DISRUPTING THE FOOD DESERT/OASIS BINARY:

**ETHNIC GROCERY RETAILERS AND PERCEPTIONS OF
FOOD ACCESS IN HUMBERMEDE, TORONTO**

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Abstract

Contemporary studies of food accessibility often disregard 'ethnic' grocery retailers as sources of food or assume them to be attractive to all individuals. This body of research also frequently frames access as an issue of spatial proximity to grocery stores. Drawing on thirty interviews I conducted with residents of Humbermede, Toronto, I explore how food accessibility is perceived and experienced in a culturally-diverse neighbourhood where the only grocery retailers present are ethnic in nature. I argue that identity-related factors (food preferences, ethnic identification, language, and attitudes towards difference) and aspects of one's life circumstances (purchasing power, mobility, and location or length of residence) – not merely distance – coalesce to influence understandings of one's food retail environment and one's store patronage decisions. These findings suggest that food shoppers are not homogenous, that all retailers are not equally attractive to all consumers, and that food accessibility has critical socio-cultural, economic, and spatiotemporal components.

<u>Dedication</u>

For my late Nana, who sparked my interest in food accessibility.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

1. Introduction

The term 'food desert' has been used by food accessibility researchers working within the fields of health geography, nutrition, and preventive medicine to identify residential areas where individuals are assumed to have a limited ability to access healthy, high quality, and affordable food (Wrigley, 2002). Such food deserts have been seen by some to exist in opposition to 'food oases', areas where food is said to be accessible due to the presence of a major grocery retailer within walking distance of individuals' homes (Raja, Ma, & Yadav, 2008; Short, Guthman, & Raskin, 2007; Walker et al., 2010, 2011).[1] The recent literature on food deserts, oases, and access more broadly, however, suffers from three notable limitations: 'ethnic' supermarkets and grocery stores[2] are either disregarded as potential sources of food or are thought to be attractive shopping venues for all persons; consumers are treated as homogenous in terms of their food and store preferences; and the possibility that food access, as it is perceived and experienced, may have key socio-cultural and economic dimensions is afforded little consideration in existing studies.

In this thesis, I attempt to address these issues by critically examining the notion of food accessibility, using an in-depth case study. I consider how 'ethnic' grocery retailers[3], sited in a multicultural[4] urban area devoid of 'mainstream' stores[5], are conceived of and used or avoided as sources of food by local inhabitants, who may or may not be members of the ethnic groups represented by such stores. Drawing on thirty in-depth interviews I conducted with residents of

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[1] The term 'food oasis' appears to have surfaced following the popularization of the 'food desert' concept, and has been used by authors to speak of areas that *are not* 'food deserts' (e.g. Walker et al., 2011). The problems I identify with a binary classification of food accessibility, such as issues of perceived food or store acceptability or appropriateness, inform my choice of title for this thesis.

[2] I define 'ethnic' supermarkets and grocery stores as retailers that exhibit a strong affiliation to one or more ethnic or cultural groups by way of their name, signage, product offerings, advertisements, or in-store ambience. Canadian examples include Caribbean Island Food Mart and Long Hui Supermarket.

[3] I use 'grocery retailers' as an umbrella term to encompass large 'supermarkets' and small 'grocery stores'.

[4] I employ the term 'multicultural' in a narrow, demographic sense, referring to areas comprised of individuals of diverse origins. I do not mean to speak to the contested idea of 'multiculturalism' or Canadian multicultural policy.

[5] I define 'mainstream' supermarkets and grocery stores as retailers that primarily stock food items designed to appeal to 'western' cuisines. These stores may have 'international aisles' where a selection of non-Anglo-Canadian cultural food items may be found. Examples include Loblaws, Metro, No Frills, and Food Basics.

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Humbermede – a culturally-diverse, mixed-income, north Toronto neighbourhood[6] – I provide a case-based response to the following general research question: *How are local food shopping environments[7] perceived and food acquisition experienced by residents of multicultural neighbourhoods where the only grocery retailers are 'ethnic' in nature?*

This question is worth addressing as the state of food access in areas served by ethnic grocery retailers has been described in conflicting terms in the literature (e.g. Milway et al., 2010; Nasr et al., 2011). How individuals who reside in such neighbourhoods actually view their retail landscapes, and whether or not they encounter any difficulties in procuring groceries, are matters that are currently not well-understood. The need to mitigate these knowledge gaps functions as a central rationale for my study.

Beyond the overarching question I take up in this thesis, I specifically explore the extent to which people's perceptions and experiences of food access are influenced by their food preferences, their ethnic identities[8], their personal circumstances, and their lengths of residence in their neighbourhood.

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[6] While I acknowledge that views of what constitutes one's 'neighbourhood' may be multiple and contested, as neighbourhoods are socially and politically constructed (see p. 39), I nonetheless see the term as a useful and simple way to refer to any given small, residential area located in an urban setting (Castree, Kitchin, & Rogers, 2013). This is the meaning that I attach to this word in this thesis.

[7] I use the terms 'food/grocery retail environment', 'food/grocery shopping environment', 'food/grocery retail landscape' and 'food/grocery shopping landscape' interchangeably to refer to the suite of supermarkets and grocery stores found in a particular geographic space. In this study, I employ these terms with reference to the politically-defined neighbourhood of Humbermede, Toronto.

[8] I adopt a definition of 'ethnic identity' heavily informed by Laroche, Kim, and Tomiuk (1998) and Lo and Wang (2012). I see ethnic identity as a reflection of the degree to which an individual personally associates or disassociates with a particular ethnic group, or retains or relinquishes elements of his or her culture of origin (Laroche et al., 1998; Lo & Wang, 2012). Ethnic identity is a self-assessed social construct; it fundamentally involves how individuals define or identify themselves in relation to others (Laroche et al., 1998; Lo & Wang, 2012). It is different from 'ethnic origin', which tends to be used as a vague, essentializing, static, nominal category on census forms (Laroche et al., 1998).

The potential interplay between culture[9], ethnicity[10], and perceived food access has been underemphasized in the food accessibility literature; however, food can be a key aspect of one's identity (Bell & Valentine, 1997), and identity may act as a salient determinant of consumption decisions (e.g. Lo & Wang, 2012). It is possible, then, that individuals engage in acts of 'place likening', choosing to approach consumption spaces that they sense are consistent with their own identities and preferences, while avoiding others where they perceive a mismatch (Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007). By examining the extent to which ethnic identity and food preferences impact food retail environment perceptions and grocery acquisition experiences through place likening, I offer insight into the understudied yet potentially important socio-cultural aspects of food access.

Personal circumstances and characteristics have been documented by researchers to have an effect on consumers' willingness or ability to use particular stores (e.g. Goodwin & McElwee, 1999; Kirkup et al., 2004; Mortimer & Clarke, 2011; Piacentini, Hibbert, & Al-Dajani, 2011; Worsley, Wang, & Hunter, 2011). For instance, while low-income persons may prefer retailers that are easy to travel to without a car, or that sell products that are inexpensive or of a good value, those who are less constrained by economic factors may seek out stores that have other desirable attributes like a wide selection of items, top-quality products, or ample parking (Kirkup et al., 2004; Mortimer & Clarke, 2011; Worsley et al., 2011). Insofar as individual characteristics may influence the store attributes desired by consumers, the former could have an effect on how local food retail environments are evaluated and how, or from where, groceries are obtained. By investigating the degree to which personal circumstances and attributes affect access perceptions

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[9] Drawing on Castree, Kitchin, and Rogers (2013, p. 89), I see 'culture' as both, on the one hand, a "way of life" that is grounded in certain traditions or values; and, on the other, the precise articulations of these traditions or values, for instance, through rituals, writing, consumption, and other everyday practices. Culture is practiced or performed.

[10] I see 'ethnicity' as a categorization of individuals, often self-defined, on the basis of their cultural attributes held in common, like their experiences, values, beliefs, languages, and preferences (Castree, Kitchin, & Rogers, 2013).

and experiences, my research enhances contemporary understandings of the relative importance of economic and social factors to food accessibility.

Finally, the food accessibility literature has afforded relatively little attention to the issue of short-to-medium term, resident-experienced changes in food retail landscapes; however, such alterations may affect the ways in which people view their surroundings (Cummins et al., 2008). The extent to which local grocery shopping environment perceptions are shaped by individuals' encountering or non-encountering of retail changes such as store closures or openings – explored through their lengths of residence in an area – is an issue that has received minimal consideration in the literature on food accessibility. By addressing this knowledge gap, I uncover the relative significance of spatiotemporal factors to food access perceptions.

My objectives in this thesis, therefore, are five-fold:

1. To explore, in the context of Humbermede, Toronto, how residents perceive their local food retail environment in terms of the availability, accessibility, and appropriateness of stores and food products;

2. To uncover the factors that influence these views, with a particular focus on assessing the degree to which food retail environment perceptions are shaped by one's food preferences, ethnic identity, personal circumstances, and length of residence in a neighbourhood;

3. To identify the shopping needs or preferences that motivate people's decisions to patronize or to avoid certain grocery retailers, including those stores located within the neighbourhood of study as well as those sited in surrounding areas;

4. To determine where people obtain their groceries from, to learn how easy or difficult it is for individuals to travel to and from these locations, and to document the reasons for these experiences; and,

5. To ascertain the degree of satisfaction that people have with the grocery retailers that they currently visit.

I proceed in the following manner. In Chapter 2, I offer a review and critique of the food accessibility, consumer choice, and consumption behaviour literatures, drawing further attention to the knowledge gaps that I seek to address in my research. I detail, in Chapter 3, the design and conduct of my Humbermede case study, outlining and justifying my methodology, my choice of research site, and my data collection and analysis methods. In Chapters 4 and 5, I present my central findings. I discuss, in Chapter 4, Humbermede residents' perceptions of their local food retail environment, and I explicate two sets of factors that shaped how they viewed this landscape, thereby addressing Objectives 1 and 2. In Chapter 5, I explore the food acquisition behaviours and experiences of Humbermede dwellers, detailing their shopping patterns, their thoughts concerning the physical accessibility of grocery retailers, and their levels of satisfaction with the stores they visited; in the process, I accomplish Objectives 3 to 5. I draw attention, in a final chapter, to the implications of my findings, and I note the limitations of my research as well as potential avenues for further inquiry.

I ultimately argue that, for the Humbermede residents whom I interviewed, 'food access' is viewed and experienced in a more multifaceted and subjective manner than the literature on this topic often allows for. Perceptions of the local food retail environment in Humbermede and store patronage decisions were not always simple functions of spatial distance or one's proximity

to shopping venues; identity-related factors[11] – the foods that individuals preferred, their ethnic identifications, the languages they used, and their attitudes towards difference – and aspects of participants' life circumstances[12] – their purchasing power, their mobility levels, their residential locations, and the lengths of time they had lived in their neighbourhood – also influenced how individuals thought of the shopping landscape in Humbermede. As these characteristics tended to differ on individual bases, multiple interpretations of the level of food retail provision in Humbermede were reported by residents. These factors frequently impacted food acquisition behaviours and experiences as well. Most of my participants did not do the majority of their shopping at the retailers closest to their homes; they instead patronized more distant stores – sometimes enduring travel difficulties – so they could acquire food that met their personal needs. These findings suggest that, at least for the Humbermede residents I interviewed, food shoppers are not homogenous; all grocery retailers are not equally attractive to all individuals; and food accessibility, both in terms of perceptions and experiences, can indeed have critical socio-cultural, economic, and spatiotemporal components.

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[11] Drawing on Castree, Kitchin, and Rogers (2013), I define 'identity' as the way in which individuals view themselves and articulate this self-concept to others. I see identity as constructed, performed, and expressed in various forms, including but not limited to: the food one eats, the language one speaks, the activities one takes part in, the values or beliefs one holds, and the people or groups that one associates or disassociates oneself with. While identity may be an individual matter, it can also be collective, in the sense that people may feel like they belong to a particular group that is united by common perspectives and experiences.

[12] I use 'life circumstances' as a broad umbrella term to refer to the everyday material or environmental conditions that individuals encounter, either presently or in the past, which serve to facilitate or constrain their behaviours, or to moderate their knowledge of and engagement with their surroundings. One's life circumstances may be a product of economic, social, and spatiotemporal factors such as income, upbringing, and location, among others. While I take the notion of 'identity' to be a matter of how one sees oneself, I view 'life circumstances' as a question of what one faces or has faced in his or her daily life.

2. Literature Review

In this chapter, I draw on literature relating to two thematic areas: (1) food accessibility, which has been discussed by researchers working primarily in the fields of economic and health geography, nutrition, and preventive medicine; and (2) consumer choice and consumption behaviour, which synthesizes scholarship from the fields of consumption geography, marketing, and environmental psychology. I review research published on these topical areas in the next two sections, noting absences in contemporary understandings throughout this discussion. I conclude by linking the knowledge gaps that I have identified with the research question and objectives that governed my investigation.

2.1 – Food Accessibility

2.1.1 – Early Research and Critical Developments

Research into food accessibility in industrialized settings has a relatively short history. The earliest published inquiries appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the United States (e.g. Alcaly & Klevorick, 1971; Kunruether, 1973; Markus, 1969; Sexton, 1971), and did not concern precise locational patterns of food retailers across geographic space per se. Rather, these investigations focused on examining possible variations in food prices between communities and store types, suggestive of an interest in what may be deemed the 'economic dimension' of food access (Alcaly & Klevorick, 1971; Kunruether, 1973; Markus, 1969; Sexton, 1971). Research at this time was framed as an attempt to uncover business practices and to explore whether retailers contributed to the perpetuation of disadvantage amongst poor individuals and people of colour (Alcaly & Klevorick, 1971; Kunruether, 1973; Markus, 1969; Sexton, 1971). While it was often noted that food was less expensive in supermarkets compared to smaller, independent stores (Alcaly & Klevorick, 1971; Sexton, 1971; Kunruether, 1973), findings concerning potential

disparities in food prices by neighbourhood demographic composition were decidedly mixed (Alcaly & Klevorick, 1971; Markus, 1969; Sexton, 1971). As such, the few additional studies of food access that surfaced during the 1980s and early 1990s continued to focus on the question of price variations within cities (e.g. Bell & Burlin, 1993; Guy & O'Brien, 1983; Horton & Campbell, 1990). Food accessibility at this time remained an issue cast primarily in economic terms.

Developments in the mid-1990s transformed the course of food accessibility research. In the context of growing income inequalities and the increasing spatial concentration of poverty in Britain (Wrigley, 2002), the country's Nutrition Task Force created a Low Income Project Team [LIPT] to identify strategies to ensure that low-income individuals enjoyed access to 'healthy' food (Nelson, 1997). In their 1996 report, the LIPT employed the term 'food desert' as a way of speaking to what it saw as a mounting problem in Britain (Whelan, Wrigley, Warm, & Cannings, 2002; Wrigley, 2002). The Team suggested that spaces within cities exist where affordable and nutritious food is difficult to obtain due to an absence of grocery retailers (Wrigley, 2002). In these food deserts, it was speculated that individuals lacking access to a vehicle might be forced to rely upon corner stores selling expensive food items of a poor nutritional value (Wrigley, 2002). This scenario was appreciated for its potential to adversely affect diets and to induce negative health outcomes (Wrigley, 2002). Consequently, considerable interest in the spatial distribution of grocery stores surfaced within policy and popular circles (Wrigley, 2002). This development intensified the engagement of researchers with food access issues, and reoriented the literature on food accessibility away from its previous preoccupation with prices and towards a new focus on the geography of food retail provision.

Much of the research that exists on food accessibility today has been undertaken since the late 1990s. Three primary trends in this body of work can be documented. First, the conduct of such research has been consistently rationalized as being important to the fields of health and dietetics (e.g. Bader, Purciel, Yousefzadeh, & Neckerman, 2010; Berg & Murdoch, 2008; Burns & Inglis, 2007; Coyle & Flowerdew, 2011; Gordon et al., 2011; Zenk et al., 2005). Mirroring the earlier concerns of the Low Income Project Team and policymakers in Britain (Wrigley, 2002), contemporary authors often share the view that food retail environments potentially influence the consumption decisions and dietary qualities of residents (e.g. Gustafson et al., 2011; Odoms-Young, Zenk, & Mason, 2009). Should healthy foods be difficult to obtain in an area, nutrition may suffer, and individuals may be rendered more susceptible to chronic diet-related illnesses such as obesity or diabetes (e.g. Gordon et al., 2011). The need to identify areas potentially at risk for these adverse health conditions due to poor access to food has functioned as the leading impetus for much contemporary research on food accessibility.

Second, the overwhelming majority of research on food access has been quantitative in nature. Accessibility has largely been approached as an issue of distance or spatial proximity to food retailers (Ledoux & Vojnovic, 2013), matters that are seen as best understood through measurement, mapping, and spatial analysis. Geographic information systems [GIS] have been the preferred tool of researchers (e.g. Apparicio, Cloutier, & Shearmur, 2007; Burns & Inglis, 2007; Donkin, Dowler, Stevenson, & Turner, 1999; Eckert & Shetty, 2011; Larsen & Gilliland, 2008; Milway et al., 2010; Smoyer-Tomic, Spence & Amrhein, 2006). Statistical techniques such as regression analysis have also been used – in addition or independently – to examine potential relationships between residential demographic characteristics and accessibility to food

retailers (e.g. Bertrand, Thérien & Cloutier, 2008; Galvez et al., 2008; Moore & Diez Roux, 2006; Raja et al., 2008).

Third, contemporary studies of food accessibility have focused on three key issues. Researchers have concerned themselves with determining whether disparities in food access levels exist between neighbourhoods of different income or racial compositions. In addition, a significant degree of attention has been afforded to identifying food deserts. To varying extents, mixed findings have been generated on each of these three topics.

Studies that have examined food retail provision between areas of differing income levels have reached divergent conclusions. Some investigations have reported that neighbourhoods that are more affluent enjoy a higher degree of access to food than their less affluent counterparts (Algert, Agrawal, & Lewis, 2006; Berg & Murdoch, 2008; Franco, Diez Roux, Glass, Caballero, & Brancati, 2008; Gordon et al., 2011; Zenk et al., 2005). Gordon et al. (2011) found that census block groups with high median household incomes in Brooklyn and East Harlem, New York had more supermarkets and healthy bodegas than low-income areas. In a study of Dallas, Berg and Murdoch (2008) documented that neighbourhoods where three or more grocery stores were found had an average household income of $58,535, while areas where food retailers were entirely absent had a lower mean income of $38,869. Such findings concerning a link between low income and poor accessibility have not been reported by all researchers. Others have, in fact, reached the opposite conclusion, documenting that low-income areas enjoy a higher degree of access to food than their wealthier counterparts (Block & Kouba, 2006; Cummins & Macintyre, 1999; Smoyer-Tomic et al., 2006). Smoyer-Tomic et al. (2006) reported that supermarkets were generally more accessible in high-need as opposed to affluent communities in Edmonton. Similarly, Cummins and Macintyre (1999) observed that deprived postcode districts in Glasgow

had more grocery stores, including more large-format retailers, than did affluent areas. A third group of authors have arrived at neither of the aforementioned conclusions, instead finding that no significant difference in levels of food retail provision exists between low and high-income areas. Research that has reached this verdict includes studies by Bertrand et al. (2008) on Montréal, Eckert and Shetty (2011) on Toledo, Ohio, Larsen and Gilliland (2008) on London, Ontario, and McEntee and Agyeman (2010) on Vermont.

Studies of food access have also investigated the potential linkages between retail provision levels and the racial composition of neighbourhoods. The majority of research conducted on this theme has found that areas that are predominantly black in make-up encounter a poorer degree of access to food compared to principally white neighbourhoods. Several United States-based studies have found that significantly fewer grocery stores and/or supermarkets are located in or near census tracts or block groups composed primarily of African-American residents when examined with reference to mostly-white areas (Berg & Murdoch, 2008; Franco et al., 2008; Galvez et al., 2008; Gordon et al., 2011; Raja et al., 2008). Some authors, however, have suggested that this pattern does not hold amongst high-wealth communities. Zenk et al. (2005) found that although supermarkets were more distant and fewer in number in poor African-American neighbourhoods compared to poor white communities in Detroit, levels of food access were similar in wealthier areas irrespective of race. Though these trends in the distribution of food retailers by neighbourhood composition have been documented, relatively few researchers[13] have explored in detail the underlying factors – social, economic, or political – responsible for their existence.

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[13] A key exception is McClintock (2011), whose recent chapter on the political economy of food desert production in the African-American neighbourhoods of Oakland, California is insightful. His case study, however, raises the question of whether the processes he identifies as at work in Oakland (capital devaluation, industrial location, racism in mortgage lending, etc.) are to blame for the production of racial inequalities in food access in other cities as well.

A third substantial stream of research on food accessibility has been the identification of food deserts. Studies have attempted to determine whether there are particular areas within cities where spatial access to grocery retailers is poor and where a significant proportion of residents may lack the financial or physical means, such as a vehicle, needed to travel great distances to acquire food (e.g. Apparicio et al., 2007; Gordon et al., 2011; Larsen & Gilliland, 2008; Leete, Bania, & Sparks-Ibanga, 2012; Smoyer-Tomic et al., 2006). Locational information on economic disadvantage – often in the form of composite indices that incorporate data on median household incomes or poverty rates (e.g. Apparicio et al., 2007; Larsen & Gilliland, 2008; Smoyer-Tomic et al., 2006) – has been used in conjunction with geo-coded store addresses to examine the potential existence of food deserts in various settings.

Evidence has been furnished both in support of and against the notion that food deserts are present in cities in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. In their study of New York City, Gordon et al. (2011) suggested that the neighbourhoods of East and Central Harlem and North and Central Brooklyn are food deserts. Food deserts have also been claimed to exist in portions of cities like Lawrence, Kansas (Hallett & McDermott, 2011), Leeds, England (Wrigley et al., 2002), London, Ontario (Larsen & Gilliland, 2008), and Edmonton, Alberta (Smoyer-Tomic et al., 2006), among others. In contrast, the studies of Coyle and Flowerdew (2011) and Cummins and Macintyre (1999) have concluded that food deserts are not found in the Scottish cities of Dundee and Glasgow, respectively. Perhaps most strikingly, researchers examining identical locations have drawn conflicting conclusions concerning the existence or spatial extent of food deserts, as has occurred in Buffalo (Lee & Lim, 2009; Raja et al., 2008), Toronto (Martin Prosperity Institute, 2010; Milway et al., 2010; Nasr et al., 2011), and Montréal (Apparicio et al.,

2007; Paez, Mercado, Farber, Morency, & Roorda, 2010). The observance of these discrepancies alludes to the limitations of the extant food accessibility literature.

2.1.3 – Research Limitations and Gaps

The literature on food access presently suffers from three key limitations. These include: (1) a use of inconsistent quantitative measures of geographic access; (2) a propensity to frame access in relation to a narrow or broad suite of stores without fully exploring the implications of these choices as they pertain to multicultural cities; and (3) a general lack of recognition of the possibility that consumers are not homogenous and that access, as it is actually perceived, may have significant socio-cultural dimensions.

While a central focus of the contemporary literature on food accessibility is to assess the state of spatial access to food within a given setting and to identify the areas therein where such access is poor, no consensus exists amongst researchers as to how this should be done. Three divergent techniques have been frequently utilized. First, a number of authors have employed measures of physical distance as determined using GIS-based street network or buffer analyses. Residential areas, whether approximated by postcode districts, census tracts, or census blocks, are defined as having sufficient access to food[14] if they fall within a distance from retailers deemed reasonable for pedestrians to traverse. Areas that do not fall within these distances are identified as having poor food access or are labelled as food deserts (Algert et al., 2006; Apparicio et al., 2007; Donkin et al., 1999; Eckert & Shetty, 2011; Larsen & Gilliland, 2008; Leete et al., 2012; Martin Prosperity Institute, 2010; Milway et al., 2010; Smoyer-Tomic et al., 2006). A second approach has involved the use of store counts. The number of stores found within a specified distance of residential areas (Berg & Murdoch, 2008; Gordon et al., 2011), or

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[14] Some authors have labelled areas determined to have sufficient access to food using these methods as 'food oases' (e.g. Walker et al., 2010, 2011).

the quantity of stores falling within the boundaries of these politically-constructed spatial units (Cummins & Macintyre, 1999; Galvez et al., 2008; Moore & Diez Roux, 2006), are sometimes taken as indicators of access. Food is deemed to be less accessible in areas that have a smaller quantity of stores within or close to their supposed boundaries. A third technique has entailed GIS analyses of travel time. Rather than measuring physical distances between stores and residential areas, some researchers have computed the time it would take to travel to retailers by foot and/or by car (Burns & Inglis, 2007; Coyle & Flowerdew, 2011; Raja et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2010; Yamashita & Kunkel, 2012). Individuals whose journey to the closest store exceeds a specified time threshold are claimed to have poor access to food.

Each of these methods of assessing food accessibility relies, to some extent, on a measure of a 'reasonable' travel distance or time to a grocery retailer from a residential area; however, what researchers define as 'reasonable' has varied greatly between studies. Distances of 400 metres (Block & Kouba, 2006; Gordon et al., 2011), 500 metres (Bertrand et al., 2008; Donkin et al., 1999), 800 metres (Algert et al., 2006; Bader et al., 2010; Yamashita & Kunkel, 2012), 1000 metres (Apparicio et al., 2007; Larsen & Gilliland, 2008; Martin Prosperity Institute, 2010; Milway et al., 2010; Leete et al., 2012; Smoyer-Tomic et al., 2006), 1500 metres (Nasr, Polsky, & Patychuk, 2011), and 1600 metres (Berg & Murdoch, 2008; Eckert & Shetty, 2011) have all been employed as 'reasonable' walking distances in urban settings. Walking times have ranged from five (Raja et al., 2008) to eight (Burns & Inglis, 2007) to fifteen minutes or more (Algert et al., 2006; Yamashita & Kunkel, 2012). These thresholds appear to be the constructions of researchers based on assumptions of reasonability. Urban dwellers have not been asked how far they are able or willing to travel by foot to purchase groceries.

The use of divergent quantitative criteria to evaluate access – alongside the employment of inconsistent distance and time thresholds that may not correspond to shoppers' conceptions of 'reasonable' – makes it difficult to meaningfully identify areas where food access is and is not actually experienced as problematic. The apparent discrepancies have rendered researchers studying the same locations susceptible to drawing conflicting conclusions, leading to significant uncertainty as to whether food deserts exist and where they are found if they are indeed present (Apparicio et al., 2007; Bader et al., 2010; Bertrand et al., 2008; Gordon et al., 2011; Martin Prosperity Institute, 2010; Milway et al., 2010; Nasr et al., 2011). In order for nuanced and experientially relevant depictions of food accessibility to be produced for particular locations, especially those where the state of access has been contested by researchers, the findings of quantitative analyses should be read against the views of area residents (Caspi, Kawachi, Subramanian, Adamkiewicz, & Sorensen, 2012). The literature to date, however, has neglected to uncover how individuals perceive access in those areas where divergent quantitative methods have yielded conflicting conclusions. This represents a significant gap in the existing knowledge of food accessibility and constitutes a meaningful avenue of inquiry.

Research on food accessibility appears divided as to which store types should be included in analyses. Some authors have defined access in relation to any retailer, grouping together supermarkets, small grocery stores, and produce markets as sources of food in their analyses (Andreyeva, Blumenthal, Schwartz, Long & Brownell, 2008; Bader et al., 2010; Bertrand et al., 2008; Donkin et al., 1999; Eckert & Shetty, 2011; Franco et al., 2008; Moore & Diez Roux, 2006; Raja et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2010; Yamashita & Kunkel, 2012). Other researchers have assessed access in relation to supermarkets only, seeing these larger stores as offering the widest variety of food at the most competitive prices (Larsen & Gilliland, 2008; Leete et al., 2012;

Smoyer-Tomic et al., 2006). A final group of authors have adopted an even narrower focus, defining accessibility exclusively in relation to supermarkets affiliated with major, mainstream, national or regional chains, as it is these stores which often command the largest market share in a given location (Apparicio et al., 2007; Berg & Murdoch, 2008; Burns & Inglis, 2007; Coyle & Flowerdew, 2011; Martin Prosperity Institute, 2010; Milway et al., 2010; Zenk et al., 2005). In centring their analyses on any one of these categories, however, researchers could potentially misrepresent food access issues, especially in multicultural cities.

A focus on national or regional supermarket chains devalues the potential contributions made by smaller businesses and non-mainstream stores to the system of food provision. These retailers include local chain supermarkets and independent grocery stores, as well as ethnic supermarkets and grocers. Should these stores be present in areas devoid of major, mainstream supermarkets, and should these stores be interpreted by residents as affordable and culturally-acceptable shopping spaces, it is possible that researchers may overstate food access issues and misidentify food deserts. Studies that have been conducted in the multicultural settings of Montréal (Apparicio et al., 2007), Toronto (Martin Prosperity Institute, 2010; Milway et al., 2010), Detroit (Zenk et al., 2005), Dallas (Berg & Murdoch, 2008), and Melbourne (Burns & Inglis, 2007) are most vulnerable to this critique, for these cities are home to a number of independent and ethnic supermarkets that are otherwise unconsidered in these food access analyses (e.g. Griffioen, 2011; Lo, 2009).

Studies that focus on supermarkets in general may also misconstrue access issues for two reasons. First, authors have utilized inconsistent quantitative criteria to categorize stores as supermarkets. Some researchers have suggested that supermarkets are defined based on their number of employees, but are divided as to whether ten (Smoyer-Tomic et al., 2006) or fifty

workers (Franco et al., 2008; Moore & Diez Roux, 2006) are sufficient to qualify a store as a supermarket. Other authors have used annual sales as the leading defining criterion, but have not agreed on a specific threshold; $1 million in sales per annum is sufficient for some (Yamashita & Kunkel, 2012), while others have suggested that at least $2 million is necessary for a grocery retailer to be deemed a supermarket (Bader et al., 2010). A third group of researchers has insisted that it is a store's spatial footprint that matters, but again there has been division in terms of specifics; ten thousand (Hillier et al., 2011) and thirty thousand square feet (Hallett & McDermott, 2011) are both measures that have been employed in recent studies. The use of such quantitative thresholds to deem stores eligible for inclusion in analyses may potentially overstate the existence of food access issues; small, reliable, affordable, high-quality food retailers could indeed be found in areas without 'supermarkets'. Moreover, the employment of divergent criteria to categorize stores in studies of both same (Gordon et al., 2011; Moore & Diez Roux, 2006) and different cities (Bader et al., 2010; Yamashita & Kunkel, 2012) means that it is difficult to compare the state of food accessibility across places and to generate sound conclusions about access within a particular locale.

A second limitation concerning research that centres on supermarkets also applies to studies that define access in relation to any store selling food. These works treat retailers and consumers as homogenous, and do not consider the possibility that the acceptability of a store and its product offerings to shoppers may affect how individuals perceive food access (Coyle & Flowerdew, 2011; Hillier et al., 2011; Odoms-Young et al., 2009). Ethnicity and culture, for instance, are rarely considered in studies of food environments in general, and these elements are not taken into account in the processes of food desert identification or food access determination (Grigsby-Toussaint, Zenk, Odoms-Young, Ruggiero, & Moise, 2010; Raja et al., 2008). By

discounting the potential significance of socio-cultural barriers, authors who assume that all supermarkets serve all persons (e.g. Bertrand et al., 2008; Nasr et al., 2011) risk understating the existence of access issues as they are perceived and experienced by individuals.

The food accessibility literature is notably silent when it comes to the potential interplay between culture, ethnicity, and perceived food access. In particular, the influence of ethnic supermarkets and grocery stores on perceptions of food access in multicultural settings has not been critically examined. How individuals view access to food when ethnic retailers are the only stores found in their immediate area, and whether such perceptions are associated with one's ethnic identity or cultural preferences, are questions that have not yet been addressed in the literature. Given that ethnic retailers are a notable feature of multicultural cities (e.g. Lo, 2009), and given that existing studies either ignore their presence (e.g. Apparicio et al., 2007; Martin Prosperity Institute, 2010; Milway et al., 2010) or assume that all individuals are equally willing to patronize them (e.g. Bertrand et al., 2008; Nasr et al., 2011), these questions should not continue to go unanswered if nuanced conclusions are to be drawn about food accessibility.

As I have thus far discussed, the contemporary literature on food access has taken as its key concerns the identification of areas of poor food access and the investigation of access disparities, using primarily GIS-based techniques. This is not to say, however, that no research has been conducted that has involved the input or perspectives of individuals; a very small body of work exists in this area and centres principally on two topics.

First, survey research has been conducted that investigates the relationship between perceived and objective assessments of food availability, accessibility, and pricing, on the one hand, with purchasing patterns or dietary practices, on the other (e.g. Caspi et al., 2012; Giskes, Van Lenthe, Brug, Mackenbach, & Turrell, 2007; Gustafson et al., 2011; Inglis, Ball, &

Crawford, 2008). Some studies have found a positive link between perceptions of food items or food provision, and the purchase or consumption of fruits, vegetables, and/or low-fat foods. Giskes et al. (2007) reported that the decision to purchase the 'healthier' versions of fifty-eight food items in Brisbane, Australia was more a function of the perceptions individuals had concerning the availability and price of these items than it was the true price or availability of these products. Caspi et al. (2012) found that residents of Boston who perceived a supermarket to be within walking distance of their homes consumed more servings of fruits and vegetables per day than did individuals who felt a store was not accessible by foot. Inglis et al. (2008) documented that perceptions of the availability, affordability, and accessibility of food better accounted for dietary differences amongst women of differing income levels in Australia than did socioeconomic position itself. Other studies, however, have not observed such a connection between perceptions of one's retail environment and positive dietary outcomes. In their research on North Carolina, Gustafson et al. (2011) noted that although individuals residing in census tracts with supercentres were more likely to perceive food availability as high, their consumption of fruits and vegetables was lower than those who lived in census tracts without such stores. This collection of research does touch on dimensions of food access as they are perceived by individuals. Its emphasis on quantitative techniques and food intake patterns, however, along with its tendency to treat consumers as homogenous in their consumption habits and access perceptions (Caspi et al., 2012; Giskes et al., 2007; Gustafson et al., 2011; Inglis et al., 2008), has prevented detailed insights from being generated concerning how diverse individuals view their local food retail environments.

A second, small body of research has employed qualitative techniques to uncover the grievances that residents report with food stores and food provision in particular areas (Kirkup et

al., 2004; Kumar, Quinn, Krista, & Tomas, 2011; Munoz-Plaza, Filomena, & Morland, 2008; Park et al., 2011; Zenk et al., 2011). These studies have documented resident-perceived concerns with: food quality (Kirkup et al., 2004; Kumar et al., 2011; Munoz-Plaza et al., 2008; Zenk et al., 2011), variety (Munoz-Plaza et al., 2008; Zenk et al., 2011), price (Kirkup et al., 2004; Munoz-Plaza et al., 2008; Zenk et al., 2011), sales practices (Munoz-Plaza et al., 2008; Zenk et al., 2011), customer service (Kumar et al., 2011; Zenk et al., 2011), and safety (Kirkup et al., 2004; Zenk et al., 2011). With the exception of a paper by Park et al. (2011), who, in their study of Hispanic immigrant women in New York City, noted that participants were dissatisfied with the absence of culturally-relevant livestock markets and farmers' markets in their communities, little attention has been given to the question of food preferences in studies of perceived food access (Hillier et al., 2011). In addition, this limited literature on food environment perceptions has tended to engage with specific segments of the population in isolation: African-Americans (Kumar et al., 2011; Munoz-Plaza et al., 2008), African-American women with children (Zenk et al., 2011), female Hispanic immigrants (Park et al., 2011), or white Europeans (Kirkup et al., 2004). It treats all of those deemed to fall within these groups as homogenous in terms of their needs, preferences, experiences, and opinions. Furthermore, it discounts the possibility that non-selected segments of the population – along with those subsumed into the aforementioned homogenized categories – might differ in their perceptions of the food retail environment in question, based on differences in cultural backgrounds or ethnic affiliations.

Given this lack of attention to culture and ethnicity in the limited body of qualitative work on food environments, there is a need for research that examines whether food access is understood in similar or different ways amongst residents of multicultural communities. While it is valuable to address this research gap in the context of any food retail environment, it is one

20

which is perhaps most relevant to investigate with reference to neighbourhoods that contain only ethnic supermarkets and grocery stores; as noted earlier, quantitative researchers appear divided in their interpretations of the state of food access in these communities (e.g. Milway et al., 2010; Nasr et al., 2011). Qualitative work that not only uncovers how access to food is perceived by residents of these areas but also considers the extent to which these views are shaped by factors such as ethnic identity and cultural preferences would be useful in addressing these salient gaps in the contemporary literature on food accessibility.

In this review of the food accessibility literature, I have identified several sub-topical areas that require additional research. Fundamental knowledge gaps include the issue of how access to food is conceived of when ethnic retailers are the only stores to be found in a given area, and the question of the extent to which cultural preferences and ethnic identity influence perceptions of food access. That these matters are worth investigating is supported by insights from the literature on consumer choice and consumption behaviour.

2.2 – Consumer Choice and Consumption Behaviour

Recent research on the topic of consumer choice and consumption behaviour has engaged with four issues that are of significant relevance to this thesis. These matters include the effects of identity, personal characteristics, and the retail environment on consumer behaviour, along with the notion that shopping spaces are infused with multiple meanings.

2.2.1 – The Influence of Identity on Consumption Decisions

Prior to the 1980s, much of the research on consumption, particularly within geography, subscribed to the principles of neoclassical economic theory (e.g. McFadden, 1976; Niedercom & Bechdolt, 1970). Consumption decisions were taken to be a function of the rational

maximization of utility and the minimization of purchase or travel costs (Lo & Wang, 2012). Today, however, it is frequently recognized that consumption is a social and cultural process imbued with meaning (Jackson & Holbrook, 1995; Lo, 2009; Wang & Lo, 2007). The recent literature on the topic of consumer choice and consumption behaviour has expended considerable effort to highlight the influence of identity on consumption decisions. Both negative and positive forms of this relationship have been discussed, and particular attention has been afforded to culture and ethnicity as critical facets of the identities of consumers, products, and retailers.

It has been suggested that consumers who harbour strong, negative feelings towards a specific ethnic group evaluate products affiliated with this group in a less favourable fashion than they judge identical products linked with other groups (Hill & Paphitis, 2011; Ouellet, 2005, 2007). This act of rating products negatively on the basis of their ethnic affiliation has been labelled 'consumer racism' in the literature (Ouellet, 2005). While this term is a recent construct, evidence of consumer racism has been presented in multiple contexts and, moreover, has been associated with a decreased willingness to buy particular goods (Ouellet, 2007; Hill & Paphitis, 2011). In a study of consumers in the United States, Canada, and France, Ouellet (2007) found that those who were deemed to display a high degree of racist sentiment towards the dominant minority group were more likely to evaluate products affiliated with this group in less positive terms, and were less likely to buy them, when compared with individuals who exhibited lower levels of racism. Hill and Paphitis (2011) reached similar conclusions in Australia. They suggested that the greater the level of racism Australians directed towards Chinese-Australians, the less likely they were to rate Chinese-Australian products favourably and to purchase them (Hill & Paphitis, 2011). The same pattern persisted when the ethnic affiliation of the consumer and the product were reversed (Hill & Paphitis, 2011).

Aside from Ouellet (2005; 2007) and Hill and Paphitis (2011), consumer racism has been understudied in the consumption literature. As a concept, it has only been explored in relation to product evaluation and purchasing (Ouellet, 2005; Ouellet, 2007; Hill & Paphitis, 2011), and it appears that it has not yet been applied to the question of store patronage decisions. It is possible that the holding of hostile feelings towards particular ethnic groups may render individuals unwilling to patronize business establishments associated in some way – whether through store name, the ethnic affiliation of the staff, or the character of the products sold – with these groups. In the context of multicultural cities, such consumer racism could have an effect on how food access is perceived among diverse individuals living in areas where only ethnic supermarkets and grocery stores are present. The potential interplay between consumer racism, ethnic grocery retailers, and perceptions of food access has not been addressed in the consumer choice, consumption behaviour, or food accessibility literatures, and thus constitutes an area where additional research is warranted.

Although ethnicity has been associated with negative consumption decisions in the form of consumer racism, it has also been well-documented as a driver of consumption, in terms of product purchasing outcomes (e.g. Carrus, Nenci, & Caddeo, 2009; Chattaraman & Lennon, 2008; Laroche, Kim, & Tomiuk, 1998) and store patronage decisions (e.g. Lo, 2009; Lo & Wang, 2012; Wang & Lo, 2007). Positive relationships have been suggested to exist between the strength of consumers' ethnic identification and the consumption of cultural products. Laroche et al. (1998) found that the extent to which individuals identified as 'Italian', as gauged through the degree to which they had Italian social circles, used the Italian language amongst family, and practiced Catholicism, was positively associated with the consumption of traditional Italian foods. Chattaraman and Lennon (2008) noted that the strength of one's ethnic identification

positively predicted the extent to which one would consume cultural apparel. Carrus et al. (2009) reported that West Indian female immigrants residing in Italy were more likely to purchase their traditional ethnic foods if they strongly identified with their ethnicity and if they felt that a strong sense of cultural norms existed amongst members of their ethnic group.

The importance of ethnic identity to consumer behaviour has not only been discussed in relation to product purchasing, but has been documented with regards to store patronage decisions as well. Wang and Lo (2007) and Lo and Wang (2012) argued that, for middle-class Chinese immigrants in Toronto, ethnicity is a more important determinant of grocery store patronage decisions than is physical distance. These authors suggested that individuals consider the ethnic character of a store in the act of deciding where to shop (Wang & Lo, 2007), and documented that Chinese immigrants prefer to shop at Chinese supermarkets compared to mainstream stores, even in instances where the former are not convenient to access (Lo & Wang, 2012). Business practices consistent with cultural preferences, such as selling familiar cuts of meat and live fish, along with the role of the Chinese supermarket as providing a social environment which facilitates the construction, reinforcement, and negotiation of Chinese ethnic identity, were cited as key factors for this preference (Lo, 2009; Lo & Wang, 2012; Wang & Lo, 2007). These researchers also observed that the stronger the ethnic identity of Chinese immigrants – gauged through the extent of their ties with Chinese traditions, their use of Chinese languages and media sources, and their interactions with co-ethnics – the greater the preference they demonstrated for Chinese businesses (Lo & Wang, 2012; Wang & Lo, 2007). From this collection of studies within the field of the geography of consumption, ethnic identity appears to assume a more important role than economic rationality in influencing the store choices of consumers (Lo, 2009; Lo & Wang, 2012; Wang & Lo, 2007).

A concept developed within the field of marketing by Rosenbaum and Montoya (2007), and informed by insights from environmental psychology, offers a useful theoretical basis upon which to better understand the empirically-supported linkage between ethnic identity and store choice. Rosenbaum and Montoya (2007) coined the term 'place likening' to suggest that consumers consider the identities – in particular the ethnicities – of store employees and other customers, in addition to cues in the store environment, to determine whether a shopping venue is congruent with their self-identities. When aspects of one's own identity align with what one senses to be present in a space of consumption, one will likely approach this place (Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007). In contrast, when there is a perceived incongruity between one's self-identity and a particular shopping venue, one will likely avoid this place (Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007).

Rosenbaum and Montoya's (2007) notion of place likening brings a well-cited idea from the field of environmental psychology into conversation with the literature on consumer choice and behaviour. This idea is that of 'place-identity' as developed by Proshanksy (1978, 1983). Proshanksy (1983) argued that the formation and nurturing of an individual's identity does not occur only in relation to other persons, but with regards to physical settings as well. According to this author, the self-identity of an individual is defined, maintained, and supported by the ideas, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and values he or she holds with reference to particular physical places (Proshanksy, 1978, 1983). These latter cognitions are what Proshanksy (1983) has termed place-identity. This concept of place-identity therefore suggests that physical environments are drawn on, and are essential for, the construction and maintenance of personal identities (Bonnes & Secchiaroli, 1995; Proshanksy, 1978; Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007).

Within the environmental psychology literature, place-identity has been discussed in relation to myriad settings within the natural and built environments (e.g. Budruck, Thomas, &

Tyrrell, 2009; Devine-Wright, 2009; Hull IV, Lam, & Vigo, 1994; Hunter, 1987; Larsen, 2004; Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011). Examples include, but are not limited to: urban green spaces, cognitions towards which have been investigated in relation to environmentalist identities (Budruck et al., 2009); forests and urban churches, feelings about which have been linked with people's bonds towards nature and religion (Hull IV et al., 1994); and schools, which have been tied with cognitions concerning the importance of educational success (Marcouyeux & Fleury-Bahi, 2011). One type of setting within the built environment that has not received attention by environmental psychologists working within the place-identity paradigm, however, has been the consumption space (Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007).

Rosenbaum and Montoya (2007) addressed this research lacuna. Their creation of the place likening concept narrows the broad focus of environmental psychologists on physical settings in general to the specific environment of places of consumption, and provides place-identity with a consumption-based application (Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007). The act of place likening they theorize is simply a process whereby one evaluates the cognitions or perceptions one has of consumption settings – that is, place-identity – against one's own self-identity to reach a decision concerning store patronage (Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007). The idea of place likening retains the environmental psychology-based focus on the significance of place to self-identity (Proshanksy, 1983), but goes a step further to suggest that perceptions concerning the congruity or incongruity of a place with one's own identity may function as a key determinant of consumption decisions (Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007).

A number of studies have produced evidence that could be interpreted as supporting the theory of place likening. In a study of the shopping experiences of African-Americans in New York City and Philadelphia, Lee (2000) documented instances in which individuals would

patronize stores owned by co-ethnics in order to be around similar people and to feel comfortable while shopping. Rosenbaum (2005) reported that Jewish and homosexual consumers would visit establishments where they interpreted – through artefacts and objects – a match to exist between their own identity and the character of the shopping space. Again, being amongst individuals of similar identities was cited as an important factor in shaping patronage decisions (Rosenbaum, 2005). Rosenbaum and Montoya (2007) noted instances where female Hispanic shoppers avoided particular department stores because they sensed co-ethnic shoppers to be absent. These authors also spoke of cases in which Hispanic men avoided Japanese-staffed stores as they felt unwelcomed due to the fact that they were not Japanese (Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007). Lo (2009) found that cultural factors were primarily responsible for deterring non-Chinese, Canadian-born persons in Toronto from using Chinese supermarkets. Salient comments cited by Lo from surveyed consumers who avoided such stores, such as "'I would prefer shopping with people of my own cultural background'" and "'I would prefer shopping in a grocery store where I do not feel like a minority'" (Lo, 2009, p. 406), illustrate the apparent significance of place likening to shopping venue choice. Finally, Johnstone (2012) argued that the need to feel like an 'insider' in a consumption space occasionally mattered more for women's store patronage decisions than did the type of products sold. This author also illustrated that an individual's inability to identify with the retailers in an area may cause him or her to think that certain types of stores are absent when they are in fact present (Johnstone, 2012). This collection of research lends support to the notion that decisions to utilize particular stores may be premised on the extent to which they align with one's own identity, as consumers may wish to feel comfortable and amongst like others whilst shopping. The notion of place likening thus helps to theorize the linkage between ethnic identity or other self-concepts and consumer behaviour.

Research within the fields of consumption geography and marketing has thus suggested that identity, and in particular ethnic identity, influences consumption behaviour and store approach or avoidance decisions (Carrus et al., 2009; Chattaraman & Lennon, 2008; Johnstone, 2012; Laroche et al., 1998; Lee, 2000; Lo, 2009; Lo & Wang, 2012; Rosenbaum, 2005; Wang & Lo, 2007). Moreover, the literature has produced evidence that supports the theory that consumers may assess the congruity between their identities and those associated with particular consumption venues in the act of deciding where to shop (Johnstone, 2012; Lee, 2000; Lo, 2009; Rosenbaum, 2005; Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007). What has not been done, however, is research that investigates the applicability of these insights to the study of food access in multicultural cities. The extent to which identity and processes of place likening may influence the ways in which individuals perceive their local food retail environment and food accessibility is not yet known. This research gap is particularly worth investigating in the context of ethnically diverse neighbourhoods that are home to only ethnic supermarkets and grocery stores. It may be that the degree to which food is perceived to be accessible in these areas hinges upon the extent to which residents sense a congruity to exist between their own identities and those they associate with these stores. After all, a perceived incongruity of this nature was suggested as having led a participant in Johnstone's (2012) study to claim that her neighbourhood was devoid of clothing stores when some, in actuality, were present.

2.2.2 – Personal Characteristics, Economic Circumstances, and Consumer Behaviour

Although identity has been stressed in the recent literature as a potentially critical driver of consumption decisions, recognition has been given to personal characteristics and economic circumstances as having effects on the behaviour of shoppers. In relation to grocery shopping, it has been suggested that store attributes of patronage-inducing importance may vary along

28

income, age, and gender lines. Low-income shoppers have been claimed to prioritize low pricing and value-for-money (Mortimer & Clarke, 2011; Piacentini, Hibbert, & Al-Dajani, 2011; Worsley et al., 2011), and accessibility by walking or public transportation (Kirkup et al., 2004) when selecting a grocery retailer to visit. More affluent grocery shoppers have been said to prefer shopping at venues where parking is easy (Kirkup et al., 2004) and food quality is high (Mortimer & Clarke, 2011). Older consumers have been noted to value the availability of appropriate portion sizes (Kirkup et al., 2004), traditional brands (Goodwin & McElwee, 1999), and high quality foods (Worsley et al., 2011) in their choice of store more so than their younger counterparts, who have been suggested to be more concerned with saving (Worsley et al., 2011), convenience (Worsley et al., 2011), and the availability of easy parking (Goodwin & McElwee, 1999). Finally, men and women have been claimed to differ in terms of the store attributes they ascribe importance to. Mortimer and Clarke (2011) found that while both men and women preferred shopping venues which were well-staffed and had weekly specials, men tended to be attracted to stores that provided fast service and efficient check-outs, while women valued stores that were hygienic and offered consistent, competitive pricing.

This collection of research further stresses the notion that consumers are not homogenous in their store preferences, and reveals that patronage behaviours may indeed be associated with one's own characteristics or circumstances. The extent to which these factors affect the ways in which individuals perceive or assess their local food retail environments, however, is an issue that has received limited attention in the literature. Research on food accessibility would benefit from additional studies that explore the influence of personal characteristics and circumstances on food access perceptions, especially in neighbourhoods that are home to individuals of mixed incomes or a high proportion of low-income or elderly individuals. If these factors affect store

preferences and patronage decisions, as the consumption behaviour literature has suggested, they may influence the ways in which particular food environments are evaluated as well.

2.2.3 – The Effect of the Retail Environment on Consumption Patterns

A small degree of attention in the consumption literature has been afforded to the issue of how a change in the retail environment affects consumer behaviour. With regards to grocery shopping, longitudinal studies in Leeds, England (Wrigley et al., 2002; Wrigley, Warm, & Margetts, 2003) and Glasgow, Scotland (Cummins, Petticrew, Higgins, Findlay, & Sparks, 2005; Cummins et al., 2008) have noted that the opening of a supermarket in an economically-deprived area with limited food resources will induce a portion of consumers to change their main shopping venue to the new store. Commuting patterns may also change; more individuals may travel to and from the grocery store by foot rather than rely on services such as taxis to transport them to more distant, formerly relied-upon retailers (Wrigley et al., 2003).

Whether the opening of a new supermarket in deprived neighbourhoods under-served by grocery retailers actually affects the product purchasing patterns of area residents, however, is a matter that has been debated. Research conducted in Leeds found that the diets of residents were positively but modestly affected by the opening of a new Tesco superstore (Wrigley et al., 2002, 2003). Fruit and vegetable consumption increased slightly among surveyed residents in general, but more than doubled for the group of persons who had the poorest diets prior to the launch of the store (Wrigley et al., 2002, 2003). As most of the members of the latter group were individuals who switched away from limited range or budget stores to the new Tesco, the authors concluded that the opening of the supermarket markedly improved the consumption patterns of those who previously had the worst diets (Wrigley et al., 2002, 2003). Research conducted in Glasgow, however, reached different conclusions. There, the opening of a Tesco supermarket in

a deprived neighbourhood had no significant effect on the fruit and vegetable intake patterns of area residents (Cummins et al., 2005, 2008). Residents did, however, perceive the store to provide benefits to the neighbourhood, such as increasing the availability and variety of food that may be purchased locally, and providing new employment opportunities (Cummins et al., 2008).

This group of studies suggests that a change in the retail environment may have various effects on the consumption behaviours and perceptions of individuals. Environmental changes may impact shopping venue choice, travel patterns, and in some cases even purchasing and food consumption decisions (Cummins et al., 2005, 2008; Wrigley et al., 2002, 2003). An alteration to the retail environment may also affect the perceptions that individuals have of an area, as the work by Cummins et al. (2008) has shown. This research raises the possibility that perceptions of food access in a neighbourhood are dynamic rather than static, and may be shaped by changes in the retail environment over time. It is possible that individuals who have resided in an area for many years and have encountered retail changes, both positive and negative, may perceive food access in a manner different from the way that it is viewed by relative newcomers to the community; however, the extent to which length of residence, as a proxy of familiarity with possible changes to the local food retail environment, affects perceptions of food access is an issue that has been understudied in the food accessibility literature. Additional work should be undertaken to address this gap if more nuanced understandings of perceived food access are to be generated by researchers.

2.2.4 – The Meanings Associated with Shopping Spaces

A final theme that has surfaced within the recent literature on consumer choice and consumption behaviour is that of shopping spaces as having multiple and contested meanings. It has been consistently suggested that sites of consumption do not exist as neutral and value-free

features of the urban fabric (e.g. Holden & French, 2012; Lo, 2009; Zarkada-Fraser & Fraser, 2002). Moreover, it has been contended that such spaces evoke divergent and perhaps conflicting meanings among different individuals (e.g. Holden & French, 2012; Jackson & Holbrook, 1995; Lo, 2009; Zarkada-Fraser & Fraser, 2002).

Three examples are instructive. Zarkada-Fraser and Fraser (2002) found that the prospect of a new American-owned supermarket opening in an Australian neighbourhood was not viewed as a welcomed occurrence by all individuals. Nearly one-quarter of those surveyed stated that they would protest a decision allowing such a store to open in their community, and upwards of one-fifth would petition to boycott the store entirely (Zarkada-Fraser & Fraser, 2002). These sentiments were stronger amongst individuals who identified as Australian rather than those who identified as Greek-Australian (Zarkada-Fraser & Fraser, 2002). The authors argued that 'consumer ethnocentrism', or the belief in the impropriety or immorality of buying foreign-made goods, contributed to these feelings, especially amongst those who more narrowly identified with Australia (Zarkada-Fraser & Fraser, 2002). On a similar note, Holden and French (2012) showed that efforts to open a location of a Mexican-based grocery chain in Orange County, California were met with resistance. Though today the store thrives precisely due to its efforts to cater to Hispanic-Americans, its ethnic character was long a point of contention and was particularly condemned by the local city council, who felt that the store was "too Spanish" and would not bring the desired demographic of shoppers to the surrounding mall (Holden & French, 2012, p. 91). Finally, Lo (2009) suggested that Chinese supermarkets convey conflicting meanings to divergent consumer groups. Those who are Chinese value such settings for their conveyance of nostalgia, their support of cultural practices, and their functioning as social environments key to the construction, reinforcement, or negotiation of Chinese identity (Lo, 2009). In contrast, non-

Chinese individuals encounter these stores as "impermeable spaces", settings where they may feel uncomfortable and may perceive their cultural needs to be unmet (Lo, 2009, p. 410).

This collection of research suggests that sites of consumption do not exist simply as functional, neutral settings where goods can be purchased; instead, they are infused with multiple and divergent meanings. Depending on who a consumer is, and what his or her cognitions are, a shopping venue may be understood in a particular and unique light. Because of this possibility of multiple interpretations of shopping spaces, it cannot be assumed that all consumers will behave in a homogenous fashion, nor can it be assumed that all stores will be engaged with in a similar way. These insights from the literature on consumer choice and behaviour speak further to the aforementioned weaknesses of the body of research on food accessibility.

2.3 – Synthesis and Relevance

In the preceding review, I have identified several knowledge gaps that warrant attention. Little work has been done to uncover the factors that affect food retail environment perceptions and grocery acquisition experiences. A focus on distance or proximity to retailers has assumed consumers to be homogenous and has obscured the possible significance of food preferences, ethnic identity, personal characteristics, and length of residence, for instance, to understandings of food access. The potentially-important concept of place likening has not been applied to studies of food retail environments and grocery store patronage. Moreover, the extant literature on food accessibility has not investigated how residents of neighbourhoods where only ethnic grocery retailers are found view their shopping environments and procure food. These areas have instead been conflictingly described as both 'food deserts' and 'food oases', as researchers have either dismissed ethnic stores as potential sources of food or have assumed them to be attractive store formats for all consumers.

Taken together, these knowledge gaps inform the research question and objectives that guide my investigation. As I noted in Chapter 1, I seek to address the following question in this thesis: *In multicultural cities, how are local food shopping environments perceived and food acquisition experienced by residents of neighbourhoods where the only grocery retailers are 'ethnic' in nature?* More specifically, I aim to uncover the factors that influence individuals' views of their grocery shopping environment and their store approach or avoidance decisions, the ease with which they access food retailers, and their levels of satisfaction with the stores they visit. By accomplishing these objectives, I strive to make a modest yet important contribution to the food accessibility literature. In the following chapter, I explain how I conducted the research necessary to achieve these goals.

3. Research Design

In this chapter, I discuss the design and conduct of my study. I begin by outlining the methodological framework from within which I worked, in particular providing a rationale for the qualitative orientation of this research. Next, I explain my choice of study area and detail my data collection procedures, justifying my use of semi-structured interviews as a research method, offering an overview of the participant recruitment and interview processes, and noting the characteristics of the sample I obtained. Finally, I summarize the steps I took to analyze the information I gathered from my fieldwork. Throughout this chapter, I reflect on how my own positionality influenced the research process, including its effects on my access to both individuals themselves and to their perspectives.

3.1 – Methodological Framework

I utilized a qualitative, phenomenological, and interpretivist research methodology in this study. Qualitative research is well-suited to investigations that explore and seek to understand the meanings behind the opinions, experiences, and behaviours of individuals – information often difficult to gather using quantitative techniques (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013). As key goals of my project were to uncover the factors that give rise to the perceptions individuals have of their shopping environment and to reveal personal accounts of grocery procurement, a qualitative research design was ideal for this thesis. Moreover, this approach offered further advantages over quantitative techniques, including the possibility of gathering detailed insights through inductive probing; the ability to obtain information on topics that may not have been anticipated had closed questions been used; and the potential to identify causal relationships to the extent that they were presented within individuals' statements (Guest et al., 2013). These methodological strengths offered great promise for addressing the research question and objectives that guided this study. I

employed semi-structured interviews as my qualitative method of choice in this project. Reasons for my use of interviews and details concerning their conduct are presented in Section 3.3.

My research was phenomenological in its approach. Phenomenology is the study of the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of people, and the meanings that are associated with these perspectives (Guest et al., 2013). It is fundamentally "a philosophy concerned with the ways individuals make sense of the world around them" (Bryman & Teevan, 2005, p. 10). Research grounded in the phenomenological tradition focuses on uncovering personal attitudes, thoughts, and feelings in an attempt to understand how people view their surroundings (Guest et al., 2013). In this research, I explored the views that individuals hold concerning food access, in order to discover how they interpret a type of food retail environment that is not well-understood in the literature. By employing phenomenological techniques, I aimed to generate insights that could aid in partially addressing the knowledge gaps that characterize the recent body of research on food accessibility.

Finally, this thesis research was grounded in an interpretivist epistemology. I adopted the perspective that no singular objective reality can be revealed by those conducting social research, subscribing to the notion that the researcher's task is to uncover multiple, subjective realities (Guest et al., 2013). The interpretivist epistemological orientation of my thesis is reflected in its title: 'Disrupting the Food Desert/Oasis Binary'. I aimed to move beyond the fact-like depictions of food retail environments often offered by those using GIS-based methods, to instead explore the subjective and perhaps multitudinous ways in which shopping landscapes are understood by those who are most familiar with them. By adopting an interpretivist perspective, I sought to allow food accessibility and grocery retail environments to be represented in ways that most closely reflected the personal realities of individuals.

I proceeded by way of a case study. Given the temporal and financial constraints that this project faced – a study for a Master's thesis that was to be completed within one year on a budget of approximately $2000 – it was not feasible to study food retail environment perceptions and shopping experiences in multiple cities or in many neighbourhoods home to ethnic grocery retailers. Instead, I chose one city and one neighbourhood within it to serve as the focal point for this investigation. A case study approach to this project afforded me opportunities to investigate perspectives on food access at an individual level and to develop a strong familiarity with the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural contexts in which these views were formed. This allowed for a greater depth of analysis than could have occurred if multiple sites were studied over a short period of time (Baxter, 2010). Moreover, the use of a case study in this instance was appropriate given an underlying impetus for this research: that is, to enhance the theorization of food access and food deserts in multicultural cities. By focusing on a geographical context and a suite of socio-cultural and economic factors that are often neglected in the extant literature, the case study design I employed here serves as a useful starting point for further reflections on the meaning of food accessibility in spaces of diversity (Baxter, 2010).

3.2 – Area of Study

3.2.1 – City of Focus: Toronto, Ontario

I chose to conduct this research in Toronto, Ontario – an ideal city of focus for four reasons. First, Toronto is renowned for its cultural diversity (Lo, 2009). Over 200 ethnic origins are represented amongst the city's population, and more than 140 languages and dialects are collectively used by Toronto residents (City of Toronto, n.d.). These demographic characteristics qualify Toronto as a 'multicultural' city, the very type of location that is central to the primary research question of this thesis. Second, Toronto is home to a large number of ethnic enterprises,

including grocery stores and supermarkets. There are portions of this city where ethnic grocery retailers exist as the only stores selling food for multiple kilometres, as Internet searches of store addresses and ground-truthing through neighbourhood visits have revealed. As such, the research question that I sought to address in this study was suited to be investigated in this location. Third, my choice of city provides an opportunity for qualitative research on food access to be conducted in a Canadian context, something that has rarely been done. Finally, a focus on Toronto and the investigation of food retail environments therein helps to clarify uncertainties in the literature, as the location and extent of food deserts in this city has been a matter of much recent debate (e.g. Martin Prosperity Institute, 2010; Milway et al., 2010; Nasr et al., 2011).

3.2.2 – Study Neighbourhood: Humbermede
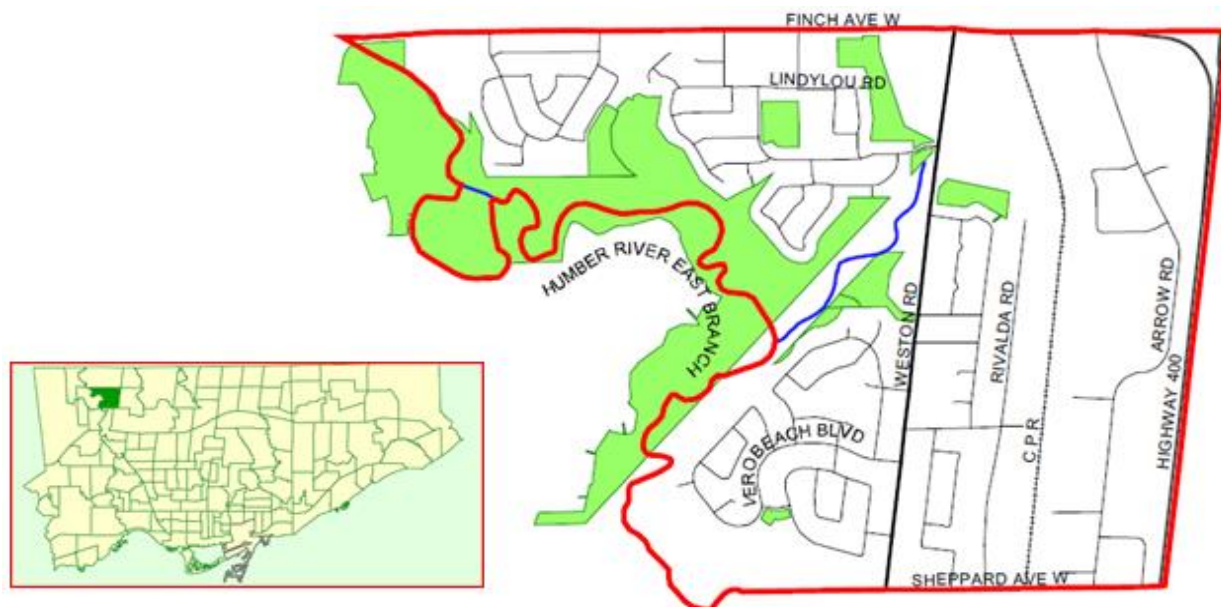
Figure 1: A map of the Humbermede neighbourhood (right) and its location in the City of Toronto (left). *Source: City of Toronto (2008).*

I set my case study in an area of northern Toronto referred to by the city as Humbermede. As Figure 1 shows, this 'neighbourhood', as the city calls it, is situated between Finch Avenue to the north, Sheppard Avenue to the south, the Humber River to the west, and Highway 400 to the

east (City of Toronto, 2008). Admittedly, Humbermede as a 'neighbourhood' is a political construct. The boundaries used to demarcate this area are arguably artificial creations. However, the Humbermede neighbourhood, as the City of Toronto defines, it is also rather self-contained; it is bordered by a ravine, a highway, and industry. As such, it is possible, though not guaranteed, that the political boundaries drawn to delineate Humbermede may be ascribed some meaning by those who live here. Acknowledging the limitations and potentially contested meanings of the word, I employ the term 'neighbourhood' in the following chapters to simply refer to my chosen study area.

Humbermede, Toronto encompasses a retail and residential landscape that possesses four key attributes that make it an ideal study site for this research. First, as Figure 2 shows, Humbermede encapsulates an area where the only grocery retailers present, and thus the closest food shopping venues for residents, are ethnic in nature. Two moderately-sized ethnic supermarkets are located on Finch Avenue; these are Centra Food Market and Long Hui Supermarket. Centra, which opened in May 2013, occupies a building that previously housed an Oriental Food Mart, an East Asian grocery store; before this, a Galati Brothers Supermarket, an Italian chain, operated a location[15] at this site. Despite Centra's rather non-descript name, this retailer draws heavily on elements of culture and religion in its advertising practices, distinguishing it from more 'mainstream' supermarkets. While the store carries a selection of 'western' groceries, its flyers have sections devoted specifically to Halal items, regularly feature text or products with labels in languages other than English, and showcase foods that are culturally-relevant to specific populations. Centra Food Market appears to operate as a 'multi-ethnic' grocery store, its recent advertisements overtly targeting Indian, Pakistani, Vietnamese,

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[15] Even earlier, a Galati was situated at the intersection of Weston and Bradstock Roads, according to Humbermede residents. Rent issues and the lack of an opportunity to expand the premises resulted in the closure of this location. A Vietnamese grocery store took its place; it closed after about six months. A Dollar Tree now occupies the site.

Figure 2: The Humbermede food retail environment.

and Caribbean persons. Long Hui Supermarket, on the other hand, exhibits a strong affiliation to the Vietnamese community, its signage being in this language and many of its products being oriented towards this group. In addition to these supermarkets, eight small ethnic grocery stores are located within Humbermede or along its boundaries: Apna Bazaar, Bantama Supermarket, Caribbean Island Food Mart, Eshtar Mini-Mart, Just Caribbean Groceries, Makola Tropical Foods, MK Meats and West Indian Grocery, and Papine Meat and Food Market. These retailers tend to provide more limited arrays of 'western' foods, mostly stocking items that are common in South Asian or Caribbean cuisine; they also are generally not full-service grocery stores. While a No Frills was once located in the area, no mainstream supermarkets are currently found in Humbermede or near its boundaries. The closest six mainstream stores are located at least 1.6 kilometres from the nearest Humbermede residences [average 2.02 kilometres], 3.1 kilometres or

more from the geographic centre of the neighbourhood [average 3.88 kilometres], and at least 4.9 kilometres away from the furthest residences [average 5.83 kilometres].[16]

Second, the multicultural character of Humbermede made this neighbourhood an ideal site for this research. According to the 2011 National Household Survey, East Indian, Italian, and Canadian persons constitute the three predominant ethnic groups in the community (Statistics Canada, 2011d-f); however, a significant number of Jamaican, Pakistani, Vietnamese, English, Filipino, Chinese, and Spanish individuals also reside in the area (Statistics Canada, 2011d-f). By region of ethnic origin, for 2011, the population of Humbermede[17] was distributed as follows: Asian, 6840 persons; European, 4575, Caribbean, 2110; Latin, Central, or South American, 2030; North American, 1555; African, 1355; and North American Aboriginal, 60 (Statistics Canada, 2011d-f). While the use of static, predefined, and essentializing labels such as these is admittedly problematic, the National Household Survey depicts Humbermede as a multicultural residential area, which made it a suitable site to address the research question of this thesis. Moreover, in Humbermede, it appears that not all residents are affiliated with the ethnic groups represented in name by the local supermarkets and grocery stores. For instance, there is presently no clearly-branded Italian supermarket in the community, even though Italians are one of the largest ethnic groups in the area. However, other groups do appear to have some degree of representation in the food retail environment, such as the Caribbean population with Caribbean grocery stores. The observance of this situation made Humbermede a suitable location to explore the potential significance of place likening to grocery shopping landscape perceptions.

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[16] As I noted in Chapter 2, distances of 0.5 to 1.6 kilometres are often used in the literature to identify food deserts (e.g. Bertrand et al., 2008; Berg & Murdoch, 2008). Thus, the absence of mainstream retailers in Humbermede has caused some (e.g. Milway et al., 2010) to regard the neighbourhood in this light.

[17] The sum of these values (18,165) exceeds the total population of Humbermede (15,825), as individuals were able to self-identify as having multiple ethnic origins in the 2011 National Household Survey. Nonetheless, these figures are instructive insofar as they provide an overview of the general demographic composition of the neighbourhood.

Third, Humbermede was an ideal location to study perceptions of food access because it is an area that has been defined in contradictory terms by researchers using quantitative methods. Recent Toronto-based studies that have utilized the presence of major mainstream supermarkets as proxies of food access have identified Humbermede as a food desert due to its absence of mainstream stores (Martin Prosperity Institute, 2010; Milway et al., 2010). Another report, which has defined access in relation to supermarkets in general, has suggested that the majority of Humbermede is not a food desert because ethnic grocery retailers are present in the area (Nasr et al., 2011). Given that Humbermede is an area where the state of food access is contested by researchers, an examination of residents' perceptions of accessibility in this community has the potential to generate significant new insights.

Finally, Humbermede was a suitable site to study access to food due to its economic and social attributes. A significant proportion of the area's residents are economically disadvantaged. About 22% of all Humbermede residents are categorized as having a low income after tax, and government transfers account for 23.8% of the income in this area (Statistics Canada, 2011d-f). These figures are higher than those for the City of Toronto as a whole, where 19.3% of persons have low incomes and 11.5% of the total income is comprised of government transfers (Statistics Canada, 2011g). In addition, Humbermede dwellers may have a low degree of access to vehicles; though not a perfect indicator, 31.5% of residents rely on public transportation to travel to work (Statistics Canada, 2011d-f). Finally, a high proportion of people in this community are over 65 years of age, 12.6% (Statistics Canada, 2011d-f). These statistics suggest that being able to purchase affordable food without having to travel long distances may be of significant social relevance in Humbermede. As such, the question of how people perceive and experience access to food was a matter well-suited to be studied in this area.

3.3 – Data Collection Methods

3.3.1 – Semi-Structured Interviews

        To acquire the information I needed to address my research question, I conducted a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews. I selected this data collection method for four reasons. First, scholars have characterized interviews as an effective means of obtaining information concerning the perceptions, thoughts, experiences, and behaviours of individuals (Dunn, 2000; Longhurst, 2010). This is the precise type of data that I required to satisfy each of my research objectives in this project.

        Second, interviews allow for the production of in-depth understandings on particular topics (Longhurst, 2010), inducing more substantial reflection among research participants than questionnaires and offering the opportunity to probe further into responses, an outcome that is not possible when structured survey instruments are utilized (Dunn, 2000). Interviews are thus an appropriate research method to use in instances where the researcher's goal is depth of analysis rather than breadth of response, as Linda McDowell has suggested (cited in Longhurst, 2010). This was the case with this research, as my aims were to acquire in-depth understandings of both resident-held perceptions of their retail environment and personal grocery shopping experiences.

        Third, insofar as interviews entail open responses, they facilitate the discovery of what is most meaningful to research participants (Dunn, 2000; Longhurst, 2010). Interviewees do not have to conform their thoughts to predetermined, selectable options as often occurs during surveys (Longhurst, 2010), but instead may speak freely about a topic in terms that are most relevant to them (Dunn, 2000). Interviews thus allow research participants to express their views using their own language, rather than using the phraseology of the researcher (Dunn, 2000). This is insightful in instances where one wishes to unearth individual perceptions or perspectives on

an issue. This is precisely what I aimed to accomplish in this research, as I sought to explore the meanings that people ascribe to their shopping environment and to uncover the ways in which these individuals personally conceive of food accessibility in their everyday lives.

Finally, interviews were ideal for this project because focus groups were a less suitable qualitative method for this research. One of my goals in this project was to identify the factors that influence the views that people hold about their grocery retail environment. It would have been difficult to adequately gather this individual-level information through focus groups, given that the group dynamic could alter the extent to which one would be willing to share one's viewpoints. In order to best solicit personal perspectives, interviews were the most preferable data collection method for this research.

3.3.2 – Participant Recruitment Process

Consistent with the goal of much qualitative research, that is, to obtain an illustrative rather than a statistically-representative sample (Valentine, 2005), I sought to recruit 30 residents of Humbermede who reflected the general demographic composition of the neighbourhood.

I wanted to capture the socioeconomic diversity of the area. In Humbermede, 37.1% of households have an annual income of less than $39,999; 35.4% earn between $40,000 and $79,999 per year; and 27.5% have an income that exceeds $80,000 annually (Statistics Canada, 2011d-f). I did not wish, however, to approach Humbermede residents as a stranger and inquire about their incomes, as asking for such sensitive information would appear threatening and would likely spell the end of any potential interaction. As such, I used dwelling type as a rough proxy for income. In Humbermede, a small portion of individuals, less than 10%, live in social housing (Statistics Canada, 2011a-c). The remainder of the population is divided between rent-based apartment units and detached or semi-detached dwellings, with apartments being a more

common residence type than houses (Statistics Canada, 2011a-c). Given that I was, in theory, likely to find low-income persons residing in social housing, low-to-moderate income individuals living in apartments, and moderate-to-high income earners dwelling in houses, I felt that I could obtain a sample that generally reflected Humbermede's socioeconomic profile by recruiting neighbourhood residents from each of these dwelling types.

I began by approaching Humbermede residents who lived in private houses and Toronto Community Housing units[18]. Because door-to-door visits offered an easy way of making initial contact with a large number of people in a timely fashion, I employed this strategy to solicit prospective participants from these two targeted groups. I chose six streets[19] in the neighbourhood to serve as the focus of my recruitment efforts. This selection was purposeful: I wanted to recruit from streets that were residential, contained the desired dwelling types, and were somewhat spatially dispersed, yet not significantly so, as my aim was to obtain a sample of residents from across the Humbermede neighbourhood but not one in which the choice sets of my prospective participants would be obviously different.

Over the course of two weekends in both July and October 2013, I implemented my door-to-door recruiting strategy. At each dwelling[20] on my chosen streets, I attempted to make contact with an adult familiar with his or her household's grocery shopping to explain the nature of my study, to inform him or her of the benefits of participation, to discuss eligibility, and to leave my contact information so that an interview could be scheduled. If an adult was not available or was

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[18] The Toronto Community Housing units in Humbermede take the form of row houses rather than apartments. As such, door-to-door recruiting was possible.

[19] The streets I selected were Ardwick Boulevard, Brubeck Road, Faulkner Crescent, Franson Crescent, Ironwood Road, and Storer Drive.

[20] The exception to this method was Ardwick Boulevard, the street where the social housing units were located. Here, I only recruited door-to-door at these particular units, rather than also visiting the private houses.

not at home, I left a flyer [Appendix A] detailing the aforementioned information at the front door or mailbox.

I instructed individuals to contact me via telephone or email if they were interested in scheduling an interview. Because I also intended to speak with apartment residents, I wanted to limit the number of interviews I arranged at this stage to about 2-3 with social housing dwellers and 12-14 with persons who lived in houses. This would allow my overall sample of 30 to be reflective of the residential composition of Humbermede.

I had more people contact me regarding interviews after these rounds of recruiting than I required for this project. I dealt with this surplus by implementing the screening criteria that I designed to confirm the eligibility of those who were interested in taking part in this study. I first asked prospective participants if they were over 18 years of age. I assumed that adults were more likely to have a greater knowledge of, and reflective opinions about, their local food retail environment than were minors. Moreover, I expected that adults would be in a better position than young people to speak about food access perceptions, their household grocery shopping patterns, their food preferences, and their personal circumstances. Provided that individuals met this age requirement, I confirmed their status as a Humbermede resident by asking if they lived on one of the streets on which I had recruited. I then asked prospective participants if they were familiar with their household's grocery shopping routine. Having such knowledge was necessary in order to thoughtfully respond the questions I intended to pose. If this was also answered affirmatively, I asked individuals to state their ethnic or cultural background. I included this as a question because I was interested in exploring the role that ethnic identity and food preferences might play in influencing food retail environment perceptions. I could not investigate this if I scheduled interviews with members of only one ethnic group; a diverse sample of Humbermede

residents that reflected the multicultural character of the neighbourhood was required. I also asked prospective participants to state the form of dwelling that they resided in, as I did have a targeted number of interviews that I wished to conduct for each residence type. At this stage of the screening process, I agreed to schedule interviews with people whose ethnic identifications and forms of dwelling were not yet sufficiently represented in this study; I sought permission to wait-list those persons associated with an over-represented ethnic group or dwelling type, keeping their contact information on file and returning to it in the event of cancelled interviews.

These screening procedures were useful for two reasons. They ensured that the sample I obtained had the demographic attributes needed to effectively address the research questions and objectives of this study. Moreover, the acts of screening and wait-listing offered a sound strategy to deal with the issue of surplus volunteers and to anticipate the problem of cancelled interviews. Five residents of houses who had been screened and had arranged, or were in the process of setting up, an interview with me ultimately cancelled. While this had the unavoidable effect of creating delays in the process of arranging interviews, the fact that I had the contact information of additional prospective participants on file meant that I did not have to do supplementary door-to-door recruiting when a cancellation occurred.

Drawing on the wait-list provided an expeditious way to finish scheduling my targeted number of interviews with residents of private houses and Toronto Community Housing units. There was, however, a limitation to this method. Wait-listed persons were often, but not always, individuals of European origins who spoke English most frequently at home. The higher level of interest from this group rather than others likely stemmed from my own positionality as a white, English-speaking researcher of European descent. Those who shared these linguistic and cultural attributes with me, as opposed to those who did not, may have been more comfortable with the

idea of being interviewed, confident that communication would not be a barrier and at ease with the prospect of speaking with someone with whom they may personally identify. I was conscious of this, and when drawing on the wait-list, I prioritized the inclusion of members of under-represented groups in my study to the fullest extent possible. Despite this, as I outline in the next subsection, the sample I obtained from houses was slightly more European and English-speaking than would have been ideal. This was somewhat unavoidable. My positionality made recruiting individuals of particular groups, such as those with a limited knowledge of English, a challenge; I did not have the financial resources to hire translators or a team of diverse research assistants; and temporal constraints placed a limit on the amount of time I could spend making door-to-door visits. It would be useful to afford attention to these issues should this research be repeated again elsewhere. Nonetheless, these limitations did not substantially hinder my ability to satisfy my objectives in this study.

Only after I had recruited and scheduled interviews with residents of private houses and social housing units did I shift my focus to contacting apartment dwellers. This was deliberate. As apartments are secured facilities that prohibit entry to uninvited outsiders, I had hoped that some of those whom I interviewed from houses would be able to put me in touch with acquaintances in these buildings. Only one participant knew of anyone who lived in apartments in Humbermede. She arranged for two individuals to contact me regarding an interview. They did so, and after verifying their eligibility using my aforementioned screening criteria, I scheduled interviews with these residents. Because I was aware that social network biases could skew my findings if I persisted in using a snowball sampling strategy to recruit the entirety of the apartment portion of my sample (Valentine, 2005), I did not ask these interviewees to invite their friends or relatives from local buildings to take part in this study. Instead, I requested their

assistance in placing copies of the flyer that I had used in my door-to-door recruiting efforts in the mailrooms of their apartments. They did so, and this method yielded me with one additional participant.

I still, however, required a much larger sample of apartment residents. In late October 2013, I began using an intercept method to recruit individuals who lived in apartment buildings located along Finch Avenue and Weston Road. I chose this method as it allowed me to make contact with a large number of apartment residents over a short time period. Over several days, I visited the grounds of four apartments at times when I expected people to be entering or exiting the buildings, including the lunch hour and the late afternoon. I approached passersby, inquiring if they were residents of the apartments I was near. If they indeed were, and had a moment of free time, I indulged these individuals in a brief conversation, explaining the nature of my study, discussing the benefits of participation, detailing eligibility requirements, and offering a copy of my flyer containing the contact information that was needed to schedule an interview.

This recruitment strategy proved generally successful, as I received a high volume of telephone and email responses to my efforts. I again screened those who contacted me using the criteria listed earlier. I scheduled interviews with those who identified as belonging to groups not adequately represented in the study, while wait-listing the others. Additionally, I asked those whom I had arranged an interview with to assist in placing copies of my recruitment flyer in their mailrooms. This assistance resulted in a few additional interviews being arranged.

At this point, I faced setbacks that prolonged the fieldwork process. Some prospective participants rescheduled their interviews on multiple occasions. I did my best to remain flexible and accommodate individuals' wishes. I realized that people lead busy lives and that sitting for an interview is a substantial time commitment. I also feared losing the opportunity to hear

important perspectives, especially those of people who belonged to groups that were not yet well-represented in my sample. After one or more attempts at rescheduling, most interviews went ahead. Other prospective participants did, however, ultimately withdraw from the study despite my efforts at making schedule accommodations. To compound the issue, several persons on the wait-list were no longer interested in being interviewed, as some time had passed, while others were members of groups that already had high levels of representation in my sample.

Accordingly, I undertook a second round of apartment recruiting in January 2014 at four additional buildings in Humbermede. I again used intercept methods to speak with prospective participants. I also asked those whom I encountered, even if they were not interested in being interviewed, to leave copies of my flyer in the mailrooms of their apartments. These efforts saw five additional individuals enrol in the study, allowing me to reach my target of 30 interviews. The characteristics of the sample that I obtained are outlined in the following subsection.

3.3.3 – Profile of Research Participants

The recruitment and screening methods I employed were generally successful in yielding a sample of participants that was illustrative of the social, economic, and cultural diversity of the Humbermede neighbourhood [Appendix B].

Of the 30 individuals whom I interviewed, 21 were female and 9 were male. The fact that it was mostly women who agreed to participate in interviews on food access and the food retail environment is not surprising, given that a gendered division of labour exists in North American society which often sees women perform household tasks like grocery shopping (GfK Roper Consulting, 2012).

Participants ranged in age from 21 to 81. The median age of the sample was 36.5, which precisely mirrored the age statistics for the neighbourhood as a whole (Statistics Canada, 2011a-

c). Individuals aged 65 or older comprised 10% of the sample; this figure was slightly below the share of seniors that constitute the Humbermede population, 12.6% (Statistics Canada, 2011a-c).

Thirteen countries of origin were represented within the sample. Twelve individuals were born in Canada; this proportion, 40%, was slightly higher than the figure for the neighbourhood as a whole, 36.3% (Statistics Canada, 2011a-c). Eighteen participants were immigrants. Two people originated from each of the following countries: India, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, Nigeria, and the Philippines. Burundi, the Dominican Republic, Holland, Kenya, Trinidad, and the United States were each represented by one participant. The sample thus consisted of individuals from South and East Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, and North America.

The eighteen immigrants who comprised this sample had spent, on average, 22.4 years in Canada; however, this figure ranged markedly from 2 to 62 years. Only three persons, or 10% of the sample, were recent immigrants, having settled in Canada within the last five years. This is reflective of the neighbourhood in general; 11.9% of the total Humbermede population are recent immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2011d-f).

Twenty-one ethnic identifications[21] were self-reported by the 30 participants. Eight of the top ten ethnic groups in the neighbourhood were represented in the sample; the two ethnic origins without self-identifying members were Pakistani and English. There was a slight under-representation of Indians and an over-representation of Africans in the group of thirty. This may have been a consequence of my sampling procedures; perhaps fewer Indian and more African persons lived on the streets I had recruited on. Regardless, this was not a significant limitation, as the sample, overall, was highly reflective of the cultural diversity of the Humbermede area.

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[21] Participants self-identified as the following: African (4 persons), African-American (1), Asian (1), Caucasian (1), Canadian (3), Canadian-Italian (1), Chinese (1), Filipino (2), French-Canadian (1), Indian (2), Italian (2), Italian-Canadian (1), Jamaican (1), Jamaican-Canadian (1), Latino (1), Mexican (1), Portuguese (1), Scottish (1), Spanish (2), West Indian/Caribbean (1), and White Canadian (1).

All participants had at least some knowledge of English. Twenty-three people, or 76.7% of the sample, spoke this language most often[22] at home. This figure was significantly higher than the share of frequent English speakers amongst the Humbermede population as a whole, 50.1% (Statistics Canada, 2011a-c). The overrepresentation of regular English speakers in this study was a consequence of my positionality and the recruitment methods I employed. As a researcher, I possessed knowledge of only English. Accordingly, this was the language I used when recruiting door-to-door, when intercepting individuals at apartment buildings, and when creating my flyers. I was turned away by several people who could not or did not wish to communicate with me due to their lack of proficiency or comfort with English. Unfortunately, it was not practical to address this issue during the recruitment process. Humbermede is diverse in linguistic terms: over 73 languages are spoken regularly at home by those who are not frequent English speakers (Statistics Canada, 2011a-c). I did not have the resources to hire translators who were skilled in these languages, nor did I have any way of anticipating what language one would speak when I approached him or her, or offered one a flyer. As such, the obtainment of a predominantly English-speaking sample was unavoidable given the circumstances. This was not, however, a detriment to my research. The fact that the individuals with whom I spoke reflected many of the other demographic characteristics of Humbermede indicates that the sample I secured for this study was still illustrative of the neighbourhood.

In terms of socioeconomic indicators, sixteen individuals stated that they were employed on either a full- or part-time basis. Five people self-identified as homemakers; four said they were unemployed; two were students; and three were retired. The employment rate of the sample, 53.3%, closely reflected that of the neighbourhood as a whole, 53.8% (Statistics Canada, 2011d-f). The distribution of annual household incomes, before tax, of my 30 participants was as

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[22] Other languages spoken most frequently at home included: Hindi, Italian, Punjabi, Spanish, Swahili, and Tagalog.

follows: $19,999 or less, 1 person; $20,000 to $39,999, 10 people; $40,000 to $59,999, 9 people; $60,000 to $79,999, 4 people; $80,000 or more, 6 people. There was a slight over-representation of individuals in the second and third income categories and an under-representation in the first, fourth, and fifth brackets when the sample was compared to Humbermede as a whole.

Twenty-two participants reported having access to a car, while eight did not. Of those households that enjoyed vehicle access, the mean number of cars was 1.6. The share of households without access to a car in the sample, 26.7%, was comparable to, if slightly less than, the proportion of Humbermede residents who utilize public transportation to commute to work, 31.5% (Statistics Canada, 2011d-f).

Participants had lived in Humbermede for an average of 12.7 years, though this figure ranged widely from 3 months to 51 years. Thirteen people resided in detached or semi-detached houses. Three participants lived in social housing units. Fourteen individuals took up residence in apartments. The difficulties I encountered in recruiting persons from apartment buildings meant that residents of this dwelling type were slightly under-represented in this study. Nonetheless, the diversity of residence types in Humbermede was reflected in illustrative terms in this sample.

3.3.4 – Interview Procedures

I arranged for interviews to take place at locations that maximized the comfort of my participants without jeopardizing my safety (Longhurst, 2010). Most individuals, in particular those who were middle-aged and older, requested that interviews take place in their homes or apartments. I was happy to oblige; the ongoing contact I had with these participants through door-to-door or intercept recruiting and telephone calls did not cause me to fear for my safety. Nonetheless, I was sure to leave a friend or family member the information of my destination

and a number where I could be reached as a precaution. At-home interviews often proceeded in a conversational and informal fashion. Being in the comfort of their own homes seemingly allowed participants to feel relaxed and enabled them to speak freely without worry of their comments being overheard. This yielded rich insights and, at times, controversial statements, an issue that I address below.

The remaining interviews were conducted in coffee shops, restaurants, parks, or at York University. These sites were preferred by participants, most often young women, who likely felt uneasy with the idea of inviting a male stranger into their homes. I was mindful of the fact that interviews held in public places or institutional settings such as the university risked appearing overly official to participants (Valentine, 2005). I was concerned that this would limit people's willingness to share their thoughts, feelings, and details about their lives with me (Valentine, 2005). I tried to mitigate this potential issue by beginning interviews with friendly small-talk in order to build rapport and make individuals feel at ease. This strategy was ultimately successful; a sense of formality seemed to dissipate as interviews progressed, with participants becoming increasingly open in the accounts they offered.

Before I began each interview, I read participants a Declaration of Informed Consent [Appendix C] and obtained their agreement to proceed. I also asked individuals if they were willing to have their interview audio-recorded; all participants agreed. Recording allowed me to remain focused on the interaction, kept matters conversational, and ensured that key comments, details, and changes in tone were not missed (Longhurst, 2010; Valentine, 2005). I did, however, also take written notes during each interview, documenting comments that I wanted to return to for further detail or clarification, ideas for follow-up questions, themes that were emerging, and

non-verbal data such as gestures, sarcasm, and body language, which added context to the statements I captured on audio-tape (Dunn, 2000).

I went into each interview with a guide containing the major questions I wanted to ask [Appendix D]; however, I allowed each interview to flow and to maintain its spontaneity, changing the order in which I asked questions based on the direction that the conversation was heading (Valentine, 2005). I used prompts to prevent lingering silences, and probes for clarification or to solicit additional detail. I exercised discretion in handling situations where the conversation began to veer off-topic. In instances where rants or stories, which at first appeared unrelated, offered the potential to shed light on an issue of interest to the project, I allowed participants to continue without interruption.

A particular challenge I encountered was the matter of handling offensive views. Several participants made prejudicial remarks, while others used derogatory or explicit language. It was personally difficult to hear some of the comments made and to avoid interjecting; I did not wish to legitimize participants' views through collusion (Valentine, 2005). I felt, however, that it was necessary to expose these perspectives so as not to downplay the existence of discriminatory attitudes within the 'multicultural' Humbermede neighbourhood. I also believed that without enabling participants to freely voice their thoughts on issues of race, immigration, and ethnic businesses, I would not have developed a thorough understanding of the factors affecting their perceptions of the local shopping environment, one which was served by ethnic retailers.

My positionality as both a white person of European descent and a stranger working in a professional capacity with a university affiliation likely functioned both to elicit and to conceal the prejudices of my participants. Insensitive comments that referenced persons of colour were most frequently made by individuals of white, European origins. Perhaps these participants felt

safe in sharing their views with me, as it was evident physically that I did not belong to the groups of which they spoke ill or critically. They may also have felt that they had a sympathetic ear in me, in that I would understand their perspectives due to our shared positionalities. Regardless of the precise reason, my identity as a white researcher did appear to create a safe space for some participants to voice their prejudices. It must be said, however, that I also came to the interview encounter as a stranger affiliated with York University, conducting rather professional work. Some of those whom I interviewed likely saw me in this light, and took care to present their best selves to me. That the interview process was impacted by social desirability bias (Spector, 2004) was evident when one person mentioned, post-interview, that although she holds hostile attitudes towards a particular group, she made a conscious effort in our session to not appear as discriminatory. This desire to avoid portraying oneself in a negative light on account of my role as a researcher and stranger likely hid from my view the full extent of prejudicial attitudes held by some if not all of my participants. I am thus aware that the identities I embodied in the interview process impacted the comfort level of my participants and their willingness to share their perspectives with me.

On this note of participant expressiveness, the 30 interviews that I conducted ranged in length from 25 to 114 minutes. The mean duration was 66 minutes. Upon the conclusion of each interview, I asked participants to complete a demographic questionnaire and issued them a $25 gift card to an establishment of their choice selected from a list as a gesture of appreciation for their participation.

3.4 – Data Analysis Methods

Interviews were transcribed verbatim. I performed 14 of the transcriptions myself over a period of three months; I hired a professional transcriptionist to complete the remainder in order

to expedite the process and to prevent further delays stemming from my limited experience with this kind of work. After each transcript was completed, I verified its accuracy by listening to the audio recordings and making corrections when necessary.

I began my analysis of the transcribed material by creating detailed summaries of each interview. To aid in comparing the responses of participants to the questions I asked, I identically formatted each summary using topical headings derived from my interview guide. As I read the transcripts to prepare these summaries, I simultaneously compiled a master list of potential codes in a Microsoft Word document that referred to themes that emerged in the interviews and other issues of relevance to my research objectives. Once I had read all of the transcripts, I returned to this codebook, removing repeated codes and consolidating overlapping themes.

I used the revised and condensed codebook to create a series of spreadsheets in Microsoft Excel, each spreadsheet representing a topic addressed in the interviews. I inserted codes from the master list that pertained to this theme as column headings; I labelled rows with participant identification numbers. I then performed an initial round of coding by entering data from each summary into these Excel tables under codes that corresponded to the content of the interview.

Preliminary coding using the summaries and Excel spreadsheets offered two advantages. First, it enabled me to work with a manageable amount of material. The interview transcripts totalled over eight hundred pages of text. It would have been difficult to keep track of and compare the views of participants on particular issues if the data were not initially consolidated. Second, the use of Excel facilitated a visual analysis of the interview material. With each spreadsheet containing information on a certain topic from all thirty interviews, I was able to easily group and colour-code common perspectives and to see patterns or the relative significance of particular themes. It would have been difficult to make these discoveries in a

prompt fashion if the first step in my analysis was to code and compare full-length transcripts. While I had considered using a qualitative software package like Dedoose at this stage in my analysis, I ultimately decided against it; such a program would not have aided in consolidating my data or creating summaries, nor would it have offered the same display of summarized information that had made Excel such a useful data organization tool.

Once I had completed my preliminary analysis with the assistance of Excel, I returned to the interview transcripts. I performed a second round of coding, this time of the transcripts, to gather participant statements related to what had emerged as the most salient themes in the interview material. I again did this without the assistance of qualitative data analysis software, as I felt that manual methods of excerpt creation offered two advantages: an opportunity to perform a close re-reading of the transcripts, which would aid in further enhancing my familiarity with the data; and the ability to note the context in which statements were made when extracting quotes, a task that is often difficult when the automated methods of software packages are relied upon (Butler, 2001). Accordingly, I proceeded by reading each interview transcript, creating excerpts of text that addressed the themes that surfaced in my earlier analysis. I placed these quotations into a series of Word documents that were labelled with specific themes. I used these quotes to reflect upon the nuances and diversity of perspectives that participants offered on particular issues. Regardless of whether or not a particular excerpt made its way into my written analysis, all comments offered by my participants informed my thinking surrounding the issues that I raise in Chapters 4 and 5.

4. Beyond 'Deserts' and 'Oases':
Reconceptualising the Humbermede Food Retail Environment

Existing studies of food deserts often utilize Geographic Information Systems to identify areas that are poorly served by grocery retailers (e.g. Martin Prosperity Institute, 2010). In these investigations, 'access' is understood primarily as an issue of spatial proximity to stores selling food. As I noted in Chapter 2, however, tendencies to use inconsistent distance or time thresholds coupled with a lack of consensus concerning the types of retailers that should be considered in analyses result in divergent conclusions being drawn about the state of food retail environments in particular locales. This outcome has occurred in Humbermede, Toronto, labelled as both a food desert, due to an absence of mainstream supermarkets (Milway et al., 2010), and a food oasis, on account of the presence of ethnic grocery retailers (Nasr et al., 2011).

This contradiction serves as the starting point for the following discussion. In this chapter, I explore how residents of Humbermede themselves view their neighbourhood's level of grocery provision, and I explicate the factors that influence their perceptions of the local food retail environment. I begin by revealing that, in a neighbourhood such as Humbermede, multiple and divergent meanings can be ascribed to the same retail landscape; while some of those whom I spoke with felt that their area was adequately served by supermarkets, others perceived Humbermede as having an insufficient number of grocery stores or, in some instances, no food retailers at all. I suggest that these perceptions of the Humbermede shopping environment may be shaped by: (a) identity-related factors, including one's food preferences, ethnic identification, language, and attitudes towards difference; and/or (b) one's life circumstances, which includes one's purchasing power, personal mobility, and location or length of residence. I ultimately show that while the presence of and one's proximity to stores can matter to how a food retail landscape

like Humbermede is viewed, there are other socio-cultural, spatiotemporal, and economic aspects to 'food access' that must also not be ignored.

4.1 – Enough, Not Enough, None: Three Views of Food Retail Provision in Humbermede

As representations of our physical surroundings in a readable format (Harley, 1988), maps are useful tools to orient individuals in space. I began each of my interviews by showing and discussing with participants a street map of the area I referred to as 'Humbermede'. I then posed a series of questions to interviewees, asking them if they felt that this neighbourhood[23] had enough grocery retailers to meet their needs, if these stores were easy to access, and if changes in the level of service by food retailers have occurred over time.[24] Later in my interviews, I asked participants about specific grocery retailers located in the area depicted on my map, inquiring as to whom these stores served, how interviewees liked them, and whether or not they satisfied their food acquisition needs. Responses to these sets of questions inform my analysis in this chapter.

Participants offered three distinct perspectives concerning the extent to which Humbermede was presently served by grocery stores. Ten of thirty interviewees (33.3%) felt that food retailers serviced the neighbourhood well. Comments such as "there's enough stores around here that I can have everything" (P1), "there's a lot" (P14), and "I'm fine with the way it is right now" (P17) were made by participants in this group. Thirteen people (43.3%) viewed Humbermede as having an inadequate number of acceptable grocery stores. Sentiments like "for me, there is not enough" (P22), "for my specific family, it didn't meet our needs" (P8), and

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[23] I was aware that residents' prior delineations of 'neighbourhood' might not correspond to the boundaries drawn by the city. As such, I took care to note to my participants that any time I used the term 'neighbourhood', I was referring to the area depicted on my map of Humbermede; I asked interviewees to do the same.

[24] I took precautions to ensure that responses to these questions were not distorted by a lack of map literacy. While most participants easily located their dwellings on the map and spoke with knowledge and confidence about the area shown on the paper, a small number did not. I helped these individuals orient themselves spatially, highlighting major streets and noting the sites of their residences. This appeared to increase participant comfort and map literacy. Only two out of thirty participants ultimately erred in discussing features of the retail landscape depicted on the map. I took this into account in analyzing their perceptions of the grocery shopping environment in Humbermede.

"these [stores] are meeting only maximum ten percent of [my] requirement" (P23) were expressed by individuals in this perception category. Finally, seven participants (23.3%) took their displeasure with the Humbermede food retail environment a step further, suggesting that the area was totally devoid of grocery stores. Statements such as "on Finch [Avenue], we have nothing" (P10), "there's no place to shop here" (P5), and "[there are] no grocery stores around here" (P12) were articulated by interviewees in this group. These divergent sets of perspectives illustrate that multiple and contradictory meanings may be attached to the grocery shopping environment in Humbermede by those who live here.

What might account for these views? To begin to address this question, it is useful to first consider the general demographic characteristics of the participants who fell into each perception category. As I show in Table 1, interviewees who felt that Humbermede had enough grocery stores tended to be middle-aged and had lived in the neighbourhood for a moderate length of time, about 10.6 years on average. They took up residence exclusively in the northern part of Humbermede, near Finch Avenue. Nearly all lived in a household with access to a vehicle; cars were the main mode of travel to grocery stores; and slightly more than half of the individuals in this group adhered to a budget for their food shopping. Participants in this perception category consumed culturally-relevant foods regularly. They tended to identify as having Caribbean, Latin American, or European origins, and only 60% spoke English most frequently at home.

Individuals who saw Humbermede as not having enough grocery retailers were generally younger than those who perceived service by stores in the area as sufficient. They had also lived in the neighbourhood for a much shorter period of time, approximately 5.4 years on average. Their location of residence was mixed; slightly more than half lived in the northern part of Humbermede, while the rest dwelled near Weston Road, south of the Humber River and Emery

	General Perception of the Humbermede Food Retail Environment		
	Enough Stores	*Not Enough Stores*	*No Stores*
Number of Participants	10	13	7
Average Age	39.5 years (Range: 32-57 years)	31.6 years (Range: 21-48 years)	64.6 years (Range: 58-81 years)
Average Length of Residence	10.6 years (Range: 1-42 years)	5.4 years (Range: 0.25-26 years)	29.4 years (Range: 7-51 years)
Location in Neighbourhood	100.0% northern 0.0% southern	61.5% northern 38.5% southern	14.3% northern 85.7% southern
Type of Dwelling	50.0% house 50.0% apartment 0.0% social housing	23.1% house 53.8% apartment 23.1% social housing	71.4% house 28.6% apartment 0.0% social housing
Average Annual Household Income	Approx. $55,000	Approx. $50,000	Approx. $53,000
Average Household Size	4.4 persons	3.9 persons	2.1 persons
% Adhering to a Budget When Grocery Shopping	60.0%	76.9%	57.1%
% with Household Vehicle Access	90.0%	61.5%	71.4%
Mode of Transportation to Grocery Stores	70.0% car 20.0% bus, taxi, or a ride 10.0% walking	38.5% car 53.8% bus, taxi, or a ride 7.7% walking	71.4% car 28.6% bus, taxi, or a ride 0.0% walking
% Immigrants	70.0%	61.5%	42.9%
Immigrants as a % of Total Surveyed Foreign-Born	38.9%	44.4%	16.7%
Average Number of Years in Canada (Immigrants Only)	20.4 years	12.3 years	54.0 years
% Consuming Traditional Cultural Foods at Least 1x/Week	90.0%	92.3%	85.7%
Self-Reported Ethnic Identities **(As a Share of Total Self-Identifying Participants)**	Caucasian (1/1) Indian (1/1) Italian (1/2) Italian-Canadian (1/1) Jamaican (1/1) Jamaican-Canadian (1/1) Latino (1/1) Spanish (2/2) West Indian-Caribbean (1/1)	African (4/4) African-American (1/1) Asian (1/1) Canadian (1/3) Canadian-Italian (1/1) Chinese (1/1) Filipino (2/2) Indian (1/2) White Canadian (1/1)	Canadian (2/3) French-Canadian (1/1) Italian (1/1) Mexican (1/1) Portuguese (1/1) Scottish (1/1)
% Speaking English Most Often at Home	60.0%	76.9%	100.0%

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of participants by food retail environment perception category.

Creek. Compared to those in the 'enough stores' perception category, those who felt that there was an insufficient number of food retailers in Humbermede had a lower degree of household vehicle access; were more likely to rely on buses, taxis, or friends and family to travel to grocery stores; and were more apt to stick to a budget while shopping. Though culturally-relevant foods were also eaten at least once per week by nearly all participants in this group, ethnic identifications differed; most were African, Canadian, or East or South Asian. A greater share of individuals in this category spoke English at home, 76.9%.

Participants who felt that Humbermede was devoid of grocery retailers possessed several attributes that distinguished them, on the whole, from persons in the other perception categories. Individuals in this group were generally much older and had lived in the Humbermede area for a considerable length of time, about 29.4 years on average. This figure was nearly three times the length of residence reported by 'enough stores' respondents, and over five times the duration of stay of those who believed there were too few retailers in the area. All participants who said that Humbermede had no stores lived in the southern portion of the neighbourhood. Their level of vehicle access was intermediate; cars were predominantly used to travel to the grocery store; and these persons were the least likely of all to adhere to a budget while grocery shopping. Culturally-relevant food consumption was fairly high, and participants generally identified as having Canadian or one of several European origins. Use of the English language was highest in this particular group compared to the others; all of those who believed grocery stores to be absent in Humbermede spoke English most often at home.

This discussion of demographic attributes begins to allude to the possibility that resident-held perceptions of the Humbermede food retail environment may have critical socio-cultural, spatiotemporal, and economic dimensions, but explanatory questions remain. Why did long-time

residents of the southern portion of the neighbourhood, for instance, tend to regard the area as having no grocery stores? Why did participants who were Spanish or Latino perceive the food retail environment in positive terms while Africans viewed it with disappointment? Why did persons without a vehicle who followed budgets while shopping disproportionately constitute the group of residents who felt that there were too few stores in Humbermede? In the following section, I address these and other questions by expounding two sets of factors that influenced perceptions of the Humbermede grocery shopping landscape.

4.2 – Factors Affecting Perceptions of the Humbermede Food Retail Environment

The local food retail environment assessments of the thirty individuals I interviewed were shaped by factors relating to identity and/or life circumstances.

4.2.1 – Identity-Related Factors

How Humbermede residents defined themselves and others in socio-cultural terms had a significant impact on how they viewed their local grocery shopping landscape. Many participants engaged in 'place likening' (Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007), evaluating neighbourhood stores or geographic locations for their congruence with facets of their own identities. When individuals identified sites or shopping venues to be compatible with their self-understandings as purchasers and consumers of food, they were often inclined to perceive of the local food retail environment in positive terms; when individuals judged incompatibilities to exist, negative views of the shopping landscape frequently emerged. Four identity-related factors – food preferences, ethnic identification, language, and personal attitudes towards difference – emerged as key influences on the food retail environment perceptions of my interviewees. Though linked by their common tendency to inform how people saw themselves, others, and, by extension, the local shopping

64

landscape, I treat these factors individually in the next four subsections as they assumed varying degrees of importance to my participants.

4.2.1.1 – Food Preferences

The ability to purchase and to consume traditional, culturally-relevant foods was afforded personal significance by twenty-six of the thirty individuals (86.7%) I interviewed. Cooking and eating familiar foods served several functions for my participants. For some, it allowed for the maintenance of connections to the past, to one's family, and to lost loved ones. Anthony (P1), who identified as Italian-Canadian, spoke with recipe-like detail about preparing breaded veal, a traditional Italian dish; his enthusiastic account involved warm recollections of his late mother's cooking, as this was her specialty, and family meals with his older brother, who worked outside of the province:

> *The Italian dishes. The, uh, breaded veal. [...] The sottofiletto. [...] You tenderize it by slamming it with the little hammer [...] and then you put it in your egg mixture, and your parsleys and everything, and you put in your breadcrumbs, and you fry them up. [...] In the mean time, you'd make a nice sauce. [...] You pour it over. You've seen it before. And you know, if you want, you can put your cheese in the centre for display and stuff, and you put them into the oven. Not too long, because they've been fried, but just enough to melt the cheese over it, and, you know, for ten minutes, and it comes out. Now, when you're doing that, usually 'cause you have your sauce, you have your fresh fettuccini noodles, that I haven't gone to the degree to make, but my mother used to make them herself fresh all the time, right? [...] She used to feed an army. [...] My brother, he's been working [in Alberta] six, seven years now – when my mom knew that he would be coming, she would make this. (P1)*

Other interviewees, especially those who had recently settled in Canada, expressed that eating traditional foods invoked fond memories of their homelands and induced feelings of comfort in the sometimes-difficult context of adjusting to life in a new country. Marissa (P24), a recent immigrant, explained how shopping for these items brought to mind pleasant recollections of life back in Nigeria:

Most of the groceries I do is more, like, African foods and stuff. [...] You know, I've been here for just, what, like three years so I'm still used to my African diet, right? [...] I feel more comfortable eating what I am used to. [...] I go to, like, an African store to get it. [...] Like, the fact that you actually go into an African store where you're going to see things that probably remind you from back home, it's a good feeling. [...] It just brings back memories, like, from back home. I'm like, oh, wow. (P24)

Finally, the preparation and consumption of traditional dishes provided a key avenue of cultural expression for several participants, enabling them to maintain and to realize their ethnic identities. Afia (P28) stressed how eating the foods she grew up with was, for her, an act infused with deep meaning, as this practice allowed her to retain elements of her Burundian culture and identity that she did not wish to relinquish upon her move to Canada:

I've been here in Canada for, like, six years. [...] My mom is still cooking traditional food and all that stuff. [...] We grew up into it, relating to those kind of stuff. [...] It means a lot. I feel like I'm back home, and I'm not losing my sense of culture, like I still... Yeah. Like I'm still – how would I say? Like, not losing my identity. (P28)

These accounts suggest that food acquisition, preparation, and consumption are not value-free, mundane acts simply necessary to sustain one's life, but rather are reflective processes that may be invested with socio-cultural significance. As the stories of Anthony (P1), Marissa (P24), and Afia (P28) begin to make clear, many Humbermede residents did not wish to procure and consume just any food; they wished to buy and eat their preferred food.

For twenty-three (76.7%) participants, personal views of the local food retail landscape were influenced at least partially by their food preferences. A distinct form of 'place likening' appears to have operated in the minds of these individuals (Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007). This group of interviewees assessed the Humbermede shopping environment for its availability of the food items – often traditional or culturally-relevant – that they were looking for. Outcomes of these evaluations informed their perceptions of Humbermede's level of service by grocery stores.

Identifying a 'preference-availability match' – that is, finding one's desired groceries at stores in the area – contributed to the belief that Humbermede had enough food retailers for six of the ten individuals in this perception category. Participants who self-identified as Spanish or Latino reported that they could find with ease their culturally-relevant and preferred foods in the neighbourhood, even at stores affiliated in name with other ethnic groups. Seeing these familiar foods carried locally contributed to these participants' contentment with their grocery shopping environment. Ricardo (P30), a Canadian-born man of Ecuadorian descent, noted that he could buy his spices, plantains, and other South American foods at local Caribbean and Chinese stores:

> *You see more products from different countries. Example, like here at the Chinese store, there's a lot more different things that like normal supermarkets like No Frills wouldn't have or Fortinos or Galati's. You know, there's a Caribbean grocery store here at this plaza here, which is good too. Got a lot of stuff from back home, South America too, like my parents' home. [...] Spices and plantains, the big long ones. [...] Stuff like that. [...] So it's a good diversity. (P30)*

Ricardo's (P30) recognition that his culturally-relevant foods, which he often ate on weekends when he had the time to cook, were available in his neighbourhood contributed to his perception that Humbermede had "more than enough" grocery stores.

Several interviewees specifically praised the new Centra Food Market, which opened in May 2013, for being attentive to the diverse food preferences of the multicultural Humbermede community. Finley's (P20) belief that Humbermede was adequately served by grocery stores partially stemmed from his perception that he could find anything he desired, including his Jamaican foods, at Centra – a store he saw as meeting the needs of the entire neighbourhood:

> *Caribbean products, everything. They cater for everything: white, black, Chinese, whatever. Yeah, that one's good. [...] Everything that I want is there, you know, everything. It's good, I'm telling you. (P20)*

Samir (P9), a recent immigrant from India, also felt Humbermede had enough grocery stores. His view was principally a function of his newfound ability to buy Indian food at Centra. To Samir,

this store has been conscious of the food preferences of Humbermede residents, and has altered its product offerings to meet consumers' needs:

> *Close to that Centra, there are so many Muslim people and the Asian people, they are living there, so by considering those people they are attracting those people to there. [...] So they are changing their menu and that stuff, according to their needs. [...] Particularly in Centra, as I already mentioned before, [...] nowadays they are introducing the Asian stuff, especially for my country, like India, there is a lot of Indian stuffs. [...] It meets my requirement anyhow, so that's why I don't think so, that they need more and more [grocery stores]. (P9)*

Not all Humbermede residents felt that local stores carried their desired grocery items. A 'preference-availability mismatch' was alluded to as a grievance by seventeen participants who held negative perceptions of the Humbermede food retail environment. For twelve of the thirteen individuals who thought that the area had too few grocery stores, assessments were fuelled at least in part by cognitions that their preferred foods were missing or were in short supply, while culturally-unfamiliar products that they did not recognize, eat, or know how to cook with were in abundance.

All four participants who self-identified as African voiced complaints about the shopping environment along these lines. Afia (P28) awarded the local retail landscape a 'five' out of ten in terms of its level of service by grocery stores. She felt that the ingredients she required to make traditional African dishes like fufu were not stocked at local retailers; according to Afia, these stores carried primarily Chinese items with which she never cooked. This mismatch caused Afia to feel isolated and incited her dissatisfaction with the Humbermede food retail environment, one which she felt cared more for Asians than Africans like herself:

> *I'll say like 5 out of 10. Simply because they don't have what I need. [...] It seems like a Chinese community mostly, yeah, so I don't really find, like, a lot of... I'm from Africa, so, like, I'm used to eating, like, African food, so I don't see that. [...] I feel isolated because they don't consider other people. They only see Chinese people. [...] They only have, like, Chinese food. [...] I feel like they don't care about other cultures, like what they eat, what they need. It's just Chinese. [...] It's*

hard. [...] Everyone should feel, like, at home, not discriminated. Everyone should have, like, access to their own food. (P28)

For Rachel (P22) and Marissa (P24), immigrants from Nigeria, and Otis (P27), who was born in Kenya, views that Humbermede had an insufficient number of grocery stores were also linked to an undersupply of culturally-preferred foods. Marissa felt that while the local retail landscape did provide the basic necessities, it ultimately fell short of meeting her needs because the ingredients she required to make African soups were missing:

We have a soup called egusi and it's made from melon seeds, right? Like, you have to dry it, like, really dry it and then grind it. So, like, stuff like that you can't find [here]. (P24)

Rachel had voiced similar complaints, suggesting that it was difficult to find yams and particular types of beans at stores in Humbermede, ingredients that were staples in her kitchen. Finally, the negative perceptions that Otis (P27) had of the Humbermede grocery shopping environment arose partly as a result of his inability to find Kenyan food at stores in the area. As he "[didn't] have anybody from [his] country who has a store" in the neighbourhood (P27), Otis felt that the items he desired to eat were not readily available in Humbermede. This influenced his view that the area was not adequately served by grocery retailers.

To be sure, perceptions of a preference-availability mismatch were not solely reported by participants who identified as African. Camilla (P26), a young woman of Filipino descent who was born in Canada, ate what she described as 'Canadian' food on a frequent basis – things like lunch meat, and pasta with Alfredo sauce. Her personal preference for these foods was a product of her upbringing in this country, she said; it was what her friends ate and was what she learned how to prepare in hospitality class. For Camilla, these Canadian items were difficult to find in the Humbermede area; stores carried predominantly Asian products that she was not interested in

eating. This mismatch led Camilla to believe that her neighbourhood was not adequately served by grocery stores:

> *They wouldn't have, like, most of the Canadian type of foods that I would normally eat. Like, for example, if you're looking for Alfredo sauce, it would be almost impossible to find. [...] It makes it harder. Like, I'm not able to cook all the foods that I know how or I learned to in hospitality class and all that. You know what I mean? It's limited to strictly Asian type foods. So yeah, it's pretty difficult. (P26)*

Rajesh (P23), an Indian-born man, believed that he could only do about twenty to twenty-five percent of his shopping – likely just produce purchasing – at the major ethnic supermarkets in his area, Centra and Long Hui. Many items he desired, such as Indian products or processed foods, were missing or were in short supply, while unfamiliar Chinese groceries were abundant:

> *They are meeting close to twenty to twenty-five percent requirement. Many things, good quality things, they don't carry at all. [...] They should be carrying more processed food. [...] Eighty percent of the things are Chinese there. [...] These guys have a lot of noodles, soya sauce, these kinds of sauces. If you are of Chinese origin, then these stores are like a mini Chinatown kind of thing. But for other guys, only fresh vegetables. (P23)*

Rajesh saw a preference-availability mismatch as a problem at the smaller ethnic grocery stores in Humbermede as well. He believed that he would be able to do little shopping at these venues, too, simply because the products that they offered were not familiar to him in cultural or culinary terms:

> *Like we have West Indian store. If you go there, you end up buying nothing. Maximum you can buy – Wonder Bread. That's it. Other things are just not of your kind. I don't say that quality's not good. [It is] because you don't recognize those things in your menu. (P23)*

The existence of a mismatch between the types of food sold in Humbermede and what Rajesh desired to eat was not new. Having lived in the neighbourhood for ten years, Rajesh knew that a Galati Brothers Supermarket, an Italian grocer, once operated a store in the area. This retailer, too, was unsuitable for him; as he did not eat Italian food, he felt that the products that

70

Galati carried went over his head. Missing the Indian items that constituted a key part of his diet and instead stocking unfamiliar food, Galati was also unable to satisfy Rajesh's shopping needs:

> *Basically I never bought more than bread at that store. Everything was something like coming from moon to me. I didn't feel like it belongs to me. Like pasta, this and that thing. This will go above my head. [...] So I was finding this store total absurd kind of thing. Like most of the shelves you roam around, you will come out without buying anything. (P23)*

Thus, for Rajesh, a longstanding food preference-availability mismatch has served as an ongoing point of grievance with the Humbermede grocery shopping environment. This mismatch has contributed to the creation and maintenance of a perception for this participant – like it has for many others – that the local area was underserved by food retailers.

Perceptions that 'no stores' were to be found in Humbermede were also influenced, for five of the seven people who held this view, by a preference-availability mismatch. This might seem counterintuitive: how could participants perceive neighbourhood stores to be unsuitable shopping venues if they simultaneously claimed that there were not any retailers in the area to begin with? It appears that some interviewees effectively erased from their perceived choice sets local stores that they were, in fact, aware of, when they judged a significant discrepancy to exist between the types of foods they personally desired to eat and the products sold at these retailers. It was not that there were objectively 'no stores' in the local food retail environment; it was that there were, in the eyes of these participants, 'no stores *for them*.'

Two examples illustrate this process of store erasure on account of a food preference-availability mismatch. Isabelle (P10), a 58-year-old Italian woman, was adamant on multiple occasions during her interview that Humbermede was devoid of grocery stores:

> *Look at that area. It has nothing. [...] There's nothing basically here. [...] It's years now, <u>years</u>, that we didn't have a store. [...] There is <u>none</u>. None. And you can tell <u>anybody</u> here. None. [...] Our area has nothing, at all. Literally <u>nothing</u>. (P10)*

Yet, in sharp contrast to her insistent depiction of Humbermede as a vast 'food desert', Isabelle made the following admission:

> *Now we have all these Chinese stores opening up here. Like, ok, one or two you don't mind, but come on! (P10)*

In addition, she professed specific awareness of Centra Food Market and Long Hui Supermarket, the two major ethnic grocery retailers located along Finch Avenue; however, she went on to later say, with reference to this very street:

> *On Sheppard we have nothing. On Finch we have nothing. On Steeles we have nothing. I don't understand that – why our area was... Whoever runs our area is not doing a good job. (P10)*

For Isabelle, the perception that Humbermede had no grocery retailers persisted in spite of the fact that she was indeed aware of evidence to the contrary. She knew of the ethnic supermarkets in the area, yet dismissed and – in the case of her complaint concerning the opening of Chinese stores – derided their existence. These retailers did not 'count' for Isabelle because they did not carry the Italian items she desired and was familiar with as an immigrant from Italy:

> *They don't have the stuff that we're, you know, used to. [...] I'm Italian. I'll stick to Italian food, you know, yeah. (P10)*

A sense that Humbermede had no grocery stores that were culturally-suitable for her, based on her food preferences, shaped Isabelle's perception that no retailers were to be found in the area.

A similar process of store erasure was apparent in my interview with Fanny, a 63-year-old Canadian woman. Like Isabelle, Fanny insisted that Humbermede lacked grocery retailers:

> *We got nothing around here now. [...] There is none. There is nothing here, and that's my biggest beef: no grocery stores around here. (P12)*

Yet, when asked whether there were any stores in the area which she did not shop at, at all, she did not dismiss my question as illogical. Fanny instead stated:

> *None of the, um... the Chinese stores. All of those. I very seldom go to them. (P12)*

For Fanny, the ethnic supermarkets in the neighbourhood, like Long Hui, were not part of her perceived choice set. As someone who, in her words, cooked strictly Canadian dishes – things like burgers, hot dogs, sausages, steaks, chicken, and fish – Fanny had no use for Asian ingredients, what she thought she would find at these stores. She was not familiar with foods from other cultures, and she even suspected that she would not know how to cook Asian dishes:

> *I'm strictly Canadian... stuff. The only way that I would go into one of these if you – if I was... cooking different variety stuff. [...] I'm not into a lot of that stuff. [...] There's nothing there that I would bother taking me up there... 'Cause as I said, the Oriental stuff... I would have to know how to cook it. [...] I probably don't know how. (P12)*

Identifying Asian supermarkets as culturally-unsuitable shopping spaces, Fanny dismissed their presence. With these grocery stores erased from her choice set due to a preference-availability mismatch, Fanny was left to conclude there were no food retailers in Humbermede. There simply were not any stores, she felt, for her.

I must note that evaluations of the availability of 'preferred foods' in the Humbermede retail environment need not be limited to culturally-relevant or traditional items. Preferences may also be motivated by additional identity-related factors like personal or religious beliefs, health concerns, and dietary choices or restrictions. Julian (P3) was conscious of what he ate for social and health reasons. Strongly opposed to the genetic modification [GM] of living organisms for its potential to adversely affect human health, Julian preferred to eat organic foods whenever possible. He attempted to find these at local stores within the Humbermede neighbourhood, but he generally could not. This preference-availability mismatch frustrated Julian, and it was the primary reason why he perceived Humbermede as not having enough grocery stores. There were simply not enough organic options available to him in this area to satisfy his needs as a health-conscious shopper:

I prefer organic goods. I can't get any organic goods around here. [...] [Interviewer: Do you think there are enough supermarkets or grocery stores in your area to meet your needs?] No. Hardly. My needs are a lot more healthy – healthy needs – rather than just what's available there. (P3)

As I have explained in this discussion, the acts of food purchasing and consumption can be afforded deep socio-cultural meaning, and may be critical for the maintenance and expression of one's identity (Bell & Valentine, 1997) – whether as a member of a particular group, as Isabelle (P10) demonstrated with her desire to eat Italian food, or as someone with particular beliefs, attitudes, or values, as Julian (P3) showcased with his opposition to GM foods. When Humbermede shoppers judged, through place likening, a match to exist between their desired food preferences – a facet of their personal identities – and the items available in the neighbourhood, positive views of the retail landscape as having enough stores emerged for some; when shoppers identified the existence of a preference-availability mismatch, many were apt to conceive of the local food retail environment in negative terms, as having an insufficient number of stores or no stores at all. Yet food preferences were only one factor that affected food retail landscape perceptions. Ethnic identification was another.

4.2.1.2 – Ethnic Identification

Grocery shoppers in Humbermede did not only assess the local retail environment in light of their food preferences; many also screened stores for their compatibility with their own ethnic identities. For sixteen (53.3%) participants, a form of place likening that entailed evaluations of the similarity between one's identity and who one thought stores targeted and served influenced, at least partly, their perceptions of the retail landscape.

Many Humbermede shoppers compared their own ethnic identities to the messages they saw communicated through branding. Stores whose names or signage did not explicitly reference a particular ethnic group were seen as enticing by some participants. These retailers conveyed a

74

message, according to these interviewees, that they were inclusive and welcomed everyone.[25]

Speaking favourably about the conversion of the somewhat exclusively-named Oriental Food

Mart to the more neutral-sounding Centra Food Market, Ricardo (P30) said:

> *I mean, because it says, like, Centra. [...] [They've tried] to make it a multicultural name so everyone can see, I'm guessing. [...] A lot of the signage and people have changed. Because like I said, they've stayed away from the "Oriental" now. Now it's more multicultural, I think. I saw a bit of a change. It did work. (P30)*

Feeling like Humbermede had retailers that served the entire population partly contributed to this

participant's perception that the neighbourhood had enough grocery stores.

Negative views of the Humbermede shopping landscape as having an inadequate number

of food retailers sometimes surfaced when participants felt that the names of, or signage at, local

stores expressed a message that they were not 'for them'. All thirteen interviewees in the 'not

enough stores' perception category raised this issue. Christina (P11), a self-described White

Canadian, stated that the branding of Long Hui Supermarket was not attractive to shoppers such

as herself. She wondered whether this store aimed to have an exclusive clientele, one that did not

include people like her:

> *When I see "Long Hui" and the characters, it's not inviting to me, you know? It's like, if you can read what – that might say "Food Mart", it might say... "Vietnamese only", "Vietnamese gro-" – I don't know. But it wouldn't <u>be</u> inviting to me to wanna go in, you know. (P11)*

Similarly, Afia (P28), who identified as African, perceived Long Hui to be a store designed to

serve only Chinese people. To her, its name clearly conveyed who it was for, and who it was not:

> *Yeah, just the name. The name itself, you know. Like if I – a Chinese person drives and needs to shop somewhere and sees the name, they definitely know, "that's my shop", and go straight there. But a person like for me, I'd be like no. Maybe they*

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[25] It is important to note that the names of 'neutral' and 'inclusive' stores, such as Centra Food Market, were written in English, and that all of those whom I interviewed had at least some knowledge of this language. It is possible that those who do not speak English might view these stores in a different way. Unfortunately, for the reasons outlined in Chapter 3, I did not have access to non-English-speaking Humbermede residents. Nonetheless, I outline the potential significance of language as a factor affecting food retail environment perceptions in the following subsection.

have African stuff or different type, but I'll have that perception it's just made for Chinese people. (P28)

Small stores that drew more explicitly on ethnic identity in their branding – retailers with names such as 'Just Caribbean Groceries' – were also cited by some participants as impermeable shopping spaces. Cindy (P15), a Chinese woman, had no desire to visit the Caribbean stores in Humbermede: "I don't have the culture of ever going in there" (P15). She felt that these retailers were only for members of a specific group, one to which she did not belong.

The views of two participants who felt that Humbermede had no food retailers at all were also shaped in part by considerations of ethnic identity. Bob (P25), a French-Canadian, and Isabelle (P10), an Italian, both knew of the ethnic supermarkets in Humbermede, but thought that these stores served people unlike themselves. Bob said that Long Hui was a retailer for "Indian and Japanese, Chinese" people (P25); Isabelle saw it as a store that "must be [for] the Oriental" (P10). Because she felt that Long Hui targeted Asian shoppers and not Italians like herself, Isabelle did not think she would ever purchase groceries there:

> *Because it's Oriental. I mean, I don't think of it – I don't think people like me would, you know, or whoever I'd talk to about it, I don't think they would ever go there. (P10)*

Her remark, "I don't think of it", is telling (P10). The ethnic supermarkets that Isabelle and Bob saw as being for other people were erased from their perceived choice sets, dismissed as potential shopping venues because of an 'ethnic identity mismatch'. Despite their awareness of retailers such as Long Hui, Isabelle and Bob felt that there were no stores in Humbermede, possibly in part because they saw no stores in the area as being 'for them'.

Ethnic identity functioned as an influence on the food retail environment perceptions of Humbermede shoppers in at least one other way. Some participants questioned whether local stores were for them because they observed that the ethnicities of the staff did not correspond to

their own identities. For Afia (P28), one of the African participants cited earlier, encountering only Chinese staff at local ethnic supermarkets compounded feelings of exclusion and cemented beliefs that these stores were not for her. Afia's perception that there was an insufficient number of grocery stores in the area was linked with her desire to have additional local retailers that were welcoming to Africans:

> *The most even sad part is it's only those people – like Chinese cashiers or people selling are also Chinese. So that's even – you feel, like, even more excluded. It's not like different kind of people you see there. [...] [Interviewer: Do you want to see anything changed in your neighbourhood?] Yeah, definitely. African stores... not just African – different kind of different stores for different people. It's not just Chinese. (P28)*

Whether through a shopper's readings of store names and/or signage, or a shopper's assessments of the employees at particular retailers, ethnic identity had an effect on the ways in which the food retail environment in Humbermede was perceived. As the preceding accounts offered by area residents have shown, congruities between this aspect of one's personal identity and the messages conveyed by stores contributed to the production of positive perceptions of the shopping landscape; disparities fuelled the creation of negative views. Another identity-related factor that had an impact on how the Humbermede grocery shopping landscape was evaluated was language.

4.2.1.3 – Language

In addition to assessing the food retail environment in light of whether it was ethnically-welcoming, a number of Humbermede grocery shoppers reflected on the degree to which stores were linguistically appropriate. For twelve (40.0%) participants, outcomes of these evaluations informed, at least to some degree, their perceptions of the local shopping landscape.

Positive views of Humbermede as having enough stores were occasionally informed by perceptions that language barriers did not exist, or were not serious, at local grocery retailers.

77

This enabled participants to feel comfortable while doing their shopping at these venues. Sensing that there were at least some retailers in Humbermede that were 'for them' due to a 'language match' encouraged three interviewees to form perceptions of the food retail environment as having enough stores. Katrina (P18) never saw language barriers as an issue at area retailers:

> *No. I have not encountered any issues. Like, I don't know if I tend to go to people that speak a little English. [...] I always watch every time they're putting it in, so I know what's going on. So I've never had any issue with any language barrier. (P18)*

Accordingly, she was comfortable with the idea of patronizing stores like Long Hui. Seeing these retailers as veritable options for English-speakers like herself, Katrina felt that Humbermede was sufficiently served by supermarkets.

Conversely, when 'language mismatches' were identified – that is, when participants felt like having knowledge of a certain language was a key prerequisite to utilizing and feeling comfortable in a particular shopping space – negative perceptions of Humbermede as having too few or even no grocery stores sometimes followed. While Carol (P5) knew of the ethnic retailers in Humbermede, she asserted that the neighbourhood had no stores at all:

> *There are no stores in my neighbourhood! We just determined that! [Laughs.] That there aren't any good shopping stores. (P5)*

This was at least partly because Carol had erased the ethnic supermarkets and grocery stores in her area as potential shopping venues due to the language barriers that she encountered at these retailers:

> *That's another reason why I don't use the Oriental stores. They use their own languages a lot, and since I don't speak it, I don't go there. I feel, I feel on the outside, and I don't care for that in any [grocery store]. (P5)*

Dismissing the existence of local ethnic grocery retailers due to a language mismatch, Carol perceived there to be no stores in her neighbourhood. It was not that no retailers were objectively

present. She knew this not to be true, as Long Hui was a short walk from her home. It was that no stores were found in the area, in the eyes of Carol, which were linguistically familiar to her.

A similar process of store erasure on account of linguistic differences likely shaped the food retail environment perceptions of Lisa (P6) as well. Like Carol (P5), Lisa knew of the specific grocery stores in Humbermede, yet she suggested that her neighbourhood had no stores at all:

> *There's just nothing. [...] We do not have a grocery store here now at all. [...] There are no stores. (P6)*

Lisa expressed significant frustration with the language barriers she encountered at supermarkets in Humbermede. She complained that the staff at stores like Centra or Long Hui did not speak or understand English:

> *They don't speak English. That's another thing. You ask them something. They don't understand you. They don't understand English, and I don't know why they cannot – they're not taught to, because they're serving the public to speak English. You ask them something and "uh, uh, uh" – they just can't answer you. Not even the ones at the cashier speak good English. (P6)*

Due to perceived linguistic differences between herself and those who worked at area retailers, Lisa felt that the stores found in Humbermede were not suitable venues for her. Discounting them as options, Lisa accordingly thought that her neighbourhood was poorly served by grocery stores.

As the stories of Katrina (P18), Carol (P5), and Lisa (P6) thus begin to make clear, a form of 'place likening' based on language – another aspect of one's personal identity – functioned to influence perceptions of the food shopping environment in Humbermede for some individuals. The identification of linguistic similarities between oneself and store staff enticed and induced comfort in some shoppers, and conveyed to these people that such retailers were suitable shopping venues for them. This contributed to the generation of views that the grocery shopping

landscape in Humbermede was indeed adequate. The encountering of language barriers, on the other hand, between oneself and employees made some shoppers feel like they were out of place or were outsiders in certain establishments. This prompted these stores to be erased from these individuals' perceived choice sets and contributed to the view that Humbermede was underserved or not at all served by grocery retailers.

While I have thus far discussed three aspects of identity rooted in self-understandings – food preferences, ethnic identification, and language – views of 'others' and assumptions about their personal characteristics also emerged in my interviews as having an effect on the food retail environment perceptions of participants.

4.2.1.4 – Attitudes towards Difference

A fourth and final identity-related factor that impacted the ways in which interviewees viewed their local grocery shopping landscape was personal attitudes towards difference. Though the holding of negative sentiments towards 'others' appeared to have a direct impact on overall assessments of the Humbermede food retail environment for only one person (3.3%), prejudicial statements were made by many more participants – at least one-third (33.3%) of those with whom I spoke. This likely had an impact on how certain stores in Humbermede were perceived by these individuals.

Many participants made discriminatory comments about others who lived in the area, shopped at ethnic grocery retailers, or ran these establishments. Hostilities were most commonly directed towards people of Asian or African origin by persons of European or North American descent. Asians were depicted by some as "aggressive" (P7), demanding task-masters (P16), who did "not care [...] about the exterior of their houses" (P5). Blacks were stereotyped for their food choices (P5, P14) or behaviours (P26), and were said by one interviewee to be "overtaking [the]

area" (P16). These sentiments may have been reflections of potential anxieties that participants had with neighbourhood demographic changes. Humbermede has experienced, in the past ten to fifteen years, a shift away from its mostly southern European composition; it is now increasingly comprised of people of colour who have Asian or African ethnic origins (Statistics Canada, 2011d-f). These changes may have incited feelings of discomfort in some Humbermede residents, who may have perceived these developments to be threatening to their established understandings of 'community' or to their imaginaries of a 'white suburbia'.[26]

The tendency of many participants to harbour negative feelings toward people of colour likely had implications for how these individuals saw stores in the local food retail environment. Some interviewees stereotyped ethnic grocery retailers, sharing opinions about their attributes without having previously visited them, or associating their qualities with socially constructed cultural differences and deficiencies. The Asian supermarkets in Humbermede were seen by some to "smell" (P12, P21) or to be "unclean" (P1, P7). For the participants who expressed these views, such attributes were often equated with 'Asianness'. Anthony (P1), an Italian-Canadian who complained about the organization of Long Hui Supermarket, stated:

> *Not that it's <u>dirty</u>, by any means, it's just kinda like <u>Oriental</u> – like everything is clustered in these stores, you know? We're not in Asia. We're here, you know? (P1)*

Similarly, Fernanda (P7), a Mexican woman, associated the decline she perceived in cleanliness at one of the stores near her home with the fact that it was now a Chinese supermarket. To her, being 'Chinese' went hand-in-hand with being 'dirty':

> *Cleanliness is not like before, when it was Galati. Yeah, no. It's a little bit more like Chinese. (P7)*

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[26] It was beyond the scope of my project to explore, in detail, the rationales behind participants' hostile or discriminatory attitudes towards others.

When participants linked difference with assumed negative characteristics, their views of ethnic grocery stores affiliated in name with these 'others' may have been informed by their prejudices. This may have contributed to perceptions, for some individuals, that the food retail environment in Humbermede was inadequate.

The most explicit way, however, in which personal attitudes towards difference impacted views of the Humbermede grocery shopping landscape emerged in my interview with Camilla (P26), the Canadian-born Filipino woman cited earlier. For this participant, personal prejudices prompted her to avoid certain geographic spaces on account of their assumed characteristics. Camilla had felt that the northern portion of Humbermede, along Finch Avenue, was home to many people of colour who resided in social housing. On account of this composition alone, Camilla assumed that the area was a bad one to visit; it must have high crime rates based on the identities of the people who lived there:

> *It looks kind of ghetto over there. [...] I don't mean to classify like certain races against something, but I guess that area does have a large amount of kind of -- like Indian, like Afghanistan type of thing as well as like, I guess, black people. And you kind of mix that, like normally it's like a lot of government housing. And they're normally seen as kind of bad areas. Or there's like -- there's a lot of crime there ... I don't want to take my kids around that kind of thing, you know? (P26)*

For Camilla, the "ghetto" along Finch Avenue was a space to be avoided. She did not feel safe in taking her young children to an area that she believed was unsavoury. Camilla's thought process and her stereotyping of part of Humbermede as ghetto and thus off-limits had a significant effect on how she perceived the local food retail environment. Her assumptions placed a key constraint on her travel activity; Camilla refused to visit the Finch Avenue area based on her views. As a result, she was unable to develop an awareness of the suite of grocery retailers that were located along this street, ones like Centra and Long Hui. Lacking this awareness, Camilla was prompted to think that there were not enough stores in Humbermede; she did not find what she was looking

for in the part of the neighbourhood that she was comfortable with visiting. Had Camilla been more open to difference and less judgemental towards others, she may have been more willing to travel about Humbermede. Her views of the food retail environment in this neighbourhood may have thus differed as a result.

As the accounts of Anthony (P1), Fernanda (P7), and Camilla (P26) illustrate, when some food purchasers held negative opinions about particular ethnic groups, they appeared inclined to evaluate stores or locations affiliated with these groups in unfavourable terms. This finding suggests that 'consumer racism' (Ouellet, 2005, 2007), a concept that I introduced in Chapter 2, can indeed impact grocery shopping landscape perceptions. Moreover, this revelation further underscores the significance of identity-related factors to evaluations of the local food retail environment in Humbermede, Toronto.

In the preceding subsections, I have shown how food preferences, ethnic identification, language, and attitudes towards difference – four matters intimately tied to issues of identity – can shape the meanings that Humbermede residents attach to their retail surroundings. In doing so, I have revealed critical socio-cultural dimensions of perceived 'food accessibility'. Another set of factors, however, also affected the food shopping landscape views of my participants. I group these influences – ones that are economic and spatiotemporal in character – together under the umbrella term 'life circumstances'.

4.2.2 – Life Circumstance-Related Factors

The material or environmental conditions that Humbermede residents encountered – ones that facilitated or constrained their behaviours or their knowledge of and engagement with their surroundings – had effects on their perceptions of the local food retail environment. The levels of

83

grocery purchasing power that individuals enjoyed; their personal mobility, activity spaces[27], and locations of residence; and the lengths of time they lived in their neighbourhood were key life circumstances that shaped the meanings that participants ascribed to the Humbermede grocery shopping landscape.

4.2.2.1 – Grocery Purchasing Power

For fourteen interviewees (46.7%), perceptions of the local food retail environment were informed, at least partly, by the extent to which they deemed area retailers to be economically accessible or attractive. This assessment was a function of individuals' 'grocery purchasing power', which I define as the sum of money that one can afford to or desires to spend on groceries, and the extent to which one's purchasing behaviours are motivated by prices. Grocery purchasing power was primarily associated with participants' personal, employment, and/or financial conditions[28], and worked to impact shopping landscape views in one of two ways.

Participants whose grocery purchasing power was low[29] tended to desire stores that had the best prices and featured regular sales, consistent with findings in the existing literature (e.g. Mortimer & Clarke, 2011; Piacentini et al., 2011; Worsley et al., 2011). The general sentiment among interviewees in this group was that retailers in Humbermede fell short of meeting this ideal; perceptions of high prices at neighbourhood stores were common complaints. When local

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[27] I draw on Ron Johnston (2005, p. 4) to define 'activity space' as "the area in which the majority of an individual's day-to-day activities are carried out". One's activity space need not be continuous, as Johnston (2005), noted; people can conduct their everyday activities in distant locations while knowing little about the spaces that they traverse in between.

[28] While one's grocery purchasing power may certainly be influenced by his or her income, it cannot be reduced to this; other factors such as one's family size and obligations, nature of employment (e.g. temporary or permanent), level of savings or debt, spending habits, and general attitudes towards money – among others – can affect grocery purchasing power.

[29] I classified individuals as having 'low' grocery purchasing power if they adhered to stringent budgets while doing their food shopping, demonstrated great concern with price as a determinant of their purchasing or store patronage decisions, had low incomes, and/or experienced other personal, financial, or employment conditions that constrained their total grocery spending (e.g. high debt or holding temporary employment).

retailers were defined as expensive, individuals with low grocery purchasing power were apt to describe the food shopping environment in negative terms. Views that there were an insufficient number of stores in Humbermede thus sometimes arose when participants felt that the existing retailers in the area were unaffordable.

Three examples illustrate this point. Sarah (P16), who received social assistance, was chiefly concerned with food prices when she did her grocery shopping. As she was planning on declaring bankruptcy, Sarah had little money to waste and wished to get the best deals. From her experience as a shopper, Sarah felt that No Frills offered the lowest prices:

> *I love No Frills 'cause of the deals. [...] It's cheap, and I can afford it. (P16)*

The fact that a store from this chain was absent in Humbermede encouraged Sarah to think that there were not enough stores in the area. Otis (P27), who recently lost his job, was another participant who was highly concerned with spending as little as possible at the grocery store. He believed that the food sold at supermarkets in Humbermede was too expensive for him. Referring to the larger ethnic stores in the neighbourhood, Otis said:

> *To be honest with you, I don't buy from big stores because of lack of money. Yeah. Lack of money. (P27)*

Otis perceived there to be too few food retailers in the area partly because he felt that there were not enough stores that were affordable, given his circumstances. Finally, Bob (P25), who was retired, was also conscious of his grocery spending. He adhered to a budget of about $100 per week when buying food for himself and his wife. Bob, like Sarah (P16), wanted a large, discount chain store near his home so he could easily take advantage of potential sales:

> *I'll tell you – one year, I would like to see them put a No Frills right in this area here. [...] They've got a lot more sales. And you can get what you want. And we haven't got one directly in this area. (P25)*

Failing to find this in the Humbermede food retail environment prompted Bob, an economic shopper, to perceive of the area as being insufficiently served by grocery stores. As these cases show, therefore, low grocery purchasing power, combined with a sentiment that local stores were expensive, crafted a perception for several individuals that the grocery shopping landscape in Humbermede was inadequate.

Participants whose grocery purchasing power was high[30] did not find price to be a critical constraint when seeking out food shopping venues. They may not have wanted to spend considerable sums of money at the grocery store, to be sure, but being able to find their preferred mid-to-high-end brands was of greater concern than purchasing the most inexpensive products. When these interviewees felt that such items were not available in Humbermede, feelings of dissatisfaction with the local food retail environment arose. Carol (P5), a widow whose annual income exceeded $60,000, had an affinity for full-service chain supermarkets that sold name-brand products. As such a store was not to be found in Humbermede, she felt that the area was underserved by grocery retailers. When asked whether she thought there were enough stores in the neighbourhood to meet her needs, Carol replied:

> *No, there's not. A high-end grocery store is missing. You know, a Loblaws. [...]*
> *I'm looking for a <u>big</u> store that has just about everything. [...] I need to have a*
> *good-sized butcher, a good bakery, a deli section, you know. [...] If I'm going to*
> *buy cheese, I like to have a nice cheese, a name-brand cheese, you know? (P5)*

Cindy (P15), who worked full-time and whose annual household income exceeded $80,000, also expressed displeasure with the fact that a large chain supermarket was missing in Humbermede. Like Carol, Cindy wanted a store in the neighbourhood that carried the brands she liked:

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[30] I categorized individuals as having 'high' grocery purchasing power if they did not regularly adhere to budgets while doing their food shopping, were more concerned with brand-names than low prices, had high incomes, and/or experienced other personal, financial, or employment conditions that limited or removed restrictions on their total grocery spending (e.g. sharing household expenses with extended, affluent family members).

In this area, there is no large chain grocery store, and that's – I feel I need a large chain grocery store [...] [to get] the brands that I like. The PC [President's Choice] brand. [...] I love buying Loblaws products. [Laughs.] I like PC brand, so, um, basically [the stores in Humbermede] wouldn't satisfy me because [they] wouldn't have PC brand. (P15)

As these accounts from Carol and Cindy both reveal, high grocery purchasing power, combined with a belief that neighbourhood stores lacked one's desired brands, also functioned to generate negative perceptions of the food retail environment in Humbermede.[31]

While participants' life circumstances influenced their shopping landscape views through their levels of grocery purchasing power, area perceptions were also shaped by mobility and locational factors, additional facets of individuals' everyday experiences.

4.2.2.2 – Personal Mobility, Activity Space, and Location of Residence

Three associated factors that moderated how individuals physically interacted with their spatial surroundings – personal mobility, activity space, and location of residence – served as key influences on participants' views of the Humbermede food retail environment. Whether or not interviewees' circumstances afforded them access to a vehicle, where people tended to travel using the means of transportation available to them, and where they lived played critical parts in shaping perceptions of the local grocery shopping landscape for nineteen (63.3%) of the thirty Humbermede residents I interviewed.

Eight individuals who were fortunate enough to live in households that had one or more cars offered rationales to explain their perceptions of the Humbermede food retail environment that were linked to the high levels of mobility they experienced as a result as a result of having vehicle access. The positive views of seven of the ten participants who felt that Humbermede had

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[31] It is worth noting that while varying levels of grocery purchasing power contributed to the formation of negative perceptions of the Humbermede grocery shopping landscape for some participants, this was not a major factor behind the formation of thoughts that there were enough stores in the area for those who held these views. For this latter group of interviewees, personal mobility and activity space, length of residence, and positive store assessments for reasons other than price were most commonly cited as influences on their food retail environment perceptions.

enough stores partly followed from the fact that they could easily travel outside of the neighbourhood, with their cars, to do their grocery shopping. One of two thought processes was at work for these interviewees.

First, being able to find a large number of supermarkets in surrounding areas, which were only a five-to-ten minute drive from their homes, instilled a sense of outright satisfaction in many of these participants. Anthony (P1) and Ricardo (P30), who could both afford to drive, were thrilled by the fact that many retailers were found in the areas bordering Humbermede, which were within a short car trip of their residences. As grocery stores outside of Humbermede were plentiful, easy to travel to, and satisfied their needs, participants like Anthony and Ricardo felt that that their neighbourhood was adequately served by grocery retailers. The fact that these stores were not located within 'Humbermede' proper did not matter to their positive assessments of the shopping landscape; nothing closer was needed when they could travel elsewhere by car:

> *Like, there's enough stores around here that I can have everything and everything, right? What item would I want that I can't find within a two-mile radius – two miles from the 401, two miles from Jane and Finch, two miles here. I think there's about twenty supermarkets of some sort within a two or three mile radius from here. [...] I can drive. [...] [It's] very simple. (P1)*

> *There is like – you know, I'm ten minutes behind from every supermarket, right? Like either left or right, you know, from where I live, so I mean, would I want to go more? I go to Sheridan Mall and there's another No Frills there. If I want to go up here, there's a Food Basics I go to once in a while. [...] [There are] more than enough [stores]. (P30)*

A second line of reasoning also linked vehicle access and shopping outside of Humbermede with positive perceptions of the local food retail environment. Some participants who could easily do their grocery shopping at stores outside of the neighbourhood on account of having access to a car had reduced expectations for the retail landscape in 'Humbermede' proper. All they wanted within the neighbourhood was a store or two that they could use in the event of an emergency to pick up last-minute items. When they found this, these participants were apt to

describe the local grocery shopping environment as having enough stores – even if area retailers did not carry all of their desired foods or have the best deals or quality. Martina (P17) was clear in equating her contentment with the Humbermede food retail landscape with its ability to satisfy her needs in an emergency:

> *I'm fine with the way it is right now. Usually I make my groceries at No Frills. That's where I do my most shopping. But if one day I need something extra, then I go to one of those stores, I usually find it – a bag of milk or something, that it's finished and I need it at the moment, I usually find it. So I think it's good. (P17)*

Though Martina had some grievances with a few of the grocery retailers in Humbermede – she complained that quality and cleanliness were lacking at Long Hui, for instance – she still felt that the neighbourhood was adequately served by supermarkets. Local stores met her needs when she ran out of things like milk; as this was all she expected from retailers in the immediate area, Martina was content with the state of the grocery shopping environment in her neighbourhood.

The cases of Martina (P17), Anthony (P1), and Ricardo (P30) thus illustrate one set of ways that personal mobility, activity space, and location can impact food retail environment perceptions. When participants had access to a car and could travel outside of the Humbermede area with ease, they sometimes ascribed less significance to the local shopping landscape. When ample food purchasing opportunities were found outside of the neighbourhood or when local retailers were deemed to be sufficient in the case of an emergency, these interviewees tended to regard the Humbermede area with satisfaction. If these participants, however, had encountered mobility limitations that constrained them to do all of their grocery shopping in the Humbermede food retail environment, their perceptions of the neighbourhood might have differed. Michelle (P19), who was satisfied with the current state of grocery store provision in Humbermede because she could easily travel elsewhere by car to meet her needs, noted that she would likely

have had a different opinion about the local shopping landscape if she was forced to attempt to do all of her shopping at the stores closest to her home:

> *[There are enough grocery stores]* <u>*within close proximity*</u>*, yeah. [...] There's Great Canadian Superstore, which is just a few extra minutes away, and then there is No Frills and, um, there's still a Fortinos and a Food Basics, and as I said, you know, there's still a Nations. But if I was – if I was dependent only on* <u>*this area*</u> *[referring to the map of Humbermede], then there's not enough supermarkets or there is not reputable supermarkets that I would be, you know, confident with in going to do a full grocery shopping, no. (P19)*

The fact that Michelle (P19) would have thought differently about the local grocery shopping environment had she been constrained to buying her food only from stores in the immediate area provides one clear illustration of the significance that car access – a dimension of one's life circumstances – can have on shaping perceptions of the food retail environment in Humbermede.

Having access to a vehicle did not only contribute to the creation of positive views of the Humbermede retail landscape. For one participant, driving and the activity space that resulted from this were linked to perceptions that Humbermede had no stores at all. Because Amy (P4) had a car and could travel wherever she desired, she chose to do her grocery shopping in the area where she used to live, around Jane Street and Sheppard Avenue. Her current activities regularly took her there. Amy's young son still went to the same school he attended when the household lived in that neighbourhood, and she drove him to and from school daily. For Amy, existing routines meant that most of her travelling was done east and south of her home following her move to the southern part of Humbermede. She already had a set grocery store – Price Chopper – which she could easily travel to by car and with which she was happy. Consequently, Amy had little need to familiarize herself with the grocery shopping options in Humbermede, and she had few reasons, given the spatial locations of the places she routinely visited, to travel to the northern portions of the neighbourhood where food retailers were located. As such, Amy had the

perception that there were no stores in the area. The activity spaces that resulted from her ability

to drive meant that she never came across the stores that were, in fact, closest to her home:

> *I don't really go down that way. Yeah, I'm not really familiar with that area. I'm more <u>this way</u>, Yeah. More like south of Finch. [...] The Price Chopper [at Jane and Sheppard] is convenient for me because my son goes to the school down that area, right, so if I'm about to pick him up or drop him off and I'm – it's easy for me to do [my shopping] there. [...] Up <u>here</u>, I don't usually – I don't even know what's up here, where Finch is. (P4)*

The food retail environment perceptions of participants who lived in households without

a car, who did not drive themselves, or who knew of others in the neighbourhood who did not

have a vehicle were influenced by the reduced mobility that a lack of vehicle access imparted.

This occurred in one of two ways. First, lacking access to a car created a need for many people to

have a grocery store that was within walking distance of their homes or that was easy to travel to

by bus. The perception that Humbermede was adequately served by food retailers emerged for

two individuals, both of whom lived in the northern part of the neighbourhood, who felt that

these needs were indeed satisfied. Samir's (P9) contentment with the local shopping environment

was partly a result of the fact that Long Hui and Centra, the two major ethnic supermarkets in

Humbermede, were located within what he deemed to be a reasonably short walk of his home:

> *It's close. It's close. [Long Hui is] only like five to six minutes walk. [Centra], if I do it just by feet, like it takes, like, fifteen minutes for me. (P9)*

Finley (P20), a Jamaican man, felt that a wide variety of ethnic grocery stores were located

within walking distance of his apartment, important because he did not drive. Sensing that people

in the area had many options in terms of potential shopping venues, Finley (P20) perceived

Humbermede to be well-served by food retailers:

> *You have the African store. You have the Chinese store. You have West Indies store. You know, you have different, different stores, so people can go around and find what they need around here. Yeah. It's good here. (P20)*

91

Participants without cars who felt that the grocery stores in Humbermede were difficult to travel to formed negative thoughts about the local food retail environment based on the perceived physical inaccessibility of shopping venues. This was common amongst people without vehicles who resided in the southern portion of Humbermede, an area that was some distance from the stores located along Finch Avenue. These retailers were not only out of reach by foot, but they were also seen as hard to travel to by bus. Transit routes were not direct; residents of southern areas had to transfer to a second bus in order to reach most Humbermede grocery stores. This was regarded as time-consuming and physically-taxing by many; participants did not wish to wait and then board a new bus while carrying heavy bags of groceries. Negative perceptions of the Humbermede food retail environment developed as a result; some interviewees expressed the view that there were not enough or no stores when there were few or no retailers to be found locally that were easy to travel to by bus or on foot. Otis (P27), who lived in an apartment building on Weston Road and could not afford a car because he was out of work, explained that the ethnic supermarkets located on Finch Avenue were not easily accessible by public transit as they required a transfer. He was not keen on the idea of crossing the street with his groceries to take a second Toronto Transit Commission [TTC] bus:

> *Yeah. They tend to be too far because of driving and commuting on the TTC. [...] Imagine, like, I'm carrying grocery and I have to cross the road to change from Finch bus to come to Weston. So I don't think that enough supermarkets in my neighbourhood. (P27)*

As his account reveals, Otis (P27) desired a store in the neighbourhood that he could reach directly and easily by bus. Failing to find this in Humbermede contributed to his view that the area was underserved by food retailers.

In an interesting case of neighbourliness and concern for others, Christina (P11), who had a car herself, based her perception of the Humbermede food retail environment primarily on

what she thought the experience of obtaining groceries might be like for local residents without a vehicle, particularly seniors. Christina had an elderly mother-in-law who lived in the area. While her mother-in-law drove, Christina did not know how much longer she would be able to do so, due to her age and her potentially declining vision. This participant wondered what her mother-in-law would do, or what kind of help she would need, if she stopped driving. Christina felt there were few stores that were within walking distance for elderly residents of the southern portion of the Humbermede area who did not drive. She also feared that travelling by bus or taxi would be prohibitively expensive for seniors with limited incomes. Christina's concern for the conditions potentially encountered by elderly persons without vehicles thus informed her perception that Humbermede was not adequately served by grocery retailers. When asked whether she felt there were enough stores in the area, Christina responded:

> *Nope, no, no. I, you know, just... thinking of where they are, um, you know, you have the Superstore, now you have the new [store] in Crossroads Plaza. [...] You know, you have the Oriental Mart at [...] Finch and Islington. So, we really need something between Finch and Weston, and Weston and Sheppard. Something here, for this community. And again, thinking of the elderly people, or people who don't drive, you know? To go to the grocery store on the bus, it's still costing someone six dollars. And usually, if you're going for groceries, you're not gonna take the bus back with your groceries, so you're looking at a taxi back. And even – even the Superstore is still gonna cost you, probably twelve to fifteen dollars to come back in this area... for a taxi. So, yeah, it's expensive. [...] There's really nothing that you could call accessible... to someone who... you know, may not drive or even – there's some elderly people not comfortable taking the bus so they taxi everywhere, and it's just a bigger expense. [...] [My mother-in-law], I mean, she's eighty-two years old and that's just fantasy to think that all eighty-two year olds will drive, you know? And who knows how much longer she will? So... Then that's putting the pressure – not pressure, it's no pressure for me, but in reality, then it would convert then that she would have to be on my schedule to take her where she'd need to go, you know? Whereas she's active enough, but it may just be a slight vision issue that she's not able to drive anymore. So then what's she gonna do? You know? (P11)*

Lacking access to a vehicle did not only prompt negative perceptions of the food retail environment in Humbermede when residents felt that area stores were difficult to reach. When

participants did not drive, their travel behaviours were often highly task-oriented and regimented in nature. These individuals tended to have set shopping routines that saw them travel to places that were easiest to access by bus. For residents of the southern part of Humbermede especially, these locations were usually outside of the neighbourhood; travelling further on one bus was seen as less of a chore than staying within the area and taking two, due to the aforementioned transfer issue. With their activity spaces, in terms of shopping, sited mostly outside of Humbermede, and parts of the neighbourhood essentially off-limits as a result of being too hard to travel to by bus, some participants had little awareness of stores in the local food retail environment. They simply did not travel to or explore – on account of their lack of vehicles and their dissatisfaction with area transit routes – the northern portion of Humbermede where these stores were located. Not knowing of these retailers, several participants with mobility and activity space constraints who lived in the southern part of the neighbourhood were thus apt to perceive of Humbermede as having few or no grocery stores.

An example is instructive. Fernanda (P7), a senior who did not drive and who resided in southern Humbermede, never travelled along Finch Avenue. She was deterred by the fact that this area was reachable only by two buses; "It doesn't appeal to me to go to that area," she said (P7). Fernanda consequently did not know of the ethnic supermarkets and grocery stores that were located on this street. When asked whether she thought there was enough food retailers in the area to meet her needs, Fernanda contended that there were none; there were no stores in the southern section of the neighbourhood that was part of her activity space, and she did not know what was to be found elsewhere in Humbermede. Even if Fernanda did know of these stores, it is possible that she would not have seen them as options anyway. They would still have been

difficult for her to reach by bus, and would not have been part of her usual activity space, one that saw her travel to areas that were accessible by more direct transit routes.

The case of Fernanda thus illustrates an additional way in which restricted mobility, the constrained activity space that followed from this, and location coalesced to generate negative perceptions of the Humbermede food retail environment. When participants found their travel opportunities limited by lack of access to a car and inconvenient transit routes, their awareness of the local shopping landscape was low and they sometimes desired to have stores that were in close geographic proximity to, or within easy bus access of, their homes. When such retailers were lacking and when knowledge of other shopping venues was low, perceptions that the food retail environment in Humbermede had too few or no stores were created.

Thus far, I have explored, as having an effect on views of the grocery shopping landscape in Humbermede, two dimensions of individuals' life circumstances grounded heavily in present-day experiences. There was, however, a third aspect to what I refer to as one's circumstances that had both historical and contemporary facets, and had also emerged as a key factor affecting food retail environment perceptions: one's length of residence in Humbermede.

4.2.2.3 – Length of Residence

The amount of time that participants lived in Humbermede, the level of familiarity they had developed with stores in the local and surrounding areas, and their attitudes toward any retail changes that they may have encountered over their period of residence had an effect on their perceptions of the contemporary grocery shopping landscape. Length of residence functioned as a critical influence on views of the food retail environment for twelve (40.0%) of the thirty people I interviewed.

The perceptions of four of the ten participants who said that Humbermede had enough grocery stores were at least partly a product of the time they had spent living in this area. Length of residence contributed to the creation of positive thoughts about the retail environment in one of two ways. First, living in Humbermede for a long duration of time enabled some interviewees to thoroughly familiarize themselves with their surroundings and to develop an awareness of the suite of store choices they had both within the local area and in adjacent neighbourhoods. When these participants were able to develop a mental database of stores near their homes and knew where to go for certain items they may have needed, they were apt to perceive of Humbermede as being sufficiently served by grocery retailers. The fact that Anthony (P1) lived in the area for forty-two years meant that he knew precisely where he could obtain all of his groceries. He saw Humbermede as having enough stores partly because there was nothing that he could not find either within the neighbourhood or at stores in nearby food retail environments:

> *There's nothing that I can't find, right – <u>if</u> you know where to go. And I've been to every one of them, so I know, "oh, I gotta go there and get this stuff." You know. That's what it is, 'cause I've been here so long. Obviously, the length of time you live here – I know everything about this area and the shopping habits. (P1)*

Length of residence fuelled positive perceptions of the Humbermede retail landscape in a second way as well. Participants who lived in the area long enough to witness alterations to the local shopping environment, such as the opening of new stores or changes in service or product offerings at existing stores, and who regarded these developments as favourable, were likely to think that Humbermede was adequately served by food retailers. Ricardo's (P30) satisfaction with the current grocery shopping options in Humbermede was partly a result of his belief that it was easier than ever to buy inexpensive food in the area. He had lived in the neighbourhood for ten to fifteen years, and he felt that the closure of the Galati Brothers Supermarket at Finchdale

Plaza and its replacement with, first, an Oriental Food Mart and then Centra Food Market caused food prices to decrease in the Humbermede area:

> *It's cheaper now. Yeah. A lot of the vegetables at... like the vegetables and fruits, they're cheaper than where they used to be. They'd be more expensive there at Galati's [...], but they moved away, so it's cheaper now. (P30)*

The positive views that Michelle (P19) had of the Humbermede food retail environment were also linked to an observation of favourable changes that had occurred over her time living in the area. Since she moved to the neighbourhood eleven years ago, Michelle has observed a number of key improvements to have been made to Long Hui Supermarket. The store has addressed the language barriers that had made her feel uncomfortable in patronizing it; customer service has been strengthened; and a greater diversity of food products capable of beginning to meet the needs of the multicultural Humbermede community is now carried:

> *Um, what I have noticed though, over the years, is that, um, the supermarket that is closest to me here – I think it's called Long Hui – yeah, over the years, they have come a long way. Now I can go in and you get a smile and you can ask for something and they can actually tell you where to find something. Years gone by, you would go in and you'd want something and it's like you're in a strange land where nobody understands your language, right? But I think they've become a little bit more community-friendly now because also that plaza has developed a little bit because of the medical clinic that's there, so now there's a variety of different cultures going in there, and I also realized that they're also selling more food from different cultures. It's not just the same thing all the times, which is a huge improvement for them, yeah. (P19)*

Michelle saw Long Hui as a place where she would now be happy to visit to pick up any last-minute grocery items, which was all she expected from the Humbermede retail environment. Her view that Humbermede was adequately served by supermarkets thus stemmed from her rising contentment with local stores, a perception that was influenced by the length of time she had lived in the area and her consequent ability to observe retail changes.

Length of residence and one's encountering of retail change were also factors in shaping negative perceptions of the Humbermede grocery shopping environment. This occurred in one of

97

two distinct ways. Some participants who lived in the neighbourhood long enough to witness store conversions, and who had complaints with the previous retailers, ascribed negative qualities to the stores that took their place, assuming them to be similar. Their perceptions soured by what they had encountered in the past, these individuals presumed contemporary stores in the area to be deficient in some way, without ever setting foot in them – a notion which contributed to the production of the perception that Humbermede was underserved by 'good' food retailers. Rachel (P22), for instance, had disliked Oriental Food Mart because she felt that it was an expensive store, that its food was sometimes expired, and that it did not carry the traditional African items she needed. When it was converted to Centra, she did not visit it, despite it being located across the street from her house; her bad experiences at Oriental had steered her away. Speaking about Oriental Food Mart and her lack of willingness to patronize Centra, Rachel said:

> *I just find that most of their things are kind of expensive, yeah, when it comes to price. [...] They don't really have any good sales. [...] They carry varieties of their own food. [...] They carry mostly Asian food. [...] Their salad is not fresh. [...] The yogurt [...] was expired. [...] I've never went there since then. [...] Since they changed the name, I haven't been there. [...] I believe it's still the same thing they have in there. [...] I didn't even bother, [...] just because of the bad experience I had. That motivation was not really there. (P22)*

For Rachel, the belief that Centra Food Market would not satisfy her needs informed her view that there were an inadequate number of grocery stores in Humbermede. This perception was a by-product of her length of residence; if Rachel had not lived in the area long enough to know of and visit Oriental Food Mart, her past experiences may not have spoiled her thoughts about the present-day shopping environment.

Length of residence incited negative views of the Humbermede food retail landscape in one additional way. Living in the area long enough to experience the closure of favourite, close-by, oft-visited stores without seeing them replaced by similar retailers shaped the perception, for

five residents, that Humbermede currently had no grocery stores at all. The southern part of the neighbourhood was once home to a No Frills, located at Weston Road and Sheppard Avenue, and a Galati Brothers Supermarket, situated at the intersection of Weston and Bradstock Roads. These stores both closed, according to interviewees, in the past ten to fifteen years; the No Frills was replaced by a residential development while the Galati, which shut its doors because of rent increases, eventually gave way to a Dollar Tree. These stores, particularly Galati, were spoken highly of by many participants who lived near them; they had been found within walking distance, sold a wide variety of food, had fresh items, and featured good sales. Isabelle (P10) fondly remembered the Galati, a store she felt served members of her ethnic group well:

> *Everything about Galati was great. It had all our typical foods that – you know, you know, I'm Italian, yeah – and not only just <u>our</u> foods, but most of our food. It had everything good. We loved it. The staff was great. (P10)*

Participants who did not identify as Italian also regarded this store in favourable terms. Lisa (P6), a Scottish woman, noted that she used to be able to do most of her shopping at Galati:

> *They were great. They carried most things. [...] They had pretty well everything. (P6)*

Bob (P25), a French-Canadian, used the store frequently as well. He cited good sales and fresh products, including baked goods and meat, as leading forces behind his contentment with Galati:

> *[I used it] all the time. All the time. [...] For one thing, they had good sales and the product was good. They had a nice bakery where you could get things fresh. And same with their meats and all that. It was really good. (P25)*

When stores such as the Galati Brothers Supermarket closed, participants who used them regularly felt that they – along with the neighbourhood food retail environment as a whole – had experienced a loss. Gone were shopping venues in the southern portion of Humbermede to which they could easily walk; gone were retailers that sold familiar food items and allowed participants to do a full grocery shopping in one place. To these interviewees, the stores that closed had

satisfied most or all of their needs: they were culturally-appropriate, offered competitive prices, carried a large selection of items, and were conveniently located. These participants did not identify these same qualities in the stores that remained in the Humbermede shopping landscape, the ones that were situated along Finch Avenue such as Long Hui Supermarket. Failing to meet their cultural, economic, or accessibility needs in the same way as Galati or No Frills did, the northerly-located stores were erased from participants' perceived choice sets; this, coupled with the closure and non-replacement of the two often-favoured retailers, left some people to feel that Humbermede was no longer serviced by grocery stores. The 'good ones' were simply gone:

> *[Galati] was wonderful, and it was packed. Then, it closed and slowly, slowly we have nothing left [...] We had a No Frills and that closed and we literally had nothing. (P10)*

> *They took – Galati's used to be across the street. They took that away, and... they took No Frills away. They used to be over at, uh, Weston Road and Sheppard. So we got <u>no</u> grocery stores. [...] They took all – They took them all away. (P12)*

> *[There are no] good ones. There is enough of the Oriental ones. [...] I miss [...] Galati's because of what they had. They had a fresh bakery and all this stuff and they don't have it there. [...] I would rather saw the Galati's stay there, because they had more of the foods that we like. (P25)*

For people like Lisa (P6), Isabelle (P10), Fanny (P12), and Bob (P25) – who lived in Humbermede for fifty-one, thirty-seven, thirty-five, and forty-three years, respectively – views of the contemporary grocery shopping landscape as having no stores were partly a function of their length of residence and their encountering of retail changes. Residing in the neighbourhood for decades, these individuals developed a suite of favourite retailers; when store closures altered their life circumstances by disrupting their shopping routines and eliminating what they saw as ideal food purchasing venues, these participants were left with the perception that Humbermede was no longer served by supermarkets. Had Isabelle (P10), Fanny (P12), and Bob (P25) settled in

Humbermede after Galati and No Frills already closed, they may have had an alternative conceptualization of the grocery shopping environment in this area.

As I have shown in this discussion, the ways in which some Humbermede residents saw the contemporary food retail landscape was influenced by the amount of time they had lived in the neighbourhood. Because it enabled residents to develop a familiarity with their surroundings or to witness store improvements, conversions, or closures, length of residence – a constitutive element of their personal trajectories – had a significant role to play in informing the food retail environment perceptions of several individuals.

The meanings that Humbermede dwellers ascribed to the grocery shopping landscape in their neighbourhood, therefore, had critical spatiotemporal and economic dimensions, as I have elaborated in the preceding subsections. The conditions individuals experienced environmentally or materially – functions of their duration or location of stay in their neighbourhood, their degree of mobility, and their purchasing power – impacted the manner in which they viewed their retail surroundings. Identity-related factors were important in shaping these perceptions, to be sure, but so too were the life circumstances that participants encountered on an everyday basis.

4.3 – Synthesis, Implications, and Conclusions

The grocery shopping landscape in Humbermede, Toronto – one typified by the presence of ethnic retailers and the absence of mainstream supermarkets – was not perceived of in the same way by all individuals who resided in this area. As my interviews with local residents have revealed, some Humbermede dwellers felt that their neighbourhood was sufficiently served by grocery stores, while others believed that the area had too few or even no food retailers at all. The existence of such divergent perspectives has key theoretical implications.

The analysis I have offered in this chapter suggests that assessments of the food shopping environment in Humbermede may be influenced by identity-related factors as well as one's life circumstances. The mere presence of grocery retailers in the area was not enough to ensure that people felt their neighbourhood was adequately served by stores; of additional, and sometimes greater, importance to individuals was having shopping venues in Humbermede that were 'for them' and their needs. Participants frequently evaluated local retailers for their congruence with aspects of their own identities, such as their food preferences, ethnic identifications, and languages; they read the shopping landscape with an eye toward their views of 'others'; and they assessed neighbourhood stores in light of the everyday material and environmental conditions they encountered as a result of their purchasing power, personal mobility, location, and lengths of residence. As these considerations were approached from different positionalities, multiple interpretations of the same food retail environment were generated.

These findings make visible a drawback of attempts to depict shopping landscapes using binary spatial labels like 'food deserts' or 'food oases'. These terms mask the potential existence of divergent conceptualizations of a food retail environment by area residents; afford primacy to distance to grocery stores as the key determinant of accessibility; and conceal the socio-cultural, economic, and spatiotemporal factors that may matter to how a particular shopping landscape is viewed. While I do not wish to entirely dismiss the potential utility of spatial designators like food deserts or oases – there very well could be areas in some cities which are completely devoid of all forms of grocery retailing or are exceptionally-served by supermarkets – their applicability to spaces of considerable retail and consumer diversity like Humbermede appears rather limited. In a context such as this one, the food retail environment is thought of, by area residents, in far more complex ways than these terms would allow for.

While I have identified in this chapter how residents of Humbermede perceive their local grocery shopping landscape and the factors that may inform these views, where these individuals actually purchase their food from and whether or not they use neighbourhood retailers is another matter worthy of consideration. I address this topic in the following chapter.

5. "I'm Gonna Travel Out of My Way to Get Cheaper Food": The Grocery Acquisition Behaviours and Experiences of Humbermede Residents

Studies of food accessibility, food deserts, and local food environments often assume, at least implicitly, that grocery shoppers will patronize the retailers that are located closest to their homes (Ledoux & Vojnovic, 2013). Yet, as I discussed in Chapter 4, the group of stores that were the most geographically-proximate to my participants – that is, the retailers that constituted the Humbermede grocery shopping environment – were not always viewed in favourable terms by these individuals. This fact raises several critical questions. From where did Humbermede residents actually buy their food? Did they visit stores within their immediate neighbourhood, or did they shop elsewhere? How did shoppers experience grocery procurement – as a simple task, or a challenging act? How content were individuals with the stores that they themselves utilized?

To address these questions, I explore, in this chapter, the grocery acquisition behaviours and experiences of residents of Humbermede. I begin by presenting a typology of Humbermede grocery shoppers. I show that while a few individuals were indeed constrained by their financial circumstances to doing all of their food purchasing at the stores nearest to their homes, the majority of participants – including many of those without cars – procured their groceries mainly from outside their neighbourhood, at more distant retailers that better met their socio-cultural and/or economic needs. I go on to discuss the experiences that interviewees had in travelling to grocery stores. I note that residents of Humbermede encountered differential degrees of physical access to food retailers; the ease with which individuals reached stores was primarily a function of their economic conditions and the mode of transportation available to them. Finally, I examine the extent to which shoppers were satisfied with the stores they visited. I suggest that while most participants utilized retailers that had the characteristics they desired, a few individuals, who faced financial constraints, sacrificed their overall contentment to patronize stores that met their

most pressing needs – low prices or spatial proximity. Ultimately, I argue in this chapter that, for Humbermede residents, grocery store patronage decisions and food acquisition outcomes are not always simple products of distance. Store attributes, like variety, quality, or price; aspects of one's socio-cultural identity, such as one's food preferences, ethnic identification, or language; and one's life circumstances, including one's level of income, grocery purchasing power, and mobility, can function as additional critical influences on the food shopping behaviours and experiences of individuals.

5.1 – A Typology of Humbermede Grocery Shoppers

As I explained in Chapter 4, the Humbermede food retail environment was not viewed in uniform terms by the thirty individuals I interviewed. Some participants felt the neighbourhood had enough grocery retailers; others thought it had too few or even no stores. The perceptions that interviewees had of their local retail landscape were linked to their shopping behaviours, but not always in straightforward ways. Three types of Humbermede food shoppers existed: those who purchased all of their groceries locally ("local shoppers"), those who visited retailers both within and outside of Humbermede ("combination shoppers"), and those who exclusively bought their food from venues located beyond their neighbourhood ("non-local shoppers"). Represented in each of these groups were participants from more than one food retail environment perception category, as Table 2 illustrates.

Type of Shopper	*Number of Participants by Food Retail Environment Perception Category (n = 30)*		
	Enough Stores	**Not Enough Stores**	**No Stores**
Local Shoppers	1	1	0
Combination Shoppers	8	9	2
Non-Local Shoppers	1	3	5

Table 2: The linkages between grocery shopping behaviours and local food retail environment perceptions.

In the following subsections, I outline the characteristics and consumption motivations of the three types of Humbermede grocery shoppers. I also draw linkages back to Chapter 4 in order to clarify the connections between individuals' perceptions of their local food retail environment and their actual store patronage decisions.

5.1.1 – Group A: Local Shoppers

Of the thirty individuals I interviewed, only two (6.7%) – Finley (P20) and Otis (P27) – did all of their grocery shopping at stores within the Humbermede neighbourhood. The decision to shop locally for these two men was entirely a product of the constraints imposed by their economic circumstances and the limited mobility that resulted from this. Finley held a poorly-paying job, while Otis had been recently laid off work. Due to their low incomes, neither participant could afford a car to travel to grocery stores outside of their neighbourhood. Taxis were also seen as financially inaccessible to these individuals; out of a job, Otis did not want to squander the little savings he had on taking taxis to regularly shop outside of Humbermede:

> *Since I don't drive and it's cold, I don't want to shop in a far distance because of sometimes the lack of jobs. So with the little money that I might be having, I don't want to go pay for the taxi to go shop from a distance. (P27)*

Moreover, using a bus to travel to and from stores was seen as an unattractive option for these participants. Commuting by bus with groceries was regarded as time-consuming and physically challenging, due to having to wait at stops – a particular inconvenience in winter months – and the always-present risk of spilling one's purchases on a crowded transit vehicle:

> *Travel on bus with groceries bags and stuff like that no good, you know? [...] Yeah, you sit an hour with no – cold too. You have to stop at all the separate bus stops. It's too cold, you have to wait, and stuff like that. (P20)*

> *I don't want to be holding a bag of groceries in a bus that might even spill. (P27)*

Unable to afford a car or taxi trips and unwilling to take the bus, Finley (P20) and Otis (P27) were constrained to doing all of their food purchasing locally. Their main consideration in selecting shopping venues was distance; personal economic circumstances compelled these men to shop at food retailers that were located within a short walk of their homes. Finley, who lived on Finch Avenue, used Long Hui Supermarket, which was located in the plaza across from his apartment building, and Caribbean Island Food Mart, which was a five minute walk away. Otis also used the latter store, as it was situated near his apartment building on Weston Road, in addition to using local convenience stores to procure his food items. These participants only shopped at these retailers because they were convenient:

> *The Chinese store? I just like it because it's close to me. That's it. If I did have another choice, I wouldn't go there. (P20)*

> *It's convenient to me. (P27)*

Had their economic circumstances differed – that is, if they had the money for a car or taxis, and if they felt like they had more of a choice in where they could buy their food from – Finley (P20) and Otis (P27) would have shopped elsewhere. They desired to go to Centra Food Market, another store in Humbermede, as they felt it had a variety of quality products; however, physical and economic accessibility constraints prevented them from presently doing so:

> *The Centra cater for everybody I think, yeah. [...] To me, they have more things, more quality, and it's more put together. [...] I would choose [this] over [Long Hui]. But it's just that store [Long Hui] is close by, and I have to go there. (P20)*

> *[Centra] pretty much [has] a lot of products to choose from and their, their stock, it's regularly, like, you know, changed. [...] Why I haven't been shopping from here is if I go in there, I'm going to buy a lot of stuff and it's not easy for me to bring them home. Another reason is like when I shop in there, I'll be having, like, a variety to pick from, right, and I'm not able to do that. Until I get enough [money] to be shopping in this store, that's when I think I'll go there. (P27)*

In addition, Finley and Otis would have liked to shop outside of their neighbourhood at stores such as No Frills, as they believed this chain offered excellent prices; however, again, mobility restrictions induced by their low incomes inhibited them from leaving Humbermede:

> *I think these stores may be cheaper, too. They have sales and stuff like that, you know. [...] I would choose these stores more. [...] But it's the distance. It's too far away from me, yeah. [...] Very hard, if you have no drive. (P20)*

> *I can't go to No Frills to buy food from there, because there, I'll be spending, like, bus fare when I'm coming back, or taxi. So I decide to go to the closest one. (P27)*

The income and personal mobility levels of Finley (P20) and Otis (P27) meant that their store patronage decisions were entirely functions of distance. The fact that they did all of their grocery shopping within Humbermede was not something these men particularly desired; if their economic conditions had been different, Finley and Otis would have liked to shop outside of their neighbourhood as well. Their status as the only two participants who relied entirely upon the Humbermede food retail environment, then, was a product of constraint more so than choice.

Although Finley (P20) and Otis (P27) were both local shoppers, their perceptions of the level of grocery provision in their neighbourhood differed. Nonetheless, these views were closely associated with their behaviours. Finley's belief that Humbermede was adequately served by food retailers largely stemmed from the fact that he was able to complete his shopping locally; as he required stores within walking distance of his home and found these within Humbermede, Finley viewed the local grocery shopping landscape in positive terms. Otis, on the other hand, did not enjoy shopping at the Humbermede stores he was constrained to visit; they did not meet his expectations in terms of price, item availability, and quality, as I will explain in Section 5.3.3. As such, Otis was an individual who held negative perceptions of his food retail environment but still shopped locally; his economic circumstances compelled him to do so.

5.1.2 – Group B: Combination Shoppers

Nineteen participants (63.3%) shopped at grocery stores both within Humbermede and in surrounding neighbourhoods. The local retail environment was not used extensively by any of these persons. Instead, the shopping landscape in Humbermede merely assumed a supplementary or complementary role.[32] Local stores were used to make small purchases only, and were visited for one or more of the following five reasons.

Eleven people who went to grocery stores in Humbermede used them at least partly out of convenience. When these participants were completing errands in the plazas that housed local food retailers or were passing by these locations and needed a few groceries, they would quickly visit a Humbermede store. Anthony (P1), for instance, occasionally patronized Centra for one or two items he required when he was already at Finchdale Plaza to do his banking:

> *Sometimes the convenience of going to the bank, you're gonna go to the store [Centra] for a particular item or two. (P1)*

Six individuals stated that they used local stores in the event of an emergency. When these people ran out of, or forgot to purchase, a certain item they needed for their cooking, they visited a store in Humbermede to obtain it. Jane (P8) noted that her parents went to Long Hui whenever they were missing a grocery item that they required; this, however, was the extent of their use of this store:

> *My parents like to go grocery shopping there [Long Hui] when there's a little bit of an emergency, or a last-minute item that we need, but we don't do our main grocery shopping there. (P8)*

Six participants utilized retailers in Humbermede to take advantage of sales or low prices on particular items. When these individuals saw specials advertized in flyers or heard about them

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[32] I define 'supplementary' shopping as the act of occasionally purchasing food items at locations other than where one would usually buy these goods. In contrast, I see 'complementary' shopping as involving more regular trips to particular retailers to buy a limited number of products that one would not purchase at another store (see Lo, 2009).

through word of mouth, they went to neighbourhood stores to capitalize on these bargains. Bob

(P25) regularly looked at the flyers of the ethnic supermarkets in Humbermede and travelled to

these stores when he found that some of the items he needed were on sale at these retailers:

> *I mean, I look at the flyers – we get the flyers every week – and I know exactly what I want. I don't go in for anything else except for what I want, unless I see something. You know, if I see milk or something on sale and it's a good price, then I'll pick it up. (P25)*

Seven people cited inexpensive or fresh produce as a reason why they patronized

Humbermede grocery stores. These individuals felt that the fruits and vegetables sold at ethnic

retailers in the neighbourhood were more affordable or were of better quality than what was

found at stores outside of the area. As such, these people used the local food retail environment

to purchase these items specifically; they did not do the rest of their shopping here, as Lisa (P6)

documented:

> *I just go for the vegetables. [...] I don't go shopping up there – only for my vegetables. They do good vegetables. (P6)*

Finally, eight participants utilized Humbermede grocery retailers to obtain culturally-

relevant food items. When these individuals saw that local stores carried traditional foods that

they would otherwise have had to travel considerable distances to obtain, or that they may not

have found at all at other retailers, they chose to patronize venues in the Humbermede shopping

environment. Michelle (P19), a self-identified Jamaican-Canadian woman, explained that she

occasionally visited Caribbean Island Food Mart because it carried Jamaican meat patties that

she could not find at a store outside of the neighbourhood like No Frills:

> *Like if I'm looking for patties, meat patties, I would go to Caribbean Island to buy a certain type of meat patties that I wouldn't get in No Frills. Not that No Frills won't carry meat patties, but they won't carry the meat patties that I would need or that I eat that Caribbean Island would also carry. (P19)*

For the nineteen participants who shopped both within and outside of Humbermede, use of the local food retail environment was limited to 'cherry-picking': making small purchases motivated by convenience, emergencies, sales, and the availability of specific products, like produce or culturally-relevant food. Why did participants in this group only buy a limited proportion of their groceries at stores within Humbermede? Three reasons account for this common shopping behaviour.

First, participants felt that the local retailers they used for cherry-picking purposes were unable to satisfy all of their grocery shopping needs. Fifteen participants noted that these stores did not have everything; they lacked the variety or selection that was required to enable people to fully complete their shopping in one place. Martina (P17) explained that Long Hui Supermarket lacked the North American snacks or drinks that she wished to purchase:

> *They don't have everything I need. [...] Snacks, drinks... yeah, they don't have everything I need. (P17)*

Michelle (P19) found that the variety of products offered at ethnic supermarkets in Humbermede was much less than what was available at stores outside of her neighbourhood:

> *They don't have the same amount of varieties that you would, that I would personally need if I was doing a full grocery shopping. [...] The ones that are right at your doorstep cannot fulfill your needs. (P19)*

Twelve participants specifically cited food preference-availability mismatches as preventing them from doing a larger share of their shopping at Humbermede stores. To these individuals, local retailers lacked their preferred foods and instead sold items that they were unfamiliar with or did not eat. As such, these participants felt that they could not do their major shopping at Humbermede grocery stores. Lisa (P6), a Scottish woman, never bought more than produce at Centra or Long Hui; as these retailers carried Asian foods she did not eat, Lisa believed these

stores could not meet her food acquisition needs. When asked why she did not do more of her grocery shopping at Humbermede stores, Lisa responded:

> *'Cause there's nothing – it's all Asian. And another thing – I don't eat a lot of that. I don't eat a lot of pasta, noodles, and all that stuff, you know. (P6)*

Similarly, Valentina (P2), who used local retailers only for convenience and for their inexpensive produce, explained that she too could do very little shopping at these stores. Retailers like Centra lacked the foods she desired as an Italian woman; instead, they mostly stocked Asian groceries that she did not cook with:

> *You go into the Oriental store, the Canadian and Italian stuff is very minimal, then they have rows and rows of Oriental stuff that you wouldn't use, so it's kinda limited to... I would like them to have more of <u>our</u> kind of food. [...] Most of the stuff is Oriental stuff, so you really don't do that much shopping. (P2)*

The Humbermede retailers that combination shoppers used for cherry-picking functions also failed to satisfy all of their food acquisition needs in two additional ways. Ten participants said that they did not do more of their shopping at local stores in part because these retailers were, on the whole, too expensive. While Humbermede stores may have featured attractive sales or prices on a few particular items, which proved enticing to cherry-pickers, the cost of doing full shopping at these retailers was seen as higher than at stores outside the neighbourhood. As such, local retailers were not used for extensive shopping trips by cost-conscious participants or those with low grocery purchasing power. Michelle (P19), who had only temporary employment, shopped at Humbermede stores just for convenience and to obtain a few cultural foods; she did not do her week's worth of shopping at these retailers because their prices were much higher than what she encountered at supermarket chains located outside of Humbermede:

> *You'll find that the prices are maybe double what you would pay for a regular household name in one of the other supermarkets, so because of that, you know, that's why I kind of look at where I would do a full grocery shopping and where I wouldn't do it. (P19)*

Rajesh (P23), an underemployed immigrant whose foreign credentials were not recognized, felt that he would waste too much money if he made all of his grocery purchases at neighbourhood stores like Long Hui. While this store sold inexpensive produce, which drew him there, Rajesh believed his total grocery bill would be substantially higher if he bought other items at Long Hui due to price mark-ups vis-à-vis mainstream supermarkets:

> *Every time, their Coke will be close to $1 to $2 higher than other Canadian stores. [...] If I am buying everything from, say, Long Hui, I will be spending close to $15 to $20 extra. If I say I will be saving on vegetables, but other products are too high. Say if you want to buy processed food, [...] these are expensive there. (P23)*

Perceptions that stores in the Humbermede food retail environment were expensive overall thus prompted some participants to do only a minimal share of their grocery shopping within their neighbourhood.

In addition, eleven interviewees felt that the local stores they used for cherry-picking purposes did not meet their personal standards in terms of general food quality or freshness. This dissuaded these individuals from purchasing more groceries from these shopping venues. While Jane's (P8) family used Long Hui for emergencies because it was a handy three-minute drive away, they did not do any major shopping at this store as they believed this retailer sold food that was of a substandard quality:

> *Most things, like, they do have – they sell meat there and rice and, like, they do sell veggies and, like, fruit but, again, it's just not the quality that we're looking for, so we've – that type of stuff, we've never really gone to it. [...] I feel like for our family, like, our shopping needs include, like, quality of food and, like, being fresh. [...] And that just really doesn't meet it, our needs. (P8)*

Valentina (P2), who utilized Centra for its inexpensive produce, was dissatisfied with the look of the meat at this store. As her family often ate steaks, hamburgers, and hot dogs, Valentina felt that quality issues prevented her from doing more of her shopping at Centra:

The meat-wise, I wouldn't buy meat there. I don't know. It's just – it looks different to me in there. So I wouldn't buy the meat in there. (P2)

Perceptions that the food sold at Humbermede stores was not always fresh or of a high quality thus also inhibited individuals from filling their shopping baskets at local retailers.

The holding of grievances with Humbermede stores that were visited for cherry-picking purposes was not the only reason why combination shoppers did relatively little food purchasing within the neighbourhood. Local shopping was also limited due to negative outcomes of place likening. Fifteen participants were deterred from using one or more neighbourhood retailers as they felt that strong food preference-availability mismatches existed at these shopping venues. Martina (P17), a Spanish woman, never visited Apna Bazaar; she sensed that she would not be able to find foods which were culturally-relevant to her at a store that specialized in Indian items:

I have never been because I don't think I'll find something that I may be interested in or something that I may use. Apna Bazaar is Indian. So I don't use – I don't think they have what I need. Seasonings are different. The products are different, so I don't go. I've never been. (P17)

Michelle (P19) avoided most of the small ethnic grocery stores in Humbermede because she too felt that these stores were culturally unsuitable shopping spaces:

There's some small little grocery stores that I would never shop at. [...] Based on my culture, some of the products that they carry is not stuff that, you know, I am culturally acquainted with. (P19)

When Humbermede residents strongly believed that they would not be able to find their desired or familiar foods at local stores, they often declined to visit these shopping venues. This form of place likening – one in which store patronage decisions were motivated by assessments of the cultural acceptability of retailers in terms of the products carried – contributed to relatively low levels of use of the Humbermede food retail environment for combination shoppers.

On a similar note, twelve interviewees reported that they were dissuaded from shopping at one or more Humbermede grocery retailers because of perceived ethnic identity mismatches.

114

When participants firmly believed that particular stores in the area targeted, welcomed, or served people other than themselves, they often avoided visiting these retailers. Jane (P8) and Cindy (P15), who self-identified as Asian and Chinese, respectively, explained that their non-use of the small grocery retailers in Humbermede stemmed from the messages conveyed to them by their names. As these stores appeared to target members of ethnic groups other than their own, Jane and Cindy felt that these retailers were not suitable shopping venues for persons like themselves. As such, they did not patronize these stores:

> *Judging from the names, they seem to cater to, like, specific ethnicities or cultures, and none of them are my ethnicity or culture. (P8)*

> *I don't have the culture of ever going in there. (P15)*

Negative outcomes of place likening based on ethnic identity thus further limited use of the Humbermede food retail environment for combination shoppers. Sentiments that a suite of stores in the neighbourhood were culturally unsuitable, judging by the messages relayed through their branding, prevented some participants from doing a greater proportion of their grocery shopping within the Humbermede area.

A third reason why combination shoppers acquired only a small share of their food items locally was that they were not seriously constrained by their circumstances to the Humbermede shopping landscape. Sixteen of the nineteen individuals in this group resided in households with access to a vehicle. These participants could either drive or obtain a ride from family members to shop at stores outside the neighbourhood that were more desirable in terms of variety, selection, price, or quality. In addition, the three combination shoppers who lacked vehicle access exhibited a strong willingness to leave their local food retail environment in order to visit stores that had more attractive characteristics. These participants could afford to and did not mind taking a bus or a taxi to do their shopping. An ability or keenness to travel outside Humbermede to acquire

115

groceries at enticing stores thus further contributed to low shares of food acquisition being done at neighbourhood retailers for combination shoppers.

Unable to satisfy all of their grocery shopping needs at local stores, and having a capacity or desire to travel outside their neighbourhood, combination shoppers acquired most of their food at retailers located in areas other than Humbermede. Draws to these stores were, unsurprisingly, factors which offset the deficiencies that participants had identified with Humbermede retailers.

Food prices, mentioned by eighteen of the nineteen combination shoppers (94.7%), was overwhelmingly the most common reason cited for visiting stores located outside Humbermede. Participants – including those who did not drive – often bypassed the closest grocery retailers to their homes and instead shopped at stores that offered what were seen to be the lowest prices. Distance, therefore, was not the major determinant of store patronage for combination shoppers. These individuals preferred to go the extra mile in order to obtain the best deals, as the following account from Rajesh (P23) illustrates:

> *Long Hui is about half kilometre from my house and Centra is 1.5 kilometre, but I am going to No Frills which is 3 kilometres away. Walmart is 4, 5 kilometres away. [...] Every time, there is a sale. (P23)*

Some combination shoppers visited just one non-local grocery store where they felt confident that they would encounter low food prices on a regular basis. This tended to be a discount supermarket chain. No Frills was frequently mentioned as a shopping destination of choice; interviewees like Paul (P13) believed that this store offered better value for money than other retailers:

> *If you have thirty bucks and you go into Superstore, you'll come out with maybe two bags, in the amount of groceries. But if you go to No Frills, you might come out with five bags. So it's really just the prices and, you know, the sales. (P13)*

Other participants demonstrated greater flexibility in their grocery shopping routines in order to save money. One of three patterns of behaviour was exhibited by these interviewees.

Some had a preferred non-local store where they made most of their purchases, but also went to other retailers when specific food items were on sale. Michelle (P19) usually shopped at No Frills, but occasionally went to Food Basics when the products she desired were on special there:

> *No Frills, every week I go to No Frills. [Food Basics], just sometimes, if they have a good sale and I need something there. (P19)*

Other interviewees were not loyal customers of one particular store. Instead, they rotated their main shopping venue between a few retailers, patronizing the one that had the best overall prices at a given time. Rajesh (P23) explained that he sought out the least expensive store when he did his weekly shopping:

> *Like where do you get the cheap thing, we will go there. Like there was no commitment. Like we will go to No Frills or Food Basics. (P23)*

A final group of participants divided their routine food purchases between multiple stores. They bought specific foods at the retailer they felt offered the lowest prices on those items. Jane (P8) believed that while Costco and Walmart had the best deals on produce, she could save money by purchasing her other groceries at Nations:

> *There's some things where we prefer certain stores. So, like, Costco, we like their avocados. Walmart, bananas and tomatoes. And then I guess either Nations or wherever else is for everything else, yeah. (P8)*

While experience and word-of-mouth contributed to participants' knowledge of where one could find the lowest food prices, flyers were a particularly important aid. Most shoppers who were drawn to stores by their prices had their patronage decisions informed at least partly by the weekly advertisements they received in the mail or with their newspapers. Flyers conveyed useful information about current or future sales and prices, and enabled individuals to determine which store(s) they should visit to save the most money, as Rachel (P22) explained:

> *The most important thing that really determines the factors of where I go is the weekly – the flyers I get every week, 'cause I get flyers every week from different stores. So I look into them. I look at what I need. So my decision is made based on*

those flyers. [...] Those flyers determine where I go. They are the number one factor. (P22)

The concern that most combination shoppers had with obtaining the lowest food prices was motivated by at least one of four factors. Personal economic circumstances, which caused individuals' grocery purchasing power to be low, led to price having a significant influence on store patronage decisions. Participants, whose incomes were limited because they were retired, were receiving social assistance, had temporary or low-paying work, or were unemployed, often adhered to strict budgets when doing their grocery shopping. As every penny saved mattered to these individuals, they sought out stores where their grocery dollars would go the furthest, even if these retailers were located some distance away. Sarah (P16), who was on social assistance and was about to declare bankruptcy, noted:

I'm not gonna go to a supermarket just 'cause it's there – I'm gonna travel out of my way to get cheaper food, yeah, which is kinda stupid, but whatever. (P16)

Household or family structure also contributed to making price an important determinant of store choice. Participants who had many children, were single parents, or lived with extended family members who they had to support were often highly conscious of saving money at the grocery store. Their food dollars had to last in order to ensure that all those people who relied on them could be adequately fed. Budgeting for groceries and obtaining good prices was thus important to Rachel (P22), for instance, a mother of three:

Price is important to me because I'm a mom. I have three kids. [...] I try to get good [food] for my kids, but at the same time I want to make sure that I am getting a good price. (P22)

Some participants suggested that their concern with low food prices stemmed from their family upbringing or cultural background. Anthony (P1), for example, learned to be a frugal shopper because he was raised in a large household that had only one source of income:

I was taught. My mother, she – one salary coming into the household, my mother was always too sick to work, raising four kids and my grandmother, so there was like seven of us in the household, with one dad's salary, all those years, immigrants, not a lot of money, had to carry a mortgage, do this, do that – nothing goes to waste. And, as you can see, I just carried on the tradition. (P1)

Rajesh (P23), whose store choices were also at least partly motivated by price, claimed that saving money and stocking up on inexpensive items was a common practice in his culture:

It is in our culture that even if we don't need anything urgently, we buy it if it's cheap. (P23)

Finally, some interviewees, like Samir (P9), expressed that wanting to save one's hard-earned money was simply a natural human impulse:

Actually, everybody does the human thing – they are looking for the sales. (P9)

Regardless of the precise motivation, a perceived need to obtain low food prices – something not always found at Humbermede stores – encouraged many combination shoppers to acquire their food at retailers located outside of their neighbourhood.

Combination shoppers had criticized stores in the local food retail environment for failing to carry their preferred foods. Accordingly, these people were often also drawn to retailers situated outside of Humbermede that sold the types of items they desired. Identifying food preference-availability matches fuelled, at least partially, non-local store patronage decisions for fourteen of the nineteen combination shoppers (73.7%) I interviewed.

Both mainstream and ethnic supermarkets located outside of Humbermede were seen as attractive to interviewees because they stocked their desired foods. Several participants noted that they could find familiar items at major chain stores. No Frills was often praised for being attentive to the demographics of the neighbourhoods in which they operated and consequently carrying the food items that were relevant to these populations. As Rajesh (P23) explained:

This No Frills on Albion and Finch, they are very, very smart people. They change according to people's requirement. They have almost now everything. I

hardly now goes to an Indian store. Total my requirement is met by No Frills. (P23)

Other participants were attracted by desired food availability to ethnic retailers situated outside the Humbermede grocery shopping landscape. Samir (P9), a recent immigrant also from India, ate traditional dishes consisting of rice and pulses daily. He felt that while some of these items were available locally, the best selection and variety of traditional Indian ingredients was found at India Bazaar, a store located outside his neighbourhood. He was thus enticed to shop there:

Yeah, India Bazaar, they have a lot of stuff. They have a lot of variety of Indian food, so that's why I prefer to go there. (P9)

Finding food preference-availability matches to exist at non-local stores – whether these were mainstream or ethnic retailers – was thus a major draw to doing the majority of one's shopping at retailers outside of Humbermede.

Finally, nine combination shoppers (47.4%) who had said that Humbermede stores were limited in terms of their variety or selection visited retailers located outside their neighbourhood which they felt had everything. The ability to do one-stop shopping was viewed as an attractive store quality; it saved individuals travel time, gas money, or bus fare, making the completion of one's shopping tasks easier and more convenient. Some participants, like Valentina (P2), were drawn to stores that offered all of the grocery items they needed under one roof:

If I'm going shopping to do the household shopping, I usually go to No Frills, because everything is there that I need. (P2)

Other individuals were attracted to stores that not only carried all of their desired food products, but also stocked other types of consumables or provided additional services. The Real Canadian Superstore was a retailer that Amy (P4) particularly liked for this reason:

There's not just the food or the groceries – there's also more like a department store, if you need to grab, like, a towel or something, it's there. There's the pharmaceutical area too. I like that. (P4)

Combination shoppers were inclined to acquire the majority of their food from outside their neighbourhood in part because these stores, unlike Humbermede retailers, had the range of items needed to fill their grocery carts.

Participants who engaged in combination shopping used an average of 1.5 Humbermede stores and 3.8 retailers located in other neighbourhoods. These stores were not necessarily all visited regularly or with the same frequency; some interviewees had a preferred non-local store but also utilized other retailers when good specials were advertised. Of the grocery stores located within Humbermede, Centra Food Market was visited the most often; thirteen combination shoppers (68.4%) patronized this supermarket. Long Hui Supermarket was visited less frequently; nine individuals in this group (47.4%) used this store. Small ethnic grocery stores were utilized by seven combination shoppers (36.7%); of these retailers, Caribbean Island Food Mart was most commonly visited.

In terms of grocery stores located outside of Humbermede, combination shoppers tended to use mainstream supermarkets most heavily. Discount chains were preferred, unsurprising given most shoppers' concern with obtaining low food prices. Various locations of No Frills and Food Basics were patronized by sixteen (84.2%) and eight (42.1%) individuals in this group, respectively. The higher-end Superstore was frequented by seven combination shoppers (36.8%), while Metro – located a considerable distance from Humbermede – was used by only one participant (5.3%). Combination shoppers also travelled outside their local food retail environment to patronize big-box stores and ethnic supermarkets, though they did not do so in large numbers. Five individuals (26.3%) purchased some groceries at Walmart, and three (15.8%) shopped at Costco. The ethnic retailers utilized included Sunny Food Mart, visited by

121

three combination shoppers (15.8%); Fresh Value and Nations, patronized by two participants (10.5%); and the Asian Food Centre, Bestco, India Bazaar, Jian Hing Supermarket, and Smart Choice Foodmart, each used by one individual (5.3%).

Among the nineteen combination shoppers were eight people who felt that Humbermede had enough grocery stores, nine who perceived the area to have too few food retailers, and two who believed the neighbourhood to have no stores at all. These perceptions, while different, were nonetheless closely linked with the specific behaviour of combination shopping.

Shoppers in this group who had said that Humbermede was adequately served by grocery retailers held this opinion because they were not reliant on the local food retail environment to do all of their food purchasing. Their favourable views stemmed from the fact that their preferred grocery stores were located just outside of the neighbourhood, and that local stores existed that they could use for cherry-picking purposes. Happy to visit food retailers in Humbermede only for supplementary or complementary functions, some people in the "enough stores" perception category accordingly engaged in combination shopping.

Some individuals who felt that Humbermede had too few grocery stores shopped both within and outside of their neighbourhood. These participants tended to perceive local stores to not have everything, to have high prices, or to not align with their own food preferences or ethnic identities; as such, they viewed the Humbermede food retail environment in negative terms. Yet, these individuals still regarded neighbourhood retailers as being convenient, handy in the event of an emergency, or attractive for a few specific items. Accordingly, these interviewees engaged in combination shopping; they bought some of their groceries locally, due to these few positive store attributes, but acquired most of their food from non-local stores as a result of their general negative perceptions of the Humbermede food retail environment.

Combination shoppers who said that Humbermede had no grocery stores dismissed local retailers from their perceived choice sets as they felt they were unsuitable venues from which to buy all of their food. Despite this negative view, these individuals still tended to regard some area stores as suitable for supplementary or complementary shopping. As such, they visited local retailers as cherry-pickers but bought most of their food from stores outside their neighbourhood; they, too, were combination shoppers.

5.1.3 – Group C: Non-Local Shoppers

Nine individuals whom I interviewed (30.0%) completely bypassed the grocery retailers located in Humbermede and instead acquired all of their food from stores situated outside of the neighbourhood. Some of their reasons for avoiding Humbermede retailers were the same as those cited by combination shoppers.

Eight non-local shoppers (88.9%) found, through place likening, that food preference-availability or ethnic identity mismatches existed at Humbermede grocery stores. For these individuals, however, such mismatches were perceived as so prevalent and substantial that none of the neighbourhood retailers were seen as personally-suitable shopping venues. Beth (P14), a self-identified Caucasian woman, believed that Humbermede grocery stores served people unlike herself; their names implied they catered to members of ethnic groups other than her own, and their advertisements revealed they sold food that she was unfamiliar with. As such, Beth had absolutely no desire to visit these retailers:

> *I don't even have [a flyer] to show you, 'cause they go right in the garbage, 'cause it's just stuff I don't know. [...] If you have this kind of writing and then you have the "Oriental..." – you're not directing food to me. You're directing food to people – you're selling food that those Oriental people would eat. That's what I assume. [...] They seem too, uh... focal. You know, "Just Caribbean Groceries" and then the other "Indian Grocery." I wouldn't try it then. [...] It's all in the name, and the look. (P14)*

123

The perceptions that Beth had of Humbermede stores echoed those of her fellow non-local shoppers. When participants strongly felt that none of the retailers in the neighbourhood were for them, based on their food preferences or ethnic identifications, they were inclined to avoid these stores and shop elsewhere. Negative outcomes of place likening based on aspects of individuals' identities were thus an important determinant of local store avoidance.

Two non-local shoppers (22.2%) were deterred from using Humbermede retailers due to perceived high food prices. Charlene (P29), for instance, a married mother of three who received disability benefits, felt that it was financially unwise given her circumstances to shop at local stores, as they were overpriced:

> *I don't frequent them. [...] They're overpriced, just ridiculous, so I don't choose to shop like that. [...] I have to think comparison shopping, right, 'cause I'm feeding like five people. (P29)*

Thoughts that Humbermede retailers were economically inaccessible or unattractive thus further discouraged neighbourhood store patronage for some non-local shoppers.

Non-local shoppers offered three additional reasons to account for their not using the Humbermede food retail environment. Five individuals in this group (55.6%) complained that local stores smelled or were not clean. Some had based this assessment on previous experiences, having walked into a retailer to see what it was like, or past a store while doing other errands. Beth (P14) mentioned that the small grocery stores in her neighbourhood appeared dirty, while the larger ethnic supermarkets had a fish odour that she could not tolerate. These attributes further discouraged her from shopping at these retailers:

> *They look dirty, to be quite honest, outside looking in, yeah. That whole plaza behind Shell is just, yuck. [...] I'm not going in somewhere where it smells. (P14)*

Other participants assumed that neighbourhood stores would smell or would be unclean because they were ethnic in nature. Fanny (P12) stated, without ever visiting any Humbermede stores:

> *That's the only thing I find with Oriental stores... if they could keep the odour down. (P12)*

Hostile attitudes towards difference which generated stereotypes, as I have explained in Chapter 4, thus further contributed to neighbourhood store avoidance for non-local shoppers.

Two non-local shoppers (22.2%) said that they were deterred from visiting Humbermede stores because they identified language barriers to exist at these retailers. Carol (P5) explained:

> *That's another reason why I don't use the Oriental stores. They use their own languages a lot, and since I don't speak it, I don't go there. I feel, I feel on the outside, and I don't care for that in any [grocery store]. (P5)*

Perceptions of language mismatches, which caused individuals to feel out of place in particular shopping venues, further discouraged use of the Humbermede food retail environment for non-local shoppers.

Finally, six participants who did all of their shopping outside of Humbermede (66.7%) noted that issues of personal mobility and activity space at least partly inhibited them from using local retailers. Some interviewees who did not drive and who resided in the southern portions of Humbermede reported that the northern areas of the neighbourhood, where grocery stores were located, were inconvenient or time consuming to travel to by bus, as a transfer was required. This caused these participants to either not know of some or all of the retailers in Humbermede, or to avoid using them because they were not easily accessible, as Camilla (P26) articulated:

> *It was kind of a long way to go from where I am, especially if you don't have a car. (P26)*

For people like Camilla, non-use of the Humbermede food retail environment was partly a result of their limited mobility and the restricted activity spaces which resulted from this.

The factors which attracted non-local shoppers to stores situated outside of Humbermede were the same as those that had enticed combination shoppers. Low food prices were, again, the leading draw, cited by all nine individuals (100.0%) in the former group. Obtaining low prices

was seen as important by non-local shoppers for reasons similar to those offered by combination shoppers. Economic circumstances, household or family structure, and personal attitudes towards saving money were mentioned as drivers of behaviours to find the best deals. Non-local shoppers concerned with price exhibited purchasing patterns which mirrored those of their combination shopper peers. Some regularly used one store that offered low prices; others supplemented their shopping with visits to additional retailers when sales were advertised; still more were cherry-pickers, going from store to store to get the best prices on particular food items. Being able to find one's preferred foods (66.7%) and sensing a store to have everything (77.7%) were two additional factors that incited non-local shoppers to use stores located outside of Humbermede. Overall, store attributes and personal preferences or circumstances were critical determinants of patronage decisions for non-local shoppers; geographic distance to retailers was not of primary significance to individuals in this group.

Non-local shoppers visited an average of 3.9 retailers situated outside of Humbermede. Like combination shoppers, these individuals used mainstream supermarkets most extensively. A slight preference for discount chains was evident. No Frills (66.7%), Food Basics (44.4%), Price Chopper (22.2%), and FreshCo (11.1%) were patronized by six, four, two, and one participant(s), respectively. Superstore (66.7%) was also used by six interviewees in this group, but other mid-to-high end stores were not regularly visited; Fortinos and Longos were each used by only one non-local shopper (11.1%). Big-box stores, namely Costco and Walmart, were patronized with low frequency; three people (33.3%) who shopped outside of Humbermede acquired groceries from these retailers. Ethnic supermarkets were used even more sporadically; Smart Choice and T&T Supermarket were both utilized by only one shopper (11.1%) in this group. Dollar stores

were visited by two individuals (22.2%), and specialty stores or retailers located in Chinatown were patronized by one non-local shopper (11.1%).

The group of non-local shoppers that I interviewed was comprised of individuals from all three perception categories that I identified in Chapter 4. Again, these participants' views of the food retail environment in Humbermede were linked with their shopping patterns.

Sensing local stores to be unattractive shopping venues due to identity-based mismatches in terms of food preferences, ethnic identification, and language caused one interviewee to avoid local retailers and instead buy her groceries from outside of the neighbourhood. She nonetheless viewed Humbermede as having enough stores, as she felt the non-local retailers she patronized were located sufficiently close to her neighbourhood that they served the area adequately.

Non-local shoppers who held negative views of Humbermede as having too few or no stores articulated common grievances: local retailers were not for them because of the aforesaid mismatches; area stores had high prices, poor item availability, or sold food that was of a substandard quality; desirable retailers had closed; and/or neighbourhood shopping venues were difficult to get to or were not within participants' usual activity spaces. These complaints fuelled negative evaluations of the Humbermede food retail environment, and also induced shoppers to patronize retailers outside of their neighbourhood, ones that they found to be more enticing.

5.2 – Physical Accessibility to Grocery Stores

While Humbermede residents purchased their groceries at stores located within and/or outside of their neighbourhood, whether or not they faced any challenges in doing so was another matter. I asked participants how they travelled to grocery retailers, how easy or difficult it was for them to reach these stores, and why they experienced physical accessibility to shopping venues in these ways.

<u>5.2.1 – Mode of Transportation to Grocery Stores</u>

As Table 3 shows, eighteen people used one regular mode of transportation to commute to grocery stores, while twelve participants utilized two or more methods. Of those in the former group, most drove a vehicle (50.0% of all interviewees). The majority of multiple-mode users commuted to stores by bus (33.3% of all participants), but occasionally obtained a ride from a friend or family member, took a taxi, and/or walked, because they saw this as more convenient. Bus ridership was primarily a consequence of economic constraints. While three people said they had no interest in driving, or never learned to operate a car, most individuals who took buses to grocery stores did so because they could not afford or did not wish to spend money on a vehicle, due to their low incomes. Age was not a factor influencing travel method choice; Lisa (P6), the oldest participant at 81, still drove and gave rides to her friends or neighbours who were without vehicles.

Mode of Travel to Grocery Stores	Number of Participants (n = 30)	As a % of All Participants (n = 30)
Single Mode	*18*	*60.0%*
Car (as Driver)	15	50.0%
Bus	2	6.7%
Walking	1	3.3%
Multiple Modes	*12*	*40.0%*
Bike and Rides	1	3.3%
Bus and Rides	5	16.7%
Bus and Taxi	2	6.7%
Bus and Walking	2	6.7%
Bus, Rides, Taxis, and Walking	1	3.3%
Car (as Driver) and Rides	1	3.3%

Table 3: The modes of transportation used by participants to travel to grocery stores.

<u>5.2.2 – Experienced Level of Physical Access to Grocery Stores</u>

Twenty-one individuals (70.0%) described physical accessibility to the food retailers they visited in positive terms, stating it was "easy" (eighteen persons, 60.0%) or "not that difficult" (three persons, 10.0%) to travel to these shopping venues. Nine participants (30.0%), however, contended that grocery stores were not easy to reach, noting that it was "time consuming" (five

persons, 16.7%), "sometimes difficult" (two persons, 6.7%), or "very difficult" (two persons, 6.7%) to access food retailers. Not all residents of Humbermede, therefore, experienced physical accessibility to grocery stores in the same way. This finding complicates, and underscores the limitations of and attempts by researchers to frame food retail environments like Humbermede in simple binary terms – as food 'deserts' or 'oases'. Such generalizations mask the possibility that differential degrees of access to stores can be encountered by residents of a neighbourhood. Indeed, personal experiences of physical accessibility to grocery retailers were, in the context of Humbermede, not homogenous, for reasons I explain below.

5.2.3 – Factors Affecting Physical Access to Grocery Stores

The fact that some participants found that grocery stores were easy to reach while others saw them as difficult to get to was largely a product of economic circumstances and the mode of transportation available to these individuals.

Access to a vehicle – whether direct, as a result of driving a car oneself, or indirect, by obtaining a ride from friends or family members – was the most important factor affecting the physical accessibility experiences of Humbermede grocery shoppers. Participants who had direct or indirect access to a car on a regular basis felt that food retailers were easy to get to. All fifteen interviewees who drove a vehicle themselves reported no difficulties travelling to grocery stores. Speaking about the retailers she visited, Cindy (P15) said:

> *They're very accessible. I go by car. [...] I don't have any issues with getting groceries. (P15)*

Participants who drove often reported that trip times to stores were short, routes were direct, and distances were reasonable. Valentina (P2), who shopped at retailers both within and outside of Humbermede, explained:

Centra is just up the street and No Frills, I just take Finch right across to Albion Mall and it's there, and sometimes I'll go to Food Basics which is on Albion, so that's also very easy to get there. It's all a five minutes drive, right? (P2)

Driving a car enabled interviewees to travel to stores with ease, regardless of where they were located. Direct car access allowed participants to complete trips quickly and in a straightforward fashion; driving meant that individuals did not encounter the time-consuming burdens associated with bus travel, such as waiting to be picked up, making transfers, and travelling along extended routes. Driving also enabled participants to visit the stores they wanted on their own schedules. For those individuals who could travel freely by car, conventional distance thresholds used in the literature to define accessibility held little weight; stores that were situated outside of the Humbermede food retail environment were nonetheless seen as easily reachable by interviewees who drove. Participants who could commute to grocery stores by car as a result of having direct access to a vehicle thus faced minimal mobility constraints, and were inclined to describe their experiences of physical access to food retailers in positive terms.

Individuals who did not drive but who could obtain regular rides to stores from others also experienced access to grocery retailers as unproblematic. When participants enjoyed indirect vehicle access by drawing on their social networks, they were able to avoid the temporal and financial costs of travelling to grocery stores by bus, taxis, or foot. As such, these participants found that food retailers were not difficult to access. When asked if he could easily reach the stores he wished to shop at, Samir (P9), a recent immigrant who could not afford a car, stated:

Yes. Actually, I just went with my friend. [...] My friend has a car, so he just came on Sunday, so we went together. [...] [We go] regularly, every weekend. [...] It saves a lot of time, yeah, it saves a lot of time. (P9)

While some individuals admitted that relying on others had drawbacks – Marissa (P24) noted that her trips to the store had to be on others' schedules and that she could not expect a ride when

she suddenly ran out of an item – participants commonly felt that having indirect vehicle access was an overall boon to their ability to easily reach grocery stores.

While there were exceptions, participants who did not drive or who did not get regular rides to food retailers were susceptible to experiencing physical access to stores as problematic. Most individuals who relied on public transportation to take them to their preferred retailers had voiced complaints with this mode of travel. Seven of the nine participants (77.8%) who felt that it was not easy to travel to grocery stores cited the time-consuming nature of bus travel as a key reason for their dissatisfaction with their commuting experience. Two interviewees took specific issue with the level of service of certain transit routes; buses did not operate frequently enough along these routes to enable participants to quickly travel to food retailers, as Fernanda (P7), who often took the 165 bus, explained:

> *It's time-consuming because it's a lot of, how do you call, travelling. You know, there's just take me one hour to go, one hour to come back, so that's two hours. It is because of the TTC. They have no, how do you call, no frequent service, you know. The 84, which is going to Sheppard – yes, it's quite often. But 165, no. (P7)*

Three participants mentioned that transit routes to their preferred grocery stores were not direct; as such, they had to transfer buses on one or more occasions. This inconvenience added to the time it took to travel to food retailers and, as Camilla (P26) discussed, further caused shopping trips to be interpreted as difficult:

> *It's been pretty difficult because of the fact that, yeah, you'd have to switch your bus a million times. (P26)*

In addition to experiencing bus trips as long, some participants felt that they were too expensive. Two individuals were displeased with the fact that they had to pay a return fare when they used public transportation. For Sarah (P16), the heavily indebted woman on social assistance cited earlier, these fares reduced the amount of money she had to spend on food and other necessities, and contributed to her belief that grocery stores were not easily accessible:

131

It's not convenient paying two bus fares for the same fucking bus, just 'cause I went one way, you know, and coming back the other way. It's a piss-off. I pay, like, six dollars to go there and back, and then I pay for my groceries. (P16)

Taking a bus to travel to and from food retailers was also regarded as unfavourable for three further reasons. First, the length of the trip reduced the amount of time that participants had available to do other things. This was a considerable source of frustration for Fanny (P12), who felt that doing her grocery shopping became an all-day affair when she had to use the bus:

When you're waiting for buses, it's time consumed... Anybody who takes a bus knows that, so like, you know, where it might take you maybe twenty minutes by car, it could take you an hour to get to where you need to go, and then an hour to get back, so, like, you know, it's just time-consuming and then your day is gone. Your day is shot. (P12)

Second, the tendency of buses to become crowded forced participants to schedule their shopping trips to avoid commuting during peak times. The fact that some bus users found it unfeasible to travel to stores spontaneously or when it was most convenient for them further contributed to their view that food retailers were not easy to get to. Fernanda (P7) explained:

I have to do it in the morning because I can't do it when it is the rush hour. Oh, it's a killer, no? (P7)

Third, some individuals saw travelling to stores by bus as difficult because it limited the amount of food that they could purchase. Bus users were constrained to buying what they could carry with them; Paul (P13), an occasional bus patron, found that going to stores using this mode of transportation was hard for this reason:

It's really tough. [...] You can only get a certain amount of groceries, you know, 'cause you have to be realistic: can I lift all this stuff at the same time? [...] We can't really do any major shopping taking the bus. (P13)

Perceived negative by-products of bus travel – long trips, infrequent or indirect service, crowded transit vehicles, and no space to stow one's groceries – caused most participants who relied on this mode of transit to experience physical access to food retailers as at least somewhat challenging.

Individuals who used taxis either regularly or occasionally expressed displeasure with the cost of this mode of travel, which led them to feel that physical access to stores was difficult. Paul (P13), who had only temporary employment and therefore could not afford a car, commuted to retailers by taxi when it was too cold to wait outside for a bus with his children, or when he had too many groceries to carry. Taxi rides, however, were a major financial strain for Paul. In the winter, when snow caused the taxi meter to run up, this participant sometimes spent upwards of twenty dollars, one-way, travelling to No Frills. High fares took money out of Paul's grocery budget; he often had to make sacrifices, such as eating less or abstaining from buying his preferred foods, so that taxi drivers could be paid and that his children could still eat well. As this situation was less than ideal, Paul felt that accessing food retailers was a challenge:

> *The taxi goes up because they're slower also for safety reasons and traffic and everything else. [...] I remember we paid twenty-four dollars one way. [...] Once that starts happening, we really, we have to start saying, hey, well, instead of putting twenty-four dollars towards, you know, food [...], we have to take that money out of that and just give it to the taxi driver, and it's really a pain. It really is. We sacrifice. And it usually has nothing to do with the kids – it's us [him and his wife]. Like we'll gladly sacrifice whatever we want so that the kids are able to continue to eat in a manner that they need to. [...] I, for instance, may like these little caramel pie things. No caramel pie for me. Or I may like a certain type of hotdogs. No hotdogs. [...] It's just really sacrifice. (P13)*

Finally, walking was associated with both positive and negative experiences of access to grocery stores. Finley (P20) felt that food retailers were easy to access because the stores he went to were conveniently located across the road from his apartment:

> *It's not too difficult, no. It's not too difficult, because it's close – ten minutes, five minutes away. (P20)*

Otis (P27), however, described grocery stores as very difficult to reach, for two reasons. First, Otis encountered a longer walk to reach the retailers he visited than did Finley. He found that it was hard to carry a significant quantity of groceries this distance, which prompted him to instead make multiple, small trips to stores. Having to do so had a debilitating effect on Otis; he felt like

a second-class citizen because he was not able to purchase groceries in timely, one-stop fashion as other individuals could:

> *If' I'm going to buy like a meal... If I wanted to buy like two packs for a meal, it's going to be heavy for me, so I have to get one pack so that next time I go get another pack and I didn't even intend to go twice. So that's a kind of minus for me. It makes me feel like there are groups of people in this country. Groups... different, many groups. So for my group, it's like unable, unable group. It makes me feel like I'm not able. (P27)*

Moreover, Otis believed the stores he could walk to did not meet his expectations in terms of quality, freshness, variety, or the availability of culturally-relevant foods:

> *They are not of good quality. [...] They spoil quick. [...] I don't get an opportunity to eat my own country food. [...] I am not happy or satisfied because these stores don't meet what I expect of them. (P27)*

Retailers which he had more favourable opinions of, however, were located too far away from his home to travel to by foot. This fact further contributed to Otis' view that grocery stores were not easy to get to; the retailers he wished to visit were not accessible by walking.

5.3 – Satisfaction with Food Retailers Visited

While perceptions of the local food retail environment and experiences of physical access to grocery stores constituted part of the food accessibility picture in Humbermede, also important was the ultimate degree to which residents were satisfied with the retailers that they patronized.[33] I asked participants what they liked and/or disliked about the stores they visited and the food they acquired from these locations, and I inquired if these retailers satisfied their needs. I also determined how content individuals were, overall, with shopping at these grocery stores.

Twenty-six of the thirty interviewees (86.7%) expressed that they were very satisfied with the retailers they bought food from. Three participants (10.0%) were somewhat content;

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[33] In this section, I explore participants' views of the stores they actually purchased their groceries from. As Section 5.1 made clear, these retailers were not necessarily the closest stores to individuals' homes and were not always found within Humbermede.

these individuals felt that the stores they used, while attractive in some ways, had one or more deficiencies that made their shopping experiences less than ideal. Only one person (3.3%) was dissatisfied with the stores he acquired food from. Disaggregating this satisfaction profile based on the perception, behaviour, and experience categories I presented earlier in Chapters 4 and 5 reveals a few interesting trends.

Food Retail Environment Perception	Number of Participants by Satisfaction Level (n = 30)		
	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Enough Stores	9	1	0
Not Enough Stores	10	2	1
No Stores	7	0	0

Table 4: The relationship between Humbermede food retail environment perceptions and levels of satisfaction with the stores that individuals procured food from.

First, as Table 4 shows, perceptions of the local Humbermede food retail environment did not always correspond to levels of satisfaction with the stores that individuals visited. Many participants who felt that Humbermede had too few or even no retailers were nonetheless very satisfied with their food acquisition outcomes. This contentment stemmed from the fact that these individuals were able to travel to retailers located outside their neighbourhood which they deemed acceptable, and bought their food from these stores. The one interviewee who expressed displeasure with his food purchases was constrained by his economic circumstances to using the Humbermede grocery shopping landscape, one which he did not find very enticing. As such, the link between his views of the neighbourhood and his food acquisition experiences was to be expected.

Type of Shopper	Number of Participants by Satisfaction Level (n = 30)		
	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Local Shoppers	0	1	1
Combination Shoppers	17	2	0
Non-Local Shoppers	9	0	0

Table 5: The links between shopping behaviours and levels of satisfaction with the stores that individuals procured food from.

Table 5, which compares the shopping behaviours I outlined in Section 5.1 with store satisfaction levels, further clarifies these points. As this table alludes to, combination and non-local shoppers often sought out and patronized stores that they were content with; local shoppers, who faced mobility constraints, were forced to use area retailers that they did not always think highly of. These findings suggest that the food retail environment in Humbermede did not function to determine satisfaction outcomes for all participants; only for those people who were constrained by economic factors to doing all of their shopping within the neighbourhood did perceptions of the local landscape translate into food acquisition experiences.

Physical Accessibility to Food Retailers	Number of Participants by Satisfaction Level (n = 30)		
	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Dissatisfied
"Easy" or "Not that Difficult"	20	1	0
"Time-Consuming" or "Difficult"	6	2	1

Table 6: The connections between physical accessibility experiences and levels of satisfaction with the stores that individuals procured food from.

A second point worth noting is that while nine participants (30.0%) experienced physical access to grocery stores as at least somewhat challenging, only one individual (3.3%) was unable to patronize a store that he was happy with. As Table 6 shows, six interviewees who felt that retailers were time-consuming or difficult to access were nonetheless ultimately content with the stores they used. Among these six participants were individuals who took buses or taxis to stores, walked, or obtained rides from friends or family members. For most interviewees who lacked direct vehicle access, not driving – while it made food acquisition a challenge – did not prevent them from obtaining groceries and visiting retailers that they were satisfied with. The majority of individuals who did not drive still demonstrated considerable agency, travelling to stores outside of their neighbourhood using alternative means of transportation so they could visit shopping venues that met their needs. This exercise of agency, and the high levels of satisfaction which

resulted from it, complicates some of the dominant assumptions in the recent food accessibility literature, a topic that I return to in Section 5.4. In the next three subsections, I offer additional insight into the shopping experiences of Humbermede residents based on their satisfaction levels.

5.3.1 – Group A: Very Satisfied Shoppers

Individuals who were content, overall, with the stores that they patronized were skilled navigators of retail landscapes, both within and outside of Humbermede. They engaged in one of two strategies which gave rise to their satisfaction. Some sought out and visited one particular retailer which exhibited most or all of the attributes they desired in a store; oftentimes this meant bypassing the closest shopping venue in favour of one that was better-suited to meeting one's needs. Christina (P11) found that Superstore sold higher-quality products, featured better prices, and had a wider selection of items than did the stores in her neighbourhood; she often went to this retailer to buy all of her groceries, and was very happy in doing so:

> *Since the Superstore opened, that's – that can easily be my one-stop shopping. It's just going to the Superstore for a hundred percent of my groceries. [...] I really like the Superstore. [...] I can find anything I need. [...] Food products are... great, you know. And prices, you know. (P11)*

Other interviewees used a combination of stores for their strengths; while each retailer on its own fell short of fully satisfying these individuals, visiting them in conjunction enabled all of their shopping needs to be met. Some participants, like Cindy (P15) and Rajesh (P23), felt that ethnic supermarkets sold a greater variety of fresh produce than mainstream stores, which were limited in what they offered. At the same time, the latter retailers were seen to stock a better selection of name-brand items or North American foods than did ethnic stores. Visiting both sets of retailers, while inadequate on their own, allowed these individuals to be very satisfied overall:

> *Yeah, so like I said, the Asian superstores, I tend to buy the fresh produce. [...] At, you know, my No Frills and my Superstore, I buy, like, the brand-name product. So it could be shampoo; it could be, um, it could be ketchup; it could be, uh, you*

know, spices, sugar, anything like that where... it's just commercially brand-name, yeah. [...] I'd say I'm pretty satisfied. They're serving my needs. (P15)

In No Frills, for vegetables, you have very limited choice. I will say no choice. They are getting good stuff for salad making, not for Indian cooking. Like if you want to go into vegetables and this and that stuff, you will find hardly two, three vegetables there in No Frills. You go to Fresh Value, there are more than fifteen kinds of vegetables. So readymade items, ready to eat, I buy from No Frills. Fresh produce from Fresh Value. [...] If you are looking for cereals, these are good at No Frills, not good at Fresh Value. [...] I am close to ninety percent satisfied, with these stores. (P23)

Other people, like Fernanda (P7), went from store to store to obtain the best deals. While no retailer on its own totally satisfied her in terms of sales, Fernanda's cherry-picking behaviour meant that she maximized her savings at the end of the day. This left her quite content:

Depends on which one is the ones they are, how you call, on special. You know, like you go in one store and they have that, like, sugar for $1.97. You cross the street and you find the sugar a little bit more expensive, you know. So I go in there [the first store] and the ones – it takes me a little bit more time to go, but you know, it's just only a few steps, you know, across the street and, you know, you shop. [...] I'm happy. (P7)

Participants who were very satisfied with the stores they visited, whether one retailer or a few, mentioned similar reasons for their contentment. Of the twenty-six individuals in this group, twenty-two (84.6%) pointed to sales or good prices as a source of satisfaction; seventeen (65.4%) cited high quality or freshness as a factor that contributed to their happiness; fifteen (57.7%) found variety to be pleasing; and ten (38.5%) derived contentment from finding their preferred foods to be available. The reasons that interviewees offered for their satisfaction with retailers were unsurprising; they aligned closely to the shopping motivations these participants provided, which I discussed in Section 5.1. Indeed, satisfied shoppers were those who found what they were looking for in the retailers that they visited.

<u>5.3.2 – Group B: Somewhat Satisfied Shoppers</u>

Three individuals were somewhat satisfied with the stores that they patronized. For these shoppers, the retailers they used had the attributes that they felt were most important given their circumstances, which drew them to these venues; however, these people identified problems with these stores that detracted from their overall experiences. Paul (P13) and Sarah (P16), who had low incomes and therefore weak grocery purchasing power, went to No Frills, as it offered discounted prices. The fact that this store was affordable was a source of contentment for these two shoppers:

> *Everything that I need – the things that I usually shop for – are <u>completely</u> affordable, which means, basically, I save money. (P13)*

> *I love No Frills 'cause of the deals. [...] It's cheap, and I can afford it. (P16)*

Finley (P20), who could not afford a car, was happy to use the nearby Long Hui Supermarket:

> *I just like it because it's close to me. (P20)*

Each of these participants, however, had criticisms of the stores they visited. All three felt that the quality or freshness of the items sold at these retailers was substandard. Paul (P13) noted that it always took him a few minutes to find produce that was in good condition at the No Frills location he patronized:

> *Some of their fruits and vegetables, um, not to say that it's old or it's just been sitting around, but a lot of times you'll find that some of it is kinda beat-up, you know. Like when I'm looking for an apple, I'm looking all around it and I'll find these bruises, like on the apple, and ok, I'll have to search around for maybe three to four minutes just to find, you know, good ones. (P13)*

Perhaps more seriously, Sarah (P16) commented that the meat and dairy products found at the No Frills she went to often spoiled quickly:

> *Their meat, it doesn't last as long. [...] A lot of things I've noticed are either expired or they go bad fast. It's not great. Like I don't want to walk into a grocery store where all the cream and milk are expired by, like, a week. Someone should*

> *be checking on that, right? Daily. But they weren't. And I've done this – twice this happened, you know. (P16)*

Finley (P20) made similar remarks about Long Hui. The food he bought there was often spoiled, forcing him to make additional trips to the store to return or exchange items:

> *Okay, sometimes you go in there, they have things that is not good. You go there and purchase, then you have to bring it back. Yeah. Like you go there, you buy fish, it's spoiled. It's no good. You have to bring it back. Stuff like that. You go buy, like, you know, like banana and stuff like that – they spoil. (P20)*

Such grievances detracted from these participants' contentment with the retailers they visited. While such stores met their most fundamental needs – price or proximity – they simultaneously fell short in other ways, particularly quality. Economic constraints meant that these retailers were still the best options for these individuals; they were affordable and convenient. Using them, however, left much to be desired. As such, Paul, Sarah, and Finley were only somewhat satisfied with their grocery shopping experiences.

5.3.3 – Group C: Dissatisfied Shoppers

One participant expressed significant displeasure with the grocery stores he visited – Otis (P27), the unemployed man I mentioned earlier who was constrained to utilizing food retailers he could walk to because he could not afford a car, taxi, or bus fare. For Otis, the grocery stores that were situated within walking distance of his apartment were not to his liking. This participant identified three critical grievances with these retailers, each of which had a negative impact on his emotional and/or physical well-being.

First, Otis (P27) noted that the food sold at the grocery stores that he could walk to was poor in quality. Items were often about to expire, and the foods that he purchased tended to spoil rapidly:

> *The food normally there, you go there to buy food, it's like due date to expire. [...] They spoil quick. (P27)*

There was little consistency in terms of the taste of what was sold; Otis suspected that stores

packaged together items that were prepared at different times to avoid wasting their product:

> *This foods, they are... they tend to mix it. Yeah. You can buy... if you want to buy chicken, you expect like this chicken should taste the same as this, right? This piece of chicken, if I'm buying a thigh of chicken, if I'm buying two thighs, there's a chance like when you cook these thighs, they never taste the same. This one is more hard and this one is like a little bit soft. So they are like... they mix up foods that were prepared on different dates. So it's not easy to know the expiry, when they were prepared, so... (P27)*

Moreover, many foods that were sold at stores in his area came in frozen form; this concerned

Otis, as he did not know how long these items had been sitting on shelves for:

> *When I go shop there, the only food I get to buy is, like, frozen, imported food, and that one doesn't make me feel like I'm eating a good food because I don't even know how long that food has been frozen for, and so that also affects me so bad. (P27)*

That Otis encountered poor-quality food at the stores he visited was a particular source of his

discontent. This participant had to eat to sustain himself, but all that was available was food that

he thought was rejected by other higher-end stores. Not only did Otis believe that consuming

these items might be putting his health at risk, he expressed that this situation made him feel like

he led an impoverished life, a source of psychological distress to him:

> *I feel like I'm living a low-class life. Because when I tend to shop there... I mean, say I shop for buying rice, that rice, when you think it's a good rice like you expect to buy from, like, a store like No Frills, when I bring it home, try to cook, that's when you go, like, "this rice, maybe it was a rejected rice." So these stores, the kinds of foods they sell, is the refurbished, like, products that cannot be in the big stores, that are rejected. That's what they bring in to the small stores to sell. [...] I'm pretty much sure they are not approved to be in the market. But they force it to the market, so whoever buys that kind of food is not buying the approved food from the Ministry of even Health. (P27)*

Second, Otis (P27) expressed frustration with item availability at the stores he used. Otis

recently moved to Canada from Kenya, and wanted to buy traditional Kenyan foods; being able

to eat these items, he felt, was critical to the maintenance of his African identity. He could not,

however, find these groceries at the retailers he used. As such, Otis was forced to eat unfamiliar food, an outcome which he saw as extremely distressing:

> *I don't get an opportunity to eat my own country food because I don't have anybody from my country who has a store. So I eat from different stores that sell different food that I wasn't used to. Make me feel like I am trapped. (P27)*

In addition to the unavailability of culturally-relevant foods, Otis felt that fresh fruit was hard to find at the stores he could travel to. As a result, he sometimes resorted to buying nutritionally-poor, energy-dense foods at convenience stores, simply so he could sustain himself:

> *If I go to the convenience store across the street there, I'm going to buy chocolate. [...] I can get milk, soda, and bread. That one will enable me to go for, like, two days. [...] In my mind, I'm like I wanted to get some greens, get to eat some tomatoes, fruits, but I can't get fresh fruits around there. (P27)*

The fact that Otis could not find the types of food that he wanted to purchase at the retailers he utilized further contributed to his discontentment with these shopping venues.

Finally, Otis (P27) felt that food prices were high at the stores he visited. Given his lack of a steady income and his minimal savings, Otis could not afford to buy groceries from these retailers on a regular basis. As such, he went without food for several days during the week. Otis believed that his tendency to fall ill frequently was a result of his inability to eat well:

> *I'm thinking right now I'm not healthy because I sometimes go without food. For three to four days, or five. [...] Money thing. (P27)*

He occasionally accepted food from friends when he was unable to do his own shopping; doing so, however, made Otis feel like a burden to others. It also caused him to believe he did not have a true, independent existence; he resigned himself to the idea that life in a shelter might be more appropriate for him:

> *Because I haven't been working and so... Sometimes I get food from friends. It still makes me feel like more of maybe I have no life. Like I'm living... I don't even know if this country has, like, "lines", like "this is poverty line, this is, you know, upper class line", you know, but it makes me feel like... It makes me feel like it's*

> *better to be living in a shelter than to be having your own house where you can't even enjoy foods, yeah. (P27)*

High food prices, taken in conjunction with his personal financial circumstances, added to Otis' dissatisfaction with the retailers he patronized. This participant wished that groceries were more affordable at these stores so that he could keep his body nourished and care for himself.

Otis (P27) desired to do his shopping at retailers that had an affordable and fresh selection of the items he wanted; the stores that his economic circumstances and limited mobility constrained him to patronize, however, did not meet these expectations. As such, Otis was a dissatisfied grocery shopper:

> *I am not happy or satisfied because these stores don't meet what I expect of them. (P27)*

5.4 – Synthesis, Implications, and Conclusions

The process of grocery acquisition was not engaged in and experienced in an unvarying fashion by all of the Humbermede residents I interviewed. Some individuals were local shoppers; others used only non-local retailers; still more did their food purchasing at stores both within and outside of their neighbourhood. Physical access to grocery retailers was also not experienced uniformly, nor was the degree to which interviewees were satisfied with the stores they visited. These findings have key theoretical implications.

The analysis I have presented in this chapter adds a layer of complexity to the notion of 'food access' and challenges several assumptions concerning the behaviours of grocery shoppers that have become dominant in the food accessibility literature (Ledoux & Vojnovic, 2013). Observations from my case study in Humbermede illustrate the dangers of treating consumers as homogenous actors, and reveal that store patronage decisions are not always simple functions of distance. Dimensions of participants' socio-cultural identities, such as their food preferences or

ethnic identifications, and aspects of their economic circumstances, like their levels of income or mobility, often intersected with retailer attributes to influence personal shopping behaviours and experiences. For some interviewees, even low-income earners without cars, factors such as food prices and the availability of one's desired groceries were more important determinants of store choice than was the geographic proximity of retailers. Only for the most economically-deprived individuals – participants such as Otis (P27) – did the local grocery shopping landscape in Humbermede assume a relatively high level of importance.

Given these findings, future studies of food access and food retail environments would benefit from a greater degree of attention, in their analyses, to store characteristics and consumer preferences or needs. A consideration of these factors might better represent the ways in which individuals actually engage with their surroundings and experience access to food. Efforts could also be undertaken to seek out, and learn from, individuals in the world like Otis (P27). If food accessibility is to be strengthened in any spatial location – Toronto or elsewhere – knowledge of the changes that would be most effective could come from those who encounter difficulties on an everyday basis.

6. Conclusion

Since the term 'food desert' was popularized in the mid-1990s (Wrigley, 2002), research on the topic of food accessibility has proliferated in North American and European settings. The resultant literature has often taken at its core a key set of assumptions: (a) that all stores are equally attractive or unattractive to shoppers, who are homogenous in terms of their preferences and behaviours; (b) that individuals will patronize the shopping venue that is closest to their homes; and (c) that food access is fundamentally an issue of spatial proximity to grocery retailers (Ledoux & Vojnovic, 2013).

The research I have conducted in Humbermede, Toronto and discussed in the preceding chapters, however, invites us to pause and critically reassess these dominant approaches. Indeed, in terms of their perceptions of the local food retail environment and their behaviours in buying groceries, most residents of Humbermede did not think about or experience food accessibility in the precise fashion presupposed by much of the contemporary literature.

For most of the individuals I interviewed, identity and life circumstance-related factors – not merely distance – coalesced to influence both their views of the immediate grocery shopping landscape and their store patronage decisions. The food preferences that participants had, their ethnic identifications, the languages they spoke, and their attitudes towards difference, coupled with their grocery purchasing power, their physical mobility levels, their residential locations, and the lengths of time they had lived in their neighbourhood, all shaped to varying degrees their personal understandings of food accessibility. These unique positionalities caused interviewees to offer multiple interpretations of Humbermede as having enough, too few, or even no stores; they also invoked divergent experiences of grocery acquisition, in terms of the retailers that people utilized and the ease with which they made these trips.

145

I thus find it too essentializing to use labels such as 'desert' or 'oasis' to describe food accessibility in Humbermede; they risk obscuring the complexities surrounding the term 'access' when they are invoked in this particular sense. As my interviews revealed, the physical presence of retailers in a particular location was not enough to instil in individuals a sense of having access to food. For many, these stores had to also be acceptable socio-culturally, in terms of selling one's preferred items and conveying welcoming messages via their branding or staff; and economically, through their prices. This acceptability was assessed by participants through place likening; indeed, Rosenbaum and Montoya's (2007) concept was of significant relevance here. Individuals who perceived retailers to be congruent with their own personal identities and needs often thought favourably of these stores and patronized them, while those who felt mismatches existed tended to develop negative views of, and avoid, these retailers. While several grocery stores were found within Humbermede, not all individuals felt that these shopping venues served them. Invoking binary labels to describe this neighbourhood, then, would misrepresent or conceal the multiple meanings that participants attached to this grocery shopping landscape.

Very few of the Humbermede residents I interviewed ascribed significance to distance as a factor that governed their store choices. Only two people, whose mobility was most restricted due to economic constraints, did most of their shopping at the retailers that were the closest to their homes. Most others – including people who did not drive – bypassed nearby stores which they saw as deficient and instead patronized more-distant retailers which better met their needs in terms of price, item availability, or quality. The majority of Humbermede shoppers I spoke with, therefore, demonstrated considerable agency in their food acquisition behaviours. They used the resources at their disposal – whether this may have been a car, calling a friend, or taking a bus or taxi – to travel to the grocery stores that possessed the characteristics they valued. The tendency I

observed for store attributes, like price or the availability of one's preferred items, to outweigh concerns about distance has potential implications; it calls into question the true importance of local food retail environments for consumption outcomes. If most Humbermede residents did not buy the majority of their groceries within their immediate neighbourhood, might nutrition-based studies of food intakes and obesogenic environments[34] – which assume that people shop at the closest stores (Ledoux & Vojnovic, 2013) – be based on somewhat unstable foundations? This is an issue which warrants further research.

My investigation of the shopping landscape views and grocery acquisition experiences of Humbermede residents was merely a case study of one particular area at one point in time. As such, the findings that I have presented here are not necessarily generalizable to other settings. It would be useful, however, to conduct similar research in additional locations to determine if the processes and patterns that were evident in Humbermede, such as place likening, operate on a larger scale.

Future studies could investigate whether variations in food retail environment perceptions and grocery acquisition experiences exist within demographic groups. While I have observed and noted a few general trends within my sample – for instance, Spanish and African participants had divergent views of local stores – other questions remain unexplored, both in the Humbermede context and elsewhere. Do recent immigrants from a given country ascribe greater significance to traditional food availability or ethnic identity than their second- or third-generation counterparts when it comes to their shopping environment perceptions and store choices? Do retired seniors and working-age adults of similar ethnic backgrounds and income levels view their local retail

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[34] 'Obesogenic environments' are spatial landscapes that promote the consumption of energy-dense foods while also encouraging sedentary behaviours (Castree, Kitchin, & Rogers, 2013). Areas that are devoid of supermarkets and are instead populated by convenience stores selling nutritionally-poor items are often considered to be obesogenic environments (e.g. Cummins & Macintyre, 2006).

landscape in the same way, or might age influence their shopping needs and attitudes toward particular stores? Taking up these questions could generate more nuanced understandings of food retail environments and grocery purchasing behaviours than are currently found in the literature. The findings of my case study could be used to develop a questionnaire for a large-scale project that addresses these concerns.

Food preferences emerged as a salient factor affecting store perceptions and approach or avoidance decisions in my research. While many participants spoke of the foods they preferred for cultural reasons, only a few – most notably Julian (P3) – explicitly associated preferences with health concerns. To what extent do personal understandings of 'health' and 'healthy eating' impact the food preferences, store patronage decisions, and purchasing outcomes of residents of Humbermede or individuals living elsewhere? Addressing this question could add another useful dimension to contemporary knowledge of consumer behaviour and shopping environments.

Methodologically, my research was limited to a series of interviews with residents of Humbermede. While participants had mentioned that several retail changes had occurred in their neighbourhood – the closure of a No Frills and a Galati Brothers Supermarket, for instance – and had expressed that the current suite of stores were not always personally acceptable or enticing, I was unable, due to financial and temporal constraints, to further investigate these issues by speaking with supermarket owners or managers. Why have retailers that formerly operated locations in Humbermede moved out of the area? Why have ethnic grocery stores come to dominate the Humbermede retail landscape while mainstream supermarkets, on the other hand, are absent? Who do neighbourhood retailers see as their target clientele? How do they attempt to meet the needs of such shoppers, and do they regard these strategies as successful? How do local stores in Humbermede currently survive, given that nearly all of the individuals I interviewed did

most of their grocery shopping outside of the neighbourhood? Answers to such questions could be a useful complement to the material I have presented in this thesis. Moreover, they could shed instructive light on how grocery retailers make locational and service decisions, topics that the contemporary food accessibility literature has not yet addressed. Further research which engages with those involved in the selling of food is thus warranted.

While a number of issues certainly remain that require scholarly inquiry, I have, in this thesis, begun to mitigate several gaps in the extant body of work on food accessibility. I provide a response to the previously-unanswered question of how individuals themselves view access to food in a neighbourhood where only ethnic stores are present, one where map-based studies have offered conflicting interpretations as to the level of local grocery provision. My study draws new attention to the linkages between identity and life circumstances, on the one hand, and perceived food access, on the other. This investigation is also the first, to my knowledge, to use the concept of place likening in a food retail environment context. I reveal that perceptions of grocery shopping landscapes and food purchasing behaviours can have critical socio-cultural, economic, and spatiotemporal aspects; in doing so, I challenge prevailing research assumptions that afford primacy to distance and treat consumers and retailers as homogenous. While the operators of Humbermede grocery stores may find the consumer behaviour information that I presented in the preceding chapters practically useful, it is my ultimate hope that this research will aid in making more robust the contemporary literature and theory on food accessibility – in the process, disrupting the food desert/oasis binary.

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
For Research Interviews on Grocery Shopping

Attention apartment residents!

A Master's student at York University is currently conducting research on how people in your neighbourhood view access to supermarkets and grocery stores.

Volunteers are needed to participate in a one-time, 60-minute interview. You are eligible to be interviewed if you are over 18 years old and are familiar with your household's grocery shopping.

In appreciation for your time, you will receive a $25 gift card to a store of your choice, such as Walmart or Canadian Tire, on completion of the interview.

For more information about this research, or to volunteer for an interview, please contact Michael Chrobok, preferably before Friday, July 26th, at:
- (416) 550-2304 (Call or Text)
- mchrobok@yorku.ca
- mikechrobok@gmail.com (Preferred)

This research has been reviewed and approved by York University's Human Participants Review Sub-Committee.

Appendix B: Participant Characteristics

ID	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Ethnic Identity (Self-Identified)	Country of Birth	Dwelling Type	Length of Residence (Years)	Employment Status (Self-Reported)	Annual Household Income ($)	Household Vehicle Access	Weekly Grocery Spending ($)
1	Anthony	Male	57	Italian-Canadian	Canada	House	42	Self-Employed	50,000-59,999	Yes	100
2	Valentina	Female	53	Italian	Italy	House	25	Homemaker	60,000-69,999	Yes	200
3	Julian	Male	33	Filipino	Philippines	House	1	Works Full-Time	50,000-59,999	Yes	100
4	Amy	Female	50	Portuguese	Canada	House	7	Homemaker	60,000-79,999	Yes	150
5	Carol	Female	70	Canadian	Holland	House	25	Retired	60,000-69,999	Yes	100
6	Lisa	Female	81	Scottish	Canada	House	51	Registered Nurse	30,000-39,999	Yes	100
7	Fernanda	Female	70	Mexican	Mexico	House	7.5	Retired	30,000-39,999	No	100
8	Jane	Female	22	Asian	Canada	House	20	Unemployed	80,000-89,999	Yes	125
9	Samir	Male	32	Indian	India	House	2	Employed	30,000-39,999	No	70-80
10	Isabelle	Female	58	Italian	Italy	House	37	Homemaker	80,000-89,999	Yes	150-200
11	Christina	Female	47	White Canadian	Canada	Apartment	26	Works Full Time	80,000-89,999	Yes	150
12	Fanny	Female	63	Canadian	Canada	Apartment	35	Cleaner	40,000-49,999	No	100
13	Paul	Male	27	African-American	United States	Apartment	1.5	Temporary Work	20,000-29,999	No	62.5
14	Beth	Female	39	Caucasian	Canada	House	1	Homemaker	> 100,000	Yes	150-175
15	Cindy	Female	37	Chinese	Philippines	House	1.17	Works Full Time	80,000-89,999	Yes	65
16	Sarah	Female	21	Canadian	Canada	Apartment	0.25	Assistant Chef	20,000-29,999	No	100-150
17	Martina	Female	35	Spanish	Dominican Republic	Apartment	5	Works at BMO	40,000-49,999	Yes	80
18	Katrina	Female	30	West Indian/Caribbean	Trinidad	Apartment	3	Law Clerk	60,000-69,999	Yes	150
19	Michelle	Female	49	Jamaican-Canadian	Jamaica	House	11	Temporary Full-Time	50,000-59,999	Yes	110
20	Finley	Male	32	Jamaican	Jamaica	Apartment	2	Working	40,000-49,999	Yes	150
21	Sofia	Female	32	Spanish	Mexico	Apartment	2	Receptionist	30,000-39,999	Yes	150
22	Rachel	Female	36	African	Africa	Social Housing	5	Student	50,000-59,999	Yes	250
23	Rajesh	Male	48	Indian	India	Apartment	10	Employed	80,000-89,999	Yes	125
24	Marissa	Female	25	African	Nigeria	Social Housing	1	Student	20,000-29,999	Yes	150
25	Bob	Male	60	French-Canadian	Canada	Apartment	43	Retired	30,000-39,999	Yes	100
26	Camilla	Female	22	Filipino	Canada	Apartment	1	Unemployed	30,000-39,999	No	75-100
27	Otis	Male	26	African	Kenya	Apartment	2	Unemployed	< 20,000	No	100
28	Afia	Female	21	African	Burundi	Social Housing	0.5	Unemployed	30,000-39,999	Yes	250
29	Charlene	Female	46	Canadian-Italian	Canada	Apartment	1.25	Homemaker	30,000-49,999	No	100-150
30	Ricardo	Male	36	Latino	Canada	Apartment	12.5	Full-Time at Airport	40,000-49,999	Yes	200

Disrupting the Food Desert/Oasis Binary:
Ethnic Grocery Retailers and Perceptions of Food Access in Humbermede, Toronto

Script: Oral Informed Consent – To Be Used with Residents

July 2013

My name is Michael Chrobok and I am a graduate student at York University, studying geography. I am working on my Master of Arts degree, and as part of my program requirements, I must write a thesis. My thesis is called "Disrupting the Food Desert/Oasis Binary: Ethnic Grocery Retailers and Perceptions of Food Access in Humbermede, Toronto".

My research seeks to understand how people living in multicultural neighbourhoods view access to food. I am especially interested in understanding how important or unimportant people's ethnic identity, cultural preferences, and personal circumstances are in shaping their views. The findings of my work will be written up as thesis chapters, and may be published as journal articles at a later date.

Your community of Humbermede, Toronto has been chosen as the focus of this research. You are invited to take part in this study. Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in a one-time interview, wherein you will be invited to respond to a series of open-ended questions. The interview will take about an hour.

The topics that will be covered in this interview include:
- Your length of residence in your neighbourhood and your thoughts about stores found in and around here in the past as well as now;
- The types of food you like to eat;
- Your current grocery shopping routine;
- The factors that affect the foods you buy and the stores you visit;
- Whether you think these grocery stores meet or fail to meet your needs;
- Your views about food accessibility in your neighbourhood.

In appreciation of your time, you will be given a $25 gift card to an establishment such as Wal-Mart or Canadian Tire on completion of the interview.

There is minimal risk associated with your participation in this research. At worst, a few questions may cause you to recall past or ongoing feelings of disappointment, frustration, or discomfort – for example, if you have had an unpleasant shopping experience at a particular store in the past. However, you will have the opportunity to voice these feelings freely in a non-judgmental setting, if you so choose. It may help you to talk about them.

Your participation will give you a chance to share your thoughts about grocery shopping and the stores in your neighbourhood. Your involvement in this research is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any time, for any reason, if you decide. You may also decline to answer certain questions. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with me, with York University, or with any other group associated with this

project either now or in the future. In the event that you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

If you agree to an interview, I will ask you, before it begins, if you agree to have our conversation audio-recorded. I only ask to record the interview so I do not have to rush taking notes, and so I do not miss any details of what you say. I will never ask you for, or mention, your name at any time during this audio-recording, so there will be no way of identifying you on the tape. If you decline to be audio-recorded, I will take notes by hand.

Your anonymity will be ensured throughout the research process. There will not be any identifying information in any of the documentation related to this project. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent of the law.

All electronic data (digital audio recordings, if applicable, and interview transcripts) will be stored securely in a password-protected computer file. All data in paper form (handwritten notes and printed transcripts) will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet in my office/home. Digital audio recordings will be destroyed after five years. The transcripts and notes will remain securely stored in a password-protected computer file or in a locked filing cabinet in my office/home indefinitely, as this study is part of a long-term research program and the data may be used again in the future.

If you have any questions about this research or your role in it, you may email me at mchrobok@yorku.ca or mikechrobok@gmail.com (preferred), or contact me by telephone at (416) 550-2304. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Lucia Lo at (416) 736-5107 or lucialo@yorku.ca, or the Office of the Graduate Program in Geography at (416) 736-5106.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics Guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Senior Manager and Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University, telephone 416-736-5914 or email ore@yorku.ca.

Do you consent to being interviewed for this research?

Your agreement indicates that you have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. You are not waiving any of your legal rights by agreeing to participate in this research.

Do you consent to having our conversation audio-recorded?

<u>**Appendix D: Interview Guide**</u>

Before beginning, show participants a map of the study area [Map #1]. Explain that this is the area referred to when the term "neighbourhood" is used.

A) Length of Residence & Historical Knowledge/Use of the Local Grocery Retail Environment
- How long have you been living in this neighbourhood? What made you move here [X] years ago?
- Have there been any changes in the number and types of grocery stores in your neighbourhood since you first moved here?
- Can you describe what these changes are and how these changes have affected your grocery shopping?

Prompts: I noticed that the Finchdale Plaza has undergone some transformations over the last few years. There used to be a Galati Brothers Supermarket there. This was replaced by Oriental Food Mart, which became Centra Food Market earlier this year.
- What do you think about these changes? How have they affected your grocery shopping?
- When the store at this plaza was a Galati Brothers Supermarket or an Oriental Food Mart, did you use it?
    - o If yes:
        - How often?
        - How did you like this store? → *Prompts:* In terms of:
            - Item/brand availability? Cultural appropriateness? Variety? Quality? Freshness? Price? Cleanliness? Decor? Atmosphere? Layout? Sales practices? Staff? Service?
            - *[If views are negative]* Why do you go it?
        - Did this store satisfy all of your grocery shopping needs? Why do you think that is?
    - o If no:
        - Can you discuss some of your reasons for not using this store?

B) Perceptions of the Humbermede Grocery Retail Environment
I would like to know your opinion about the grocery shopping environment in your area.
- Do you think there are enough supermarkets/grocery stores in your neighbourhood to meet your needs?
- Do you find you can get to these grocery stores easily?
    - o Are there any grocery stores located within walking distance of your house? How much of your grocery shopping could you do at these stores?
- Since you first moved to this neighbourhood, would you say that your local grocery shopping environment has improved, worsened, or stayed about the same? Why do you say that?
- *[If views are negative]* In order to be better served by grocery stores, what kinds of changes would you like to see?

C) Grocery Shopping Behaviours and Store Approach/Avoidance Decisions

I would like to ask you a few questions about your household's usual grocery shopping routine.

- Who does the grocery shopping in your household?
- When [you] go grocery shopping, what are the major factors that determine where [you] go?
- Where do [you] buy your groceries from now?
  - Can you discuss some of [your] reasons for using these particular stores?
  - *[If multiple stores visited]* What kinds of things do [you] usually buy from these particular stores?
  - What do you like/dislike about these stores and the food [you] buy from them?
  - Overall, how satisfied are you with the stores [you] currently buy your groceries from?
- How do [you] travel to these stores?
  - How easy or difficult is it for [you] to get there? Why do you say that?
- Are there any grocery stores in your neighbourhood which [you] do not go to at all?
  - Can you discuss some of [your] reasons for not shopping there?

D) Cultural Food Preferences & Ability to Acquire Preferred Foods

I would now like to ask you about your food preferences.

- Can you briefly tell me the kinds of food that you and members of your household typically eat?
  - Is it always easy to find these foods, or the ingredients you need to prepare them, at supermarkets or grocery stores in your neighbourhood?
  - Where do you typically buy these foods or ingredients from?
- *[If participants do not mention any culturally-specific food items in responding to the above question]* Do you prepare any foods which are traditional to your culture or religion? How often?
  - Is it always easy to find these foods, or the ingredients you need to prepare them, at supermarkets or grocery stores in your neighbourhood?
  - Where do you typically buy these foods or ingredients from?

E) Use & Views of Local Ethnic Supermarkets and Grocery Stores

I noticed that there are some ethnic supermarkets [show Map #2] and ethnic grocery stores [show Map #3] in your neighbourhood.

- Do you know all of these stores?
- In your opinion, who do these stores serve? Do you think they serve you? Why or why not?
- To you, are these grocery stores easily reachable?
- Which of these stores have you been to?

Stores Visited:

- How often do you go to these stores? *[Follow up: e.g. every week – Do you mean all of these stores?]*
- How do you like them?

- - - *Prompts:* In terms of:
    - Item/brand availability? Cultural appropriateness? Variety? Quality? Freshness? Price?
    - Cleanliness? Decor? Atmosphere? Layout? Sales practices? Staff? Service?
  - *[If views are negative]* Why do you go them?
- Do these stores satisfy all of your grocery shopping needs? Why do you think that is?
- What, if anything, could these stores do to make you want to use them more?
- Would you recommend these stores to others?

Stores Not Visited:
- Can you discuss some of you reasons for not visiting these stores?
- What, if anything, could these stores do to make you want to use them more?

F) Use & Views of Mainstream Supermarkets in Surrounding Neighbourhoods
I noticed that there are some mainstream supermarkets along Jane Street, Albion Road, and Weston Road. [Show Map #4]
- Do you know all of these stores?
- In your opinion, who do these stores serve? Do you think they serve you? Why or why not?
- To you, are these grocery stores easily reachable?
- Which of these stores have you been to?

Stores Visited:
- How often do you go to these stores? *[Follow up: e.g. every week – Do you mean all of these stores?]*
- How do you like them?
  - *Prompts:* In terms of:
    - Item/brand availability? Cultural appropriateness? Variety? Quality? Freshness? Price?
    - Cleanliness? Decor? Atmosphere? Layout? Sales practices? Staff? Service?
  - *[If views are negative]* Why do you go them?
- Do these stores satisfy all of your grocery shopping needs? Why do you think that is?
- What, if anything, could these stores do to make you want to use them more?
- Would you recommend these stores to others?

Stores Not Visited:
- Can you discuss some of you reasons for not visiting these stores?
- What, if anything, could these stores do to make you want to use them more?

G) Concluding Comments
- Is there anything I may have missed that you would like to comment on?

Post-Interview Demographic Questionnaire

Finally, I would like to ask you a few questions about yourself. <u>Please be assured that all of the information you provide here will be kept strictly confidential.</u> You may choose to skip any question if you would prefer not to answer.

1. What is your gender?

    Male ___   Female ___

2. What ethnic or cultural group would you identify as belonging to?
    _____

3. What language do you speak most often at home?
    _____

4. How old are you?
    _____

5. In what country were you born?
    _____

    a. How long have you been living in Canada?
        _____

6. What is your marital status?
    _____ Single and never married   _____ Separated or divorced
    _____ Married or domestic partnership   _____ Widowed

7. How many people are in your household, including yourself?
    _____

    a. How many people in your household are 65 or older?
        _____

    b. How many people in your household are 12 or younger?
        _____

8. Does your household have access to a car?

    Yes _____   No _____

    a. In total, how many cars does your household have?
        _____

9. What is your current employment status?
    _____

10. Do you stick to a budget when shopping for groceries?
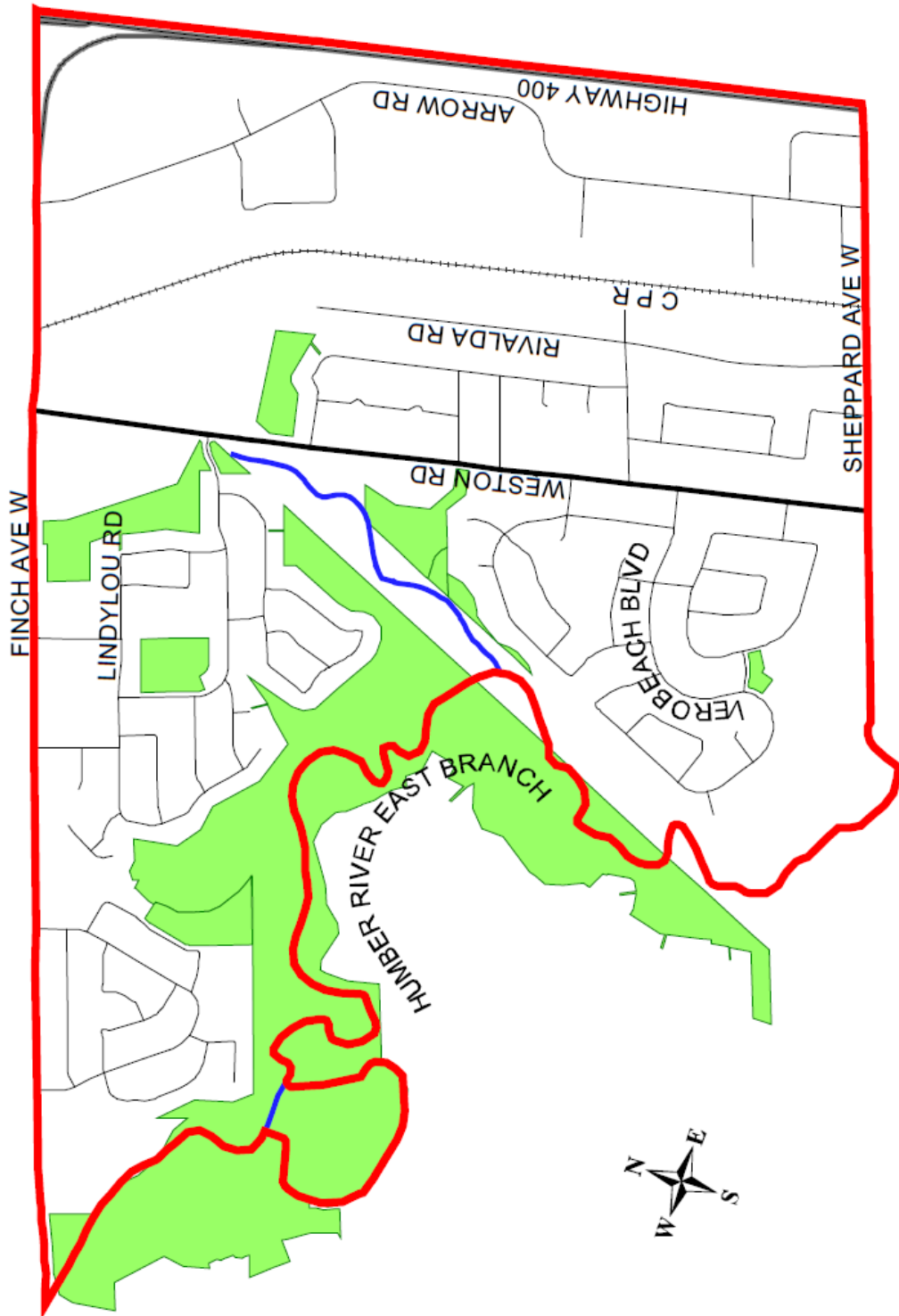
    Yes _____   No _____

11. On average, how much does your household spend on groceries every week?
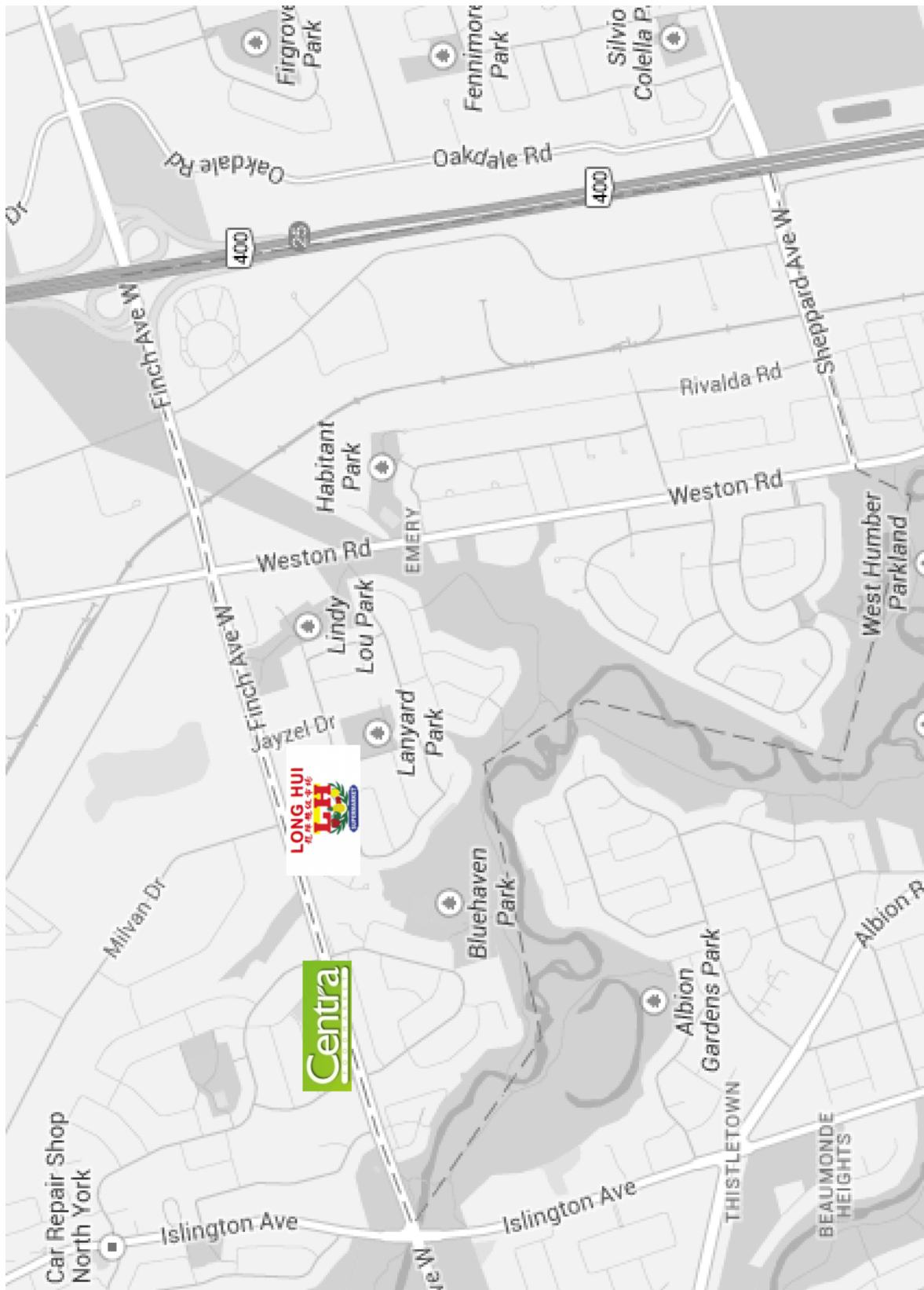
_____

12. What is your annual household income before taxes?

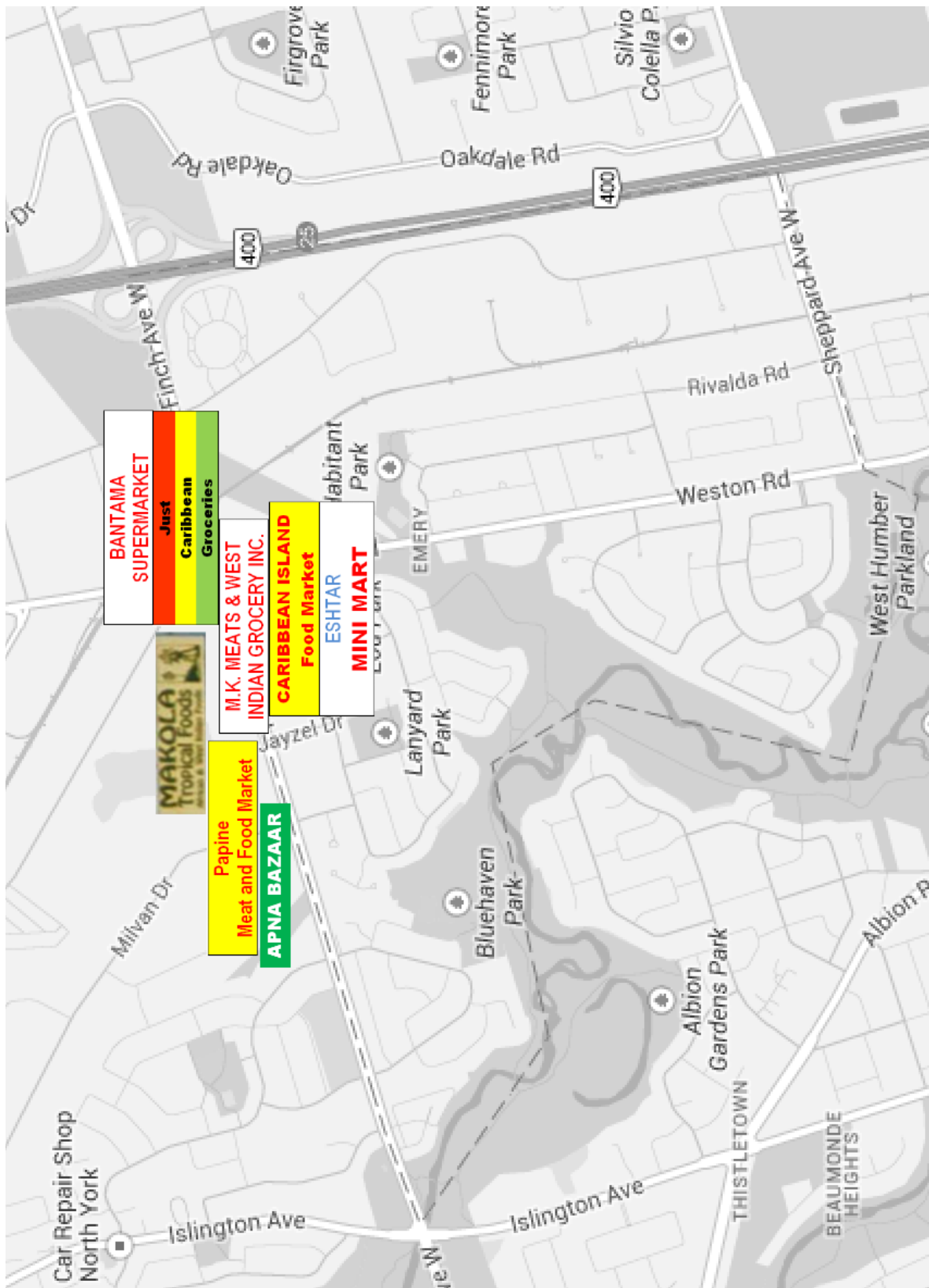|		
_____ Less than $20,000	_____ $50,000 - $59,999	_____ $90,000 - $90,999
_____ $20,000 - $29,999	_____ $60,000 - $69,999	_____ Over $100,000
_____ $30,000 - $39,999	_____ $70,000 - $79,999	
_____ $40,000 - $49,999	_____ $80,000 - $89,999	

Map #1: Humbermede, Toronto

Map #2: Ethnic Supermarkets in Humbermede, Toronto

Map #3: Ethnic Grocery Stores in Humbermede, Toronto

Map #4: Mainstream Supermarkets near Humbermede, Toronto