiality. I have had all of my questions concerning the nature of the study and my role as Key Informant answered to my satisfaction.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested. I have been given a copy of this form. I agree to participate in the study.

I agree not to reveal in any way to any person other than the researcher any of data gathered for the study. I also agree not to reveal to anyone the identity of any of the participants.

If I have recommended other research participants for this study, they will be informed that I was the person who suggested their name.

Identification and Signature Indicating Agreement

Name: ___________________________

Signature: _________________________

Date: ____________________________
Appendix E
Interview Guide

Belyea
Interview Guide: Everyday Experiences of Hunger and the Right to Food  REVISED May 2016

Name
Date

Interview Guide and Prompting Questions:

1. Review Letter of Information and consent form:

2. Basic information Gathering: tell me a bit about yourself. name, address, income status, household make-up, how long you’ve lived here.

Preliminary Questions:
- Who in household does most of the shopping? Most of the cooking? (I will come back to these later – answer to this will help to determine the questions I ask)

3. Map Exercise and/or questions about where you get food.
Goal: to identify and draw out information about all the work that is done to procure food and the geography of food procurement

Probe information with questions such as:
- Tell me about the last time you went food shopping –
- Tell me about [indicate place they have included on map]
- Which places do you go most often to get food?
- Do you go often? (weekly shop vs. daily shop)
- Ask questions about how long it takes to get places
- Do you go alone?
- How do you travel?
- Questions about why they choose certain places over others i.e. Giant Tiger versus Food Basics versus Farmers Market.

4. Food Insecurity Questions:
"I’d like to ask you some questions about whether or not you always have enough food and how you manage that situation"

Do you feel like you generally have enough to eat?
- Do you ever worry about running out of food or limited selection?
- Do you ever compromise the quality/quantity of food
- Reduce intake? Miss meals? Miss entire day of food?

What gets in the way of you having enough food?
- Money; Do you feel you can afford to eat well?
- Time; for shopping; cooking;
- Transportation
- Knowledge – where to go; what to buy; cooking - how to prepare it
- People – other household members eat it; can’t agree on budget, taste; children
Belyea  
Interview Guide: Everyday Experiences of Hunger and the Right to Food  REVISED May 2016

Do you know other people in the same situation? (friends, family, neighbours)  
(ask questions about others if not forthcoming about own situation)

Let’s talk about Strategies: What do you do to make sure you have enough food?  
Do you ever go without a meal when you want one?  
(budgeting; planning; coupons; flyers; convenience; etc.)

Are there certain times of the year/month when it’s harder to keep groceries in the house?  
What do you do about that?  
What do you wish would change about your food situation?  
What do you think would need to change in order for you to feel like you would always be able  
to have the food you want.

How would you describe how you feel about your food situation?

Household/family food relations and food insecurity:
- [If relevant] Do your kids eat at school? Do you provide them lunch or do they eat food there? Who makes lunch, what do you usually pack, etc.
- [If relevant] Other vulnerable members of household – ask about food practices; who cooks, feeds, costs, etc.
- Questions about food likes and dislikes of family members.
- Ask about cultural preferences – traditions, religion, etc.

Eating and Cooking patterns:
- Tell me about your meals – do you eat three meals a day?  
- Tell me about [name breakfast, lunch, etc.;]  
- Do you usually eat with other people? Tell me about that.  
- Do you cook for yourself/family?  
- Do you share meals/cooking/food responsibilities with someone?  
- Can you tell me how that works? (who does what; when)  
- How well does this work out for you? Why?

Do you feel you are able to maintain good health through the foods you eat? Elaborate.

[If any new locations arise in the conversation, ask them to add them to map i.e. school  
feeding programs, etc.]

5. Food Assistance:  
Goal: To draw out the particular experiences of using food banks and meal programs.  
Use the presence or absence of a food bank/meal program on the map or references made in  
Question 3 to open the conversation about those kinds of services;

“I see you put [name of agency] on your map [and/or] you referred to [name of agency] a  
moment ago. Can you tell me more about that?”
Belyea

Interview Guide: Everyday Experiences of Hunger and the Right to Food REVISED May 2016

Or

“you haven’t mentioned whether or not you ever go to a food bank or eat at a meal program in the community. Are these organizations that you use?”

- Why do you (don’t you) use that service?
- When do you go there?
- What’s good about it?
- What’s not good?

Tell me about going to a meal program or food bank — how you travel; how far it is; why you go to that one; who else is there, what you eat/receive there, etc.

[If any new locations arise, ask them to add them to map i.e. food banks, etc].

6. Other Questions:

Goal: to probe deeper into people’s feelings about their relation to food and their sense (or lack) of entitlement to safe, secure, adequate, appropriate foods.

“I’d like to ask you a few more questions about food.”

- What are your favorite foods? Describe your perfect meal.
- Can you tell me a story about food from your childhood?
- What’s the hardest thing about [shopping for/cooking/getting food?
- What’s the easiest, or most fun thing about food?
- Are there foods you’d like to be eating that you don’t get a chance to eat often?
- What would you change if you could change some things about the food you usually have?
- Is there anything else you want to share regarding your food situation that I haven’t asked you about?”
### Appendix F
### Rationed Products and Prices Havana September, 2017

#### Subsidized Products on the Libreta, Havana Cuba, September 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product:</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Subsidized price CUP</th>
<th>Free market price CUP</th>
<th>Prices of equivalent products in ‘dollar’ stores converted to CUP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>monthly</td>
<td>5 lb</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>92.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>monthly</td>
<td>10 oz</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>34.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking oil</td>
<td>monthly</td>
<td>10 oz</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refined sugar</td>
<td>monthly</td>
<td>3 lb</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crude sugar</td>
<td>monthly</td>
<td>1 lb</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>monthly</td>
<td>4 oz</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>45.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasta</td>
<td>monthly</td>
<td>1 lb</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>Every 9 days</td>
<td>1.75 lb</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>Every 3 months</td>
<td>1 kg</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground meat w soy or ham</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>1/2 lb</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>120.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>monthly</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread (80 g /day)</td>
<td>daily</td>
<td>30/month</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>monthly</td>
<td>1 lb</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fruit Compote (0-3 yrs)</th>
<th>monthly</th>
<th>2650 g/mo</th>
<th>3.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milk Powder (4-11)</td>
<td>3 times/mo</td>
<td>3 kg/mo</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soya Yoghurt (7-14)</td>
<td>3 times/mo</td>
<td>1200 g/mo</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground beef</td>
<td>monthly</td>
<td>1 lb</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Medical Diet**

- Extra ration chicken
  - Items and quantities vary according to medical condition.

- Milk for adults
- Root vegetables
- Ground beef
- Fish

---

Source: Field notes and conversation with Cubans, September 2017

1 CUP = ~ .05 USD
Appendix G Sample Maps of Food Procurement in Havana

Map of food procurement drawn by Havana research participant Marta
Map of food procurement drawn by Havana research participant, Telma