

**Sharing meals, making meanings: Foodways among 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1.5 generation immigrants**

by

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## Abstract

Second- and 1.5-generation immigrants must negotiate multiple cultures: the culture(s) of their parents, and the dominant culture where they are born. Foodways play a critical role in the construction of cultural identity, marking group inclusion and exclusion. This study explores how people with inherently in-between identities construct meaning in their everyday lives through food. It examines the intersections of diaspora, acculturation, and food in Halifax, NS – a smaller city with low immigrant retention rates (Ramos and Yoshida, 2011). Through sharing meals that are meaningful to eight participants, and supplementing these insights with semi-structured interviews, I find that foodways act as sensory, material, and symbolic markers of belonging and difference for second- and 1.5-generation immigrants. Participants constructed connections to – and were ascribed difference from – peers, family, and heritage through the relational and multisensory nature of food. This study encourages tolerance through meal-sharing, to help create a sense of community for those whose identities are rooted in culturally in-between spaces.

## Acknowledgements

Each of us “is the result of generation upon generation upon generation, going back thousands of years.” This is what one participant, Ahmed, told me while we ate curry together in his bachelor apartment. I initially thought up this project to better understand myself, but I learned from Ahmed and many others along the way that identity is not about any one individual – it comes from the people and places that matter to us.

To my participants, thank you for welcoming me to your homes and for sharing your favourite foods with me. I cherish the stories you shared and carry them with great care. You have made me feel less alone in my own experiences, and I hope this project has done the same for you.

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To my brothers, Max and Richard: our food escapades bring me the most joy! And finally, to Mom and Dad, thank you for instilling in me a love of learning and a love of food. I have an endless number of things to say, but I’ll keep it short: Let’s never stop making dumplings together.

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## **Introduction: Food as narratives of family and belonging**

When I showed up at Daisy's house on a dark, cold January evening, I hadn't anticipated how warm I would feel when I left three hours later. Daisy welcomed me with a jammy yuzu tea, and taught me how to make *kimchi-jjigae*, a Korean stew that was hot, sour, and hearty. Kimchi hit the oiled pot with a sizzle and slowly softened as we sautéed it with pork belly, canned tuna, and tofu. Then went in a gochujang sauce mixture that stained the stew red. Once ready, dinner was punctuated by metal spoons scraping ceramic bowls when we mixed stew with rice. It consisted of slurps. While her roommates washing dishes provided background noise for our conversation, I learned that Daisy's relationship with her cultural identity was complicated, much like mine. I wondered why we had never talked about our shared experiences before, despite being acquainted during high school. I thought to myself, *perhaps it's because we had never shared a meal.*

Eating stew and drinking tea were gateways to immigration stories and childhood memories. It also brought us to discussions of parents' hardships, assimilative sacrifices, and the question of, "where does that situate me?"

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The formation and maintenance of identity are processes that every individual grapples with throughout their life. Cultural identity is of particular significance for immigrants and other people who are physically separated from the locus of their cultural or heritage background. This project focuses on adult children of immigrants, who must negotiate multiple cultures: the heritage culture(s) of their parents, and the dominant culture where they are born. There are few better ways to study cultural identity than through food. As simultaneously individual, social,

material, and symbolic, food plays an essential role in the social construction of identity (Guptill et al., 2016). Encompassing what we eat, how we eat, and under what circumstances (Edge, 2007), foodways mark inclusion and exclusion, representing membership (or a lack thereof) to regions, nations, classes, genders, and ethnic groups (Guptill et al., 2016). Framing this project through foodways, rather than just food, allows me to explore its social, cultural, and sensory significance. For first- and second-generation immigrants who are geographically detached from their heritage, cultural foodways are particularly important because they act as a tangible link. However, cultures, and the foods that represent them, are not clear-cut dichotomies.

This leads to my research question: *What role do foodways play in the construction of cultural identity among adult children of immigrants?* To explore this, I refer to theories related to ethnic boundaries (Barth 1969) and acculturation (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). My research fits into broader work on migration and diaspora studies, as well as the anthropology of food. I situate my study in an era of ‘multiculturalism,’ where the co-existence of transnationalism, globalization, and white hegemony complicate all facets of life, from structural-level policies to the intimate, yet social relationship between food and cultural identity (Duruz, 2005; Gabaccia, 1998; Sigrist and Michaud, 2023). Using participant observation to capture the multi-sensory and embodied elements of food preparation, consumption, and commensality,<sup>1</sup> I cooked and ate meals with participants, and supplemented these insights with semi-structured interviews. My lived experience as the child of Chinese immigrants is central to my data collection and analysis. Through this work, I seek to foster a

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<sup>1</sup> The practice of eating together.

sense of community between diasporic communities and amplify the narratives of a growing portion of the population (Statistics Canada, 2022).

### **Literature review: Scanning the recipe**

#### ***In a large mixing bowl, toss together theories***

##### ***Roughly chop ethnic boundaries and identity***

Classic anthropological understandings of ethnicity and ethnic boundaries are both reinforced and complicated through globalization and transnationalism. Barth's (1969) influential work on ethnicity takes a constructivist approach, rejecting the notion that ethnic groups are static and ascribed with inherent differences. Instead, he argues that they are constructed and maintained through boundaries. Barth (1969) asserts that the cultural features within these boundaries may change, but what matters to an ethnic group is the "continuing dichotomization between members and outsiders" (p. 14). Ethnicity is thus a social process that is made and remade through internal and external constructions of difference. According to Barth (1969), an ethnic boundary defines the group, "not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (p. 15). However, as boundaries blur through transnationalism, it is worth critically examining what this "cultural stuff" entails and how it changes through generations.

A globalized world, characterized by migration and mobility, complicates the notion of boundaries, and the relationship between ethnic identity and place is no longer taken for granted (Wimmer, 2008; Gupta and Ferguson, 1992). Anderson's (1983) imagined communities is a helpful concept to think about ethnicity for children of immigrants, whose ethnic identities may rely on an imagined connection to their motherland. Also detached from place, Wimmer (2008) defines ethnicity as "a subjectively felt sense of belonging based on the belief in shared culture and common ancestry" (p. 973). Where Barth argues that ethnic groups are defined by

boundaries that divide, Wimmer adds that said boundaries unite individuals who may follow heterogeneous cultural practices. Further, he writes that some individuals aim to overcome ethnic boundaries by boundary blurring; some may embrace cosmopolitan identities, in which they perceive all individuals as part of a single, global community.

This agency to shift and blur ethnic boundaries is significant because ethnic identity may have command over other personal statuses (Barth, 1969). In multicultural societies like Canada, first- and second-generation immigrants may seek to change their position within the existing ethnic boundary hierarchy to escape minority stigma (Wimmer, 2008). Individuals may do this through assimilation into dominant society in hopes of gaining power, prestige, or moral worth (Wimmer, 2008). Although geographical place becomes less relevant to ethnicity in multicultural societies, the notion that individuals have the capacity – and potential desire – to blur and expand boundaries or “shift sides” shows that imaginary notions of cultural and ethnic difference remain. Lamphere (2007) suggests we pay attention to how this “the cultural construction of difference” changes intergenerationally, between first generation immigrants who typically maintain cultural traditions, and third or fourth generation immigrants who have ‘ethnic options’ (p. 1134). My project seeks to understand where second and 1.5 generations fall on this spectrum of difference. To what extent do they express pride in their heritage, and how much of their cultural identity comes from a “symbolic ethnicity” (Gans, 2010)?

Acculturation and identity in children of immigrants, and the dance between maintaining one’s heritage culture and adapting to dominant society, is a subject of debate in the literature. Most sociological and anthropological theories examine assimilation in its intersection with race and class. Segmented assimilation theory (Portes and Zhou, 1993) conflates assimilation with economic achievement. Portes and Zhou (1993) argue that depending on structural barriers, some



children of immigrants may be successful in assimilating into dominant society and others will be blocked, in part due to racialization. Within segmented assimilation theory are three possible outcomes, which Portes and Rumbaut (2001) empirically test: consonant acculturation, in which parents and children absorb mainstream culture and an equal rate, dissonant acculturation, in which children's adaption to mainstream society greatly outpaces that of their parents, and selective acculturation, in which children maintain core elements of their home culture while gaining key elements of mainstream society.

Overall, the current scholarly conversation focuses on acculturation and ethnic identity as a means to examine economic and social outcomes for second-generation immigrant. I argue that it is important to examine second generation identity as an end itself because it plays a critical role in perceptions of self-worth and belonging. Further, most studies examine acculturation in large cities that are ethnically diverse, such as New York and Los Angeles (Luthra et al., 2018). This project will examine the acculturation of 1.5- and second-generation immigrants in Halifax, Nova Scotia, a smaller city where immigrant retention rates are low (Ramos and Yoshida, 2011), and where 83 percent of residents are white (Statistics Canada, 2021).

### *Drizzle in foodways*

Food is an important marker of inclusion and exclusion that can solidify group membership or set groups apart (Mintz and DuBois, 2003). Maintaining culinary distinctions fosters a sense of personal belonging to groups (Guptill et al., 2016), and the ways that we prepare, consume, and share food allow us to define for ourselves and others who we are. Walker (2012) writes that “choices about what is eaten, and with whom, are part of a range of strategies available to groups that may wish to either differentiate or align themselves with other groups, both in response to and in initiation of intergroup interactions” (p. 204). The element of choice in

foodways means that commensal performance may be a strategy for assimilation, especially given that food is a marker of social and economic distinction (Walker, 2012; Bourdieu, 1984; Goffman, 1959). Compared to other cultural symbols of identity, food's unique significance comes from its "indispensability and polysensorial character" (Walker, 2012), as well as its embodied nature as a form of identity work (Guptill et al., 2016). The food preferences and dining practices of children of immigrants are a powerful lens through which we can understand ethnic identity and acculturation.

Although acculturation theories depict the efforts of the second generation to assimilate due to ethnic othering in mainstream society, it is possible that food is an exception in individuals' desires to cross boundaries. Immigrants may want to maintain familiar foodways to a multitude of reasons: as a means of social connection with others from the same country of origin, to treat illness, or to signify cultural values, to name a few (Gabaccia, 1998). For many, "to abandon immigrant food traditions for the foods of Americans was to abandon community, family, and religion" (Gabaccia, 1998, p. 54). In this sense, food acts as a sense of pride and identity for immigrants to separate themselves from Americans, who – in the words of one Italian boy – "were people who ate peanut butter and jelly on mushy white bread that came out of a plastic package" (Gabaccia, 1998, p. 55). In an ethnographic study of the assimilated Lebanese diaspora in New England, Rowe (2012) finds that her informants generally identified as American, only identifying as Lebanese when discussing, preparing, and enjoying food. Moreover, their maintenance of Lebanese foods did not conflict with their assimilation into mainstream American society, but rather allowed second and third generations to construct *parallel* Lebanese and American identities (Rowe, 2012, p. 227). Walker (2012), who ethnographically studies food and identity in the Comoros and its diaspora in France and

Zanzibar, writes that food and commensality permit the expression of different facets of identity – or identities – and that these identities are shaped by context (p. 189). The maintenance of cultural foods thus represents selective acculturation for immigrants of various generations, who, in other ways, alter their lifestyles to achieve economic success. I seek to further study this negotiation of identities through food, focusing on second and 1.5 generations to examine whether they perceive themselves as adaptable agents of change.

***Let marinate in the rise of multicultural foodscapes***

Many immigrants desire maintaining authenticity in their foodways. Others, for example those who cook for the dominant population as a livelihood, have created ‘westernized’ versions of their heritage foods that make them accessible to dominant society – possibly undermining food’s intimate attachment to identity. In a qualitative study in France, Brazilian immigrant entrepreneurs hybridize their heritage food with French food to appeal to a mainstream audience (Sigrist and Michaud, 2023). They use this in-betweenness in cuisine to ensure their economic survival, protect themselves from exclusion and marginalization, and ensure the continuity of Brazilian identity in the diaspora (Sigrist and Michaud, 2023). This is another example of selective acculturation (Portes and Zhou, 1993), in which a fusion of heritage and host cultures acts as a means of economic empowerment and ascension into the middle class. Although some studies see this as ethnic erasure, others state that “creolized” versions of cuisine developed as a “creative response to expectations of assimilation” or to avoid stigma (Rowe, 2012).

Globalization, which has made way for multiculturalism in places like Canada, is seen through diversifying foodscapes in western cities. Now, the “cultural stuff” of an ethnic group is no longer confined to that group. Ortiz’s (1940) concept of transculturation, which asserts that cultures merge and converge during encounters, is particularly useful in the study of

multicultural foodscapes on second generation identity. A “day-to-day confrontation with cultural diversity” through food (Gabaccia, 1998, p. 105) points to intercultural interaction between ethnic minorities and dominant society as an exchange, rather than as a unidirectional attempt for ethnic minorities to assimilate to ascend in the hierarchy of power. That said, the creation of western fusion foods in the first place implies that on a group level, ethnic minorities must compromise aspects of their heritage to accommodate the dominant population. For second generation diasporic populations, the extent to which authenticity in cuisine matters has not been thoroughly explored, especially in a city like Halifax that does not have large ethnic enclaves.

### **Methods: Collecting ingredients**

*In a skillet, conduct participant observation; transfer to oven for interviews*

### **Sample**

The population for this study is people living in Halifax who were born in Canada to immigrant parents (second-generation immigrants), or who immigrated to Canada when they were young children (1.5 generation immigrants), given the unique circumstances they face as a generation of transition. Focusing on people living in Halifax allowed me to draw conclusions about the intersection of identity, food, and place. I recruited participants primarily through social media and through postering in public spaces throughout the city. Five participants were second generation; three were 1.5 generation, who immigrated to Canada between the ages of two and seven and experienced the majority, if not all, of their schooling in Canada. While ages ranged from 20 to 55, six participants were in their twenties. Ethnic backgrounds were diverse, with participants having family ties to East Asia, South Asia, North Africa, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, Eastern Europe, and the United Kingdom. The main limitation to this study is that second and 1.5 generation immigrants are combined into one sample, as are people of

different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. Future studies may wish to focus on the second-generation immigrants of one ethnic group, allowing for a deeper dive into group histories, collective memory, and the geopolitical context of immigration and resettlement. However, including participants with an array of lived experiences allowed me to understand commonalities based on generational status.

### **Sharing a meal as method**

There were three components to data collection: cooking, eating, and semi-structured interviews. I collected data through participant observation and informal interviews, where I asked participants to cook and eat a meal together that is meaningful to them, at their homes. During this process, I conducted informal, conversational interviews, asking questions about the meal they chose, as they guided me through its preparation. Both cooking and eating are all-encompassing, sensory, material, and social processes (Adapon, 2008) that are best fit to be explored through participant observation. The merit of such an observational method is that it documents “practices”: moments when belief and action come together (Luker, 2008, p. 158). Broadly paying attention to modes of cooking, use of ingredients, and food and table etiquette, participant observation allowed me to gain an embodied understanding of the multisensory elements of cooking, eating, and commensality. All participants opted for a meal and interview, and all but two also opted to cook together. All but two participants also hosted me at their homes. One participant prepared their dish with me at a university office, and another requested to meet at a restaurant.

Relatedly, I used senses as both objects of study and means of inquiry (Howes, 2019). Particularly when being a participant observer in the kitchen, paying attention to the instructional elements of cooking and the senses participants evoke are crucial. Harris (2021) writes that

sensory education is “a complex negotiation between explicit instruction and embodied learning” (p. 103) that, during cooking, is reliant on the researcher focusing on sensory directions related to taste, appearance, texture, and smell. She points out that bread-making, for example, “involves skills in smelling yeast mixtures, kneading dough, watching for rise, and of course, the sound of a well-baked loaf: the hollow knock” (Harris, 2021, p. 95). Other recipes that use instructional onomatopoeias like “sizzle” and “crunch” evoke elements of touch and sight along with sound (Harris, 2021, p. 95). Through participant observation, my task was to interpret both the sense-evoking instructions given by my participants, and my own sensory experience in the kitchen and dining room. As an outsider to participants and their homes, I acknowledge that there are limitations to collecting ‘private sphere’ data on domestic food practices, considering impression management on the part of participants, for example – but I still believe that participant observation helped me get at the hands-on nature of food that other methods would not allow.

### **Coding**

Using NVivo, a qualitative analysis software, I thematically coded this data for analysis. Coding, which is the highlighting of key ideas and reoccurring patterns, allowed me to pull out repeated discussion about formative events and emotional states of being related to food, acculturation, and identity (Mannik and McGarry, 2017). My thematic analysis consisted of a mix of induced themes – gathered from participant observation and interviews – and a priori themes – taken from personal experiences, values, and theoretical orientations (Russell et al., 2015). Incorporated through the processes of data collection and analysis was an ongoing reflexivity about my positionality as a young, female, Asian-Canadian researcher, and how my presence and perspectives shape the contributions of participants as well as my interpretation of

their contributions (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). While situated in Halifax, sharing meals allowed me to travel through time and place, and to taste the many flavours of research.

### **Analysis: Tasting the flavours of research**

#### ***Plate, serve, and dig in.***

I found that the ambiguous cultural and ethnic boundary lines that 1.5- and second-generation populations living in multicultural societies experience are clearly reflected in participants' self-perceptions of cultural identity. Nearly all participants alluded to – or explicitly articulated – feelings of “in-betweenness” growing up, marked by a tension between not fitting in with peers because of their ethnic backgrounds, cultural values, or immigrant parents, yet not fully identifying with what one participant referred to as the “cultural script” of their parents' heritage. I therefore argue that 1.5- and second-generation immigrants have distinctly hybridized cultural identities (Bhabha, 1994; Pieterse, 1994), characterized by both by adaptability (a ‘best of both worlds’ feeling) and alienation (an ‘in between worlds’ feeling).

Moreover, I argue that the foodways of second-generation immigrants are a material representation of their hybridized cultural identities. Here, I draw on Sutton's (2010) concept of gustemology to explore “the ways in which food is central to cosmologies, worldviews, and ways of life” (p. 215). I have pulled out three themes regarding food as sensory and material markers of belonging and difference: (1) Participants' foodways mark difference from peers but belonging to Canadian ‘multiculturalism.’ (2) Heritage foodways mark a connection to family through commensality and memory. (3) Heritage foodways are limited by second and 1.5 generations' geographical detachment from their parents' homelands. Each theme indicates that cultural identity is constructed relationally, and that foodways are a mechanism that helps create these connections.

*Difference from, and belonging to, 'mainstream' culture*

*Growing up "different" from peers*

Many participants described their cultural identities as being rooted in difference due to interactions with peers that created a sense of Otherness.<sup>2</sup> The local context of school or neighbourhood was influential in their constructions of identity, with five of eight participants growing up in areas where they were an ethnic or cultural minority. Ahmed, who has an Irish immigrant mother and Bengali immigrant father, was raised in the only mixed-race family in his neighbourhood in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). He was also one of two children of colour in his grade at school, which impacted his cultural identity "just by stark contrast to everybody else":

It was always that feeling of never fitting in with anybody. I'm not Irish and I'm not Bengali. ... So, I'm confusing to everybody, and I confused myself growing up. ... So, there was all these in-between worlds sort of thing. And always this feeling of people going, 'What are you? What's your deal?'

Sam, whose family immigrated to Halifax from Libya when she was seven, recalls always being proud of her Libyan culture. However, feelings of being Othered emerged after moving from an immigrant-dense apartment to a different area in HRM:

It was predominantly white, which is not a bad thing, but it was super scary. I don't think if I started out there, I would have been proud, just because everyone else kind of looked at me weird, even immigrants. They were like, 'what are you doing?'. There's a level of, 'we don't show that much of ourselves in public, like, you have to hide a bit.' And I was like, what? That's not how it goes.

The contrasting demographics of the two neighbourhoods Sam lived in, and their subsequent influence on her perception of self, show that immediate surroundings and their relationality to

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<sup>2</sup> Otherness: the feeling of being excluded and reductively labelled as belonging to a subordinate group.



the self are perhaps more important than the city at large when it comes to constructing cultural identity.

To further illustrate this, feelings of difference were prevalent even for participants who did not grow up in HRM. Rebecca, an Eastern European Jew whose extended family lives in Israel, grew up in a heavily Russian-Jewish neighbourhood in Toronto, but was the only Jew in her friend group in high school. She said she “felt a weird shame” about being different, not only from peers at school, but from the friends she made while studying abroad, who all had “such strong cultural ties”:

I was like, oh. I don't feel Canadian enough. I don't feel Eastern European enough or Russian enough. I definitely don't feel Israeli enough. So, it was just a big, okay, ‘Who am I?’ kind of thing.

Participants in each of the above examples describe feelings of confusion and in-betweenness in who – or “what” – they were, because they felt they were perceived as being different from their peers, whether in overt or subtle ways. For all, the local context of school or neighbourhood played an instrumental role in each participant's experience of not ‘fitting in,’ showing that perceptions of self are place-based and relational.

However, perceptions of self are not solely influenced by local, interpersonal interactions. The experiences of participants who were not part of minority ethnic groups growing up show that a broader, hegemonic acceptance of their cultural backgrounds also plays a role in self-identity. In one instance, Edward, who is ethnically half-Chinese and half-Hongkonger, said he wished he grew up as a “normal kid” and “didn't have to deal with people treating me differently about my race,” despite growing up in Richmond, BC, where Chinese people make up 54 percent of the total population (City of Richmond, 2023). Although he said he grew up surrounded by Asians, he still rejected his “Asian identity” because of white hegemony. The only participant

who did not describe being different from peers due to their background was Milo, a Greek Canadian from Montreal (2<sup>nd</sup> gen.). Milo said they have never experienced discrimination based on being Greek, because “Greeks have integrated so wholly into the fold of whiteness.” Thus, the identities and self-perceptions of participants were shaped by how their cultural backgrounds were perceived not only by those around them, but also by society at large. Daisy, Sam, and Rebecca’s interactions with peers show that feelings of being interpersonally accepted are influential in the construction of cultural identity, while Edward and Milo’s perceptions of their cultures in a broader sense show that feeling like one’s heritage culture is hegemonically accepted is equally relevant.

### *Foodways and difference from peers*

Food, a facet of material culture and a marker of group alignment or differentiation (Mintz and DuBois, 2003), played an imperative role in constructing participants’ notions of difference. Heritage foodways in particular prevented most participants from gaining ‘full access’ to mainstream society, pointing to their acculturation as selective (Portes and Zhou, 1993) – but involuntarily. All participants, except Milo, spoke about how food amplified their difference from peers. Four of eight participants described experiencing what is anecdotally dubbed a “lunchbox moment” in school, when those around them expressed distaste for their food or repulsion by its ‘stench.’ Although participants like Rebecca and Natasha (Lebanese, from HRM, 2<sup>nd</sup> gen.) brushed these experiences off, others found that food-related experiences with peers impacted their relationships with their cultural identities, either by tarnishing their relationship to their heritage culture or solidifying their ethnic pride.

Sam was relatively unbothered when people dissed her food, saying: “It just brings a good sense of pride. I’m like, ‘Yeah, you think it smells stinky? But listen, it tastes good, OK?’”

According to AJ (Pakistani, from HRM, 2<sup>nd</sup> gen.), who loved the South Asian food his mom made growing up, “no one ever really complained” about his lunches. Still, his mother told him not to microwave his food at school as to not disturb people with the smell. At home, he said she would fry onions in the garage, because she was “really self-conscious” about making people uncomfortable with the smell of the food, even when in their own home. For Sam and AJ, food was a positive marker of difference that reflected a hybrid cultural identity, in the ‘best of both worlds’ sense of it, allowing them to maintain desired aspects of their heritage culture while otherwise integrating into the mainstream. However, the consumption and production of their preferred cuisine came with a constant acknowledgement (either from them or their parents) that it set them apart from peers.

### *Heritage foodways and the journey of acceptance*



*Figure 1: Ahmed's chicken curry with potatoes*

I remember being very conscious of how we ate. ... Going to my friends' places was a nightmare, because somebody's mom would make me lunch, and it would be a white person's sandwich. White bread with mayonnaise and bologna. And I'd say, 'What is this?' ... And then when I had friends come over, they're like, 'What is that? Yeah, it stinks.' Or, they would say my

house smelled funny. Or that I smelled funny – because eating a lot of curry, the spices come out of your skin. So, I remember being very, very conscious of food the whole time I was growing up. It had a lot to do with my identity. I just knew, okay, not only am I different, *I even bloody smell different*. I eat different. I have different tastes from everybody. Everything just seemed different.

For other participants, heritage foodways were stark markers of difference that took them on a journey from rejecting to embracing their heritage cultures. Ahmed said other children would make fun of him because he “smelled like curry.” Daisy (Half Korean, from HRM, 1.5 gen.) said food was an “insecurity for a bit” growing up, and that it was not until she made friends who accepted her as a person that she felt comfortable eating Korean food around others.



*Figure 2: Daisy's kimchi jjigae*

As a kid, I was like, “why am I getting this food for lunch when the other kids are getting Lunchables?” It just feels unfair. So as a kid, I was, not ashamed, but a little embarrassed of my food a little bit. Because kids can be mean. There were a select few kids who would be like, “Ew, those are worms. Ew, what is that smell?” It just smells, with like things like kimchi. So that was like an object of, like, I don't really want to have this food. I don't want to share this food. And I don't want to bring this food around people I want to be friends with. I want Lunchables.

... I remember all through junior high, basically, I told my mom to stop packing lunches. ... That was something I brought up, being like, “The kids think it smells bad.” Or they think it's weird.

And my mom was very unapologetically like, “Why does that matter?” She was so...[sighs]. It brings tears to my eyes. It's so sad. And she'd always make extra food. Or she'd always be like, “Why would they be upset? Just share the food with them. Then they'll know that it's not gross.” ... But I was still so self-conscious about the food I was eating. ...

But now I go into high school, university, and I'm like [to friends], “You'll be better if you drink this tea with me, take my word for it!” “You'll really like this soup!” I'm trying to share as much as I can. I really like cooking for people in the house and I'm always offering.<sup>3</sup>

As Daisy's story illustrates, the materiality and smell of Korean food involuntarily set her apart from peers growing up by leading them to ascribe her an ‘Other’ identity. However, she now expresses that sharing food with friends “who are outside of the Korean community” makes her “so proud to be Korean” and “so excited to share my Korean-ness.” By sharing heritage foods, Daisy both dissolves the boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’ *and* solidifies her Korean identity. Through her hybrid 1.5-generation positionality, she reframes the dichotomization between ethnic insiders and outsiders (Barth, 1969) as something that can bring people together when both parties embrace this difference through sharing rather than through one-way assimilation.

Edward's rejection of the “Asian part” of himself materially played out through a refusal to use chopsticks, even at home, for a period during secondary school. However, he came to realize the importance of Chinese food when he moved to Halifax for university, saying that the move pushed him to “miss that Asian part of me,” because he “felt like a minority for once” and the food “felt too western.” Today, Edward says that Asian food is “part of my happiness.” Yet, he said he only brings Asians to dim sum, because “dim sum's so important to me, that if I

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<sup>3</sup> All quotes have been edited for clarity.

brought people who aren't familiar with dim sum or don't really do certain dishes that they don't like, it affects me." Whereas Daisy's acceptance of the Korean part of her identity was constructed alongside a desire to share Korean foods, Edward's experience with peers who have rejected the foods important to his heritage identity led him to become protective of it. By only sharing dim sum with other Asians, Edward maintains an ethnic boundary and ascribes his own difference, giving himself the agency to internally construct a dichotomization between members and outsiders rather than allowing external voices to ascribe him an 'Other' identity.

Second- and 1.5-generation participants, particularly those who identify as visible minority, have therefore experienced heritage foodways as a form of 'everyday otherness' that is perhaps a legacy of Orientalism (Said, 1978), which paints their heritage backgrounds as inferior to the mainstream due to a history of racist and colonial representations of the East by the West. Second and 1.5 generation immigrants are uniquely placed to challenge this dichotomization because they exist with inherently hybrid identities. Participants' experiences with food and peers show that the ascriptions of their identity as 'exotic' by the mainstream act as a barrier to Portes and Zhou's (1993) selective acculturation, an outcome in which second-generation immigrants gain upward socioeconomic mobility while maintaining bicultural identities. In response to barriers such as Othering, these participants create strategies to 'gain access' to the mainstream while maintaining heritage foodways, such as finding the peers that do accept them and sharing with them important dishes.

### ***Celebrating Canadian "multiculturalism"***

Despite food setting them apart from peers, nearly all participants felt comfortable with a 'Canadian' way of life, associating it with multiculturalism and diversity. Participants' identities are thus characterized both by feelings of difference from peers – which is accentuated through

heritage foodways – and belonging to a ubiquitous ‘Canadian’ culture – which is accentuated by ‘multicultural’ foodways. For instance, all participants expressed an adaptability with food, enjoying cooking and eating cuisines from around the globe. AJ said he mainly eats lentils and curries for dinner but has burrito potlucks and crepe lunches with friends. When asked about his cultural identity, AJ said it was distinct from both his parents’, and from “the predominant Western culture” because “it’s just like a hybrid; I feel right in between.” Similarly, Ahmed cooks a variety of cuisines with friends, ranging from making kimchi to homemade dim sum to vegetarian food, because “socially, it’s my favourite thing to do.” Natasha chose to make gochujang crispy tofu with sticky rice for our meeting because of her love of Asian cuisine and spicy food. Sam believes that living in Canada has exposed her to foods she otherwise would not have tried while living in Libya:

I would have never tried ramen [or] butter chicken. I’ve only ever eaten this [Libyan food] or pizza or hamburgers, so it’s either very cultural or a very basic idea of what North Americans eat. ... [The different types of food here] forces you to not stay in your little box; you can try new stuff and you don’t have to be afraid.

It is therefore important to note that although all participants have experienced assimilation to ‘Western’ lifestyles, the contents of ‘Canadian’ culture are dynamic and transcultural, characterized in this historical moment not just by “pizza or hamburgers.” Instead, the growing accessibility of various types of heritage foodways to various demographics has become an integral part of Canada’s touted ‘multiculturalism.’ While no participant discussed fusion foods or hybrid cuisines as being influential to their cultural identities, most celebrated the wide range of cuisines at their disposal by way of living in a Canadian city, acknowledging that the importance of commensality extended beyond the sharing of their heritage cuisine.

Overall, participants' relationships with cuisines other than their own show that multicultural, 'Canadian' foodways also influence cultural identity. At the same time, participants' commensality and crossing of ethnic boundaries through sharing different types of foods is changing the nature of what is considered 'mainstream' in the first place, evincing foodways to be a transcultural process (Ortiz, 1940). In other words, the notion of 'Canadian' identity is constantly being re-negotiated due to the 'melting pot' nature of Canadian culture and the social and dynamic nature of sharing food – meaning, mainstream foodways influence identity for second- and 1.5-generation participants, and their identities and backgrounds are influencing mainstream foodways. That said, given that most participants chose to make dishes from their heritage cultures for me, heritage foodways tended to hold greater significance to participants' cultural identities than what they perceived to be 'Canadian' foodways, which I will explore in the following sections.



*Figure 3: Natasha's gochujang crispy tofu with broccoli and rice*

*"I like a lot of rice-based dishes, whether it's Lebanese, or Asian, or anything."*



### *Difference from, and belonging to, heritage culture*

Participants rejected many parts of their parents' cultures, such as fulfilling traditional gender roles (Milo), doing things out of obligation or sacrifice (Milo, AJ), and not having sleepovers or going to parties (Edward, Natasha, Rebecca). Despite cultural tensions that placed participants in an in-between state of belonging, each person acknowledged that having a connection with their heritage cultures was important to them. Although AJ spoke specifically to his experience of Pakistani culture and why it matters to him, I think his thoughts sum up feelings from all participants:

There's a lot of good in it. The aggressive hospitality. Sharing your home and what you have with people. That part of that particular culture, it's a source of joy and happiness, and so, I kind of kept it ... I guess the cultural bits are important, for the joy and the sense of community that they help create.

Oftentimes, this "good" that AJ expresses is transmitted in the form of food. All participants, except Natasha, shared with me a dish from their parents' culture that they ate growing up, and when discussing the ways that food is meaningful to identity, everyone referred to experiences from their childhood, connections to family, and memories of home. Sutton (2010) writes that synesthesia is key to food memories, "through the notion that memory has multiple interacting sensory registers" (p. 218). While I will not delve into psychosensory explanations for the importance of food, it is worth noting that the unique experience of food-making and consumption is what makes food such a strong point of memory, nostalgia, and transnational connection.



Figure 4: Milo's yemista

*"It takes a lot of effort to make, and I associate it with feelings of home, feelings of relaxation, feelings of comfort."*

### ***Heritage foodways as connection to family***

Seven of eight participants chose to share with me a dish that evoked in them feelings of joy and comfort. Each dish had sensory, ritual, or social significance, pointing to heritage foodways as a material and symbolic mechanism through which second and 1.5 generation immigrants internalize connections to immediate family. For Sam, Rebecca, and Edward, commensality played a key role in the cultural transmission of heritage foodways, since “food is such an easy thing to share” (Daisy). Sam chose to share with me *zumeeta*, a Libyan dish that is communal in nature.

We eat it at home for my family. Everyone eats it at home. ... You can eat it in big groups ... we'll do a big bowl, and we'll sit around and eat it. You all just put your hand in there and go for it. ... When I eat stuff like this, I feel clean, just because everything there's just stripped to basics, like you saw: sugar, olive oil, some mysterious powder,<sup>4</sup> and that's it. It feels clean, it feels good, I feel connected.

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<sup>4</sup> Sam later told me the “mysterious powder” was ground barley – she had to ask her family what it was.



*Figure 5: Sam's zumeeta*

*"It smells like olive oil and my grandma."*

Sam further said that when it comes to eating Libyan food with her family, "I won't have to explain myself. They just get it." Heritage foodways thus allow her to "feel like I have in common something with my family," which is important to her, given that "I live a very different lifestyle [from them]." Rebecca shared similar sentiments, saying that "I definitely start to feel like I'm losing [the Eastern European] part of myself" when she is not around family and not eating that food. She, whose meal included a set dining table with a pot of tea ready upon my arrival, articulated that the social act of eating brings her family together:

I think food is the primary way we connect. Because whenever I'm at home, if we're not going for walks, we're eating. That's just what we do; we spend time together by eating. You might not even be talking to each other, but you're at least sitting together and sharing, which is nice... You don't just show up to spend time with someone without the pinnacle of it being food. (Rebecca)

Commensality and food's indispensability therefore act as a bridge between second- or 1.5-generation immigrants and their parents, whose cultural identities tend to be more heavily influenced by their home countries, according to AJ and Milo.



*Figure 6: Rebecca's pelmeni*

*"Aside from my mom's chicken broth...it's really my comfort food. When I am just feeling down, it's what I go for; if I just want something that's warm and filling, that's what I go for. It reminds me of being a kid, it reminds me of being at my parents' house. So that's why I like it."*

Domestic food production and the recognition of parents' – particularly mothers' – labour also allowed Sam and Daisy to internalize the importance of heritage foods. Reflecting on past experiences with food and feeling different from peers, Sam said:

When you're a kid and you're different from everyone else it feels really weird. You're like, "Why am I eating this when everybody else is eating mac and cheese?" But then you understand. You're like, well, my mom made that for me! That's what my mom knows how to make. If I didn't live here, that's what I would know how to make, and that would be my favourite food.

For Daisy, Korean food connected her directly to her mother on an emotional level:

Looking back, I'm like, that was so much love and care and effort put into food. ... Like, everything my mom makes, I'm so grateful for, outwardly and inwardly. I love my mom so much. And I can tell she loves me so much just from the food she's making for me.

Heritage foodways therefore act as a material representation of love between parent and child.

But, as Sam's quote illustrates, they also accentuate cultural difference through an

acknowledgement that she would likely feel more connected to their heritage had she grown up in her parents' home country. Ultimately, parents' food production played an instrumental role in creating a feeling of closeness to parents and their culture that participants were otherwise not exposed to, strengthening their cultural identities.

Alongside commensality and domestic food production, the sensory nature of food was important for memory and connections to family. Ahmed, who prepared his father's curry, described it as "very, very down-home" and "earthy," walking me through the process in reference to how his father would prepare it. Moreover, preparing the curry with me evoked specific, visceral memories with his father from childhood. While sweating the onions with a blend of garlic, ginger, and warm spices, Ahmed told me he would routinely hang around the kitchen while his father cooked dinner, and that he "would always be over his shoulder, smelling the curry coming out." Twenty minutes later, Ahmed peered over the stove, and said: "that is literally what I grew up on, right there in that pot." The synesthetic nature of foodways also came up with Edward, who described dim sum as an all-encompassing ritual that "connects me to my Asian identity":

I really like the etiquette in enjoying dim sum, and the atmosphere of all the people serving dim sum and pushing the carts ... And, I really like the way they communicate. It's very nice and friendly if you speak their language...It's kind of like a networking event. And one of the social etiquettes is calling them beautiful and handsome. ... And the etiquette of pouring tea for other people, I really like that. And, instead of saying thank you, my dad taught me that you could use the gesture of tapping your fingers. ...

For Edward and Ahmed, the atmosphere associated with dim sum, or the smell and visual of curry in a pot, were crucial connections to their fathers and to childhood memories that they made a concerted effort to maintain. Again, the sensory nature of foodways allowed these dishes

to be mechanisms through which participants connected with family and constructed cultural identity.



Figure 7: Edward's dim sum

*"I also really like dim sum because it's also my origin, half of my origin. It's nice, even though I haven't been to Hong Kong or China for like 13 years, I'd say. So being able to have this makes me feel like I'm back there."*

At the same time, most participants were not too concerned with authentically preparing dishes. AJ used an online recipe for biryani instead of preparing the day-long, layered version his mother made growing up. Ahmed took great inspiration from his father's curry and felt that he was "honouring" his father's memory by making it – but made slight alterations, such as marinating the chicken overnight or using a teaspoon instead of measuring by eye, because "I'm not my dad." Most participants, except Edward, were not bothered by preparing and eating heritage foods that they did not perceive to be fully 'authentic,' as long as they were similar enough to spark a memory or foster a connection. Adapting heritage foodways – which are grounded in parents' cultures – to their own lifestyles and to the mainstream context where they grew up shows that heritage foodways have *symbolic* importance to second and 1.5 generation immigrants' cultural identities.

### *Heritage foodways as connections to imagined geographies*

Heritage foodways were not only a connection to participants' parents; they also acted as transnational connections to generations past and to heritage countries. Milo pointed out that "so much of identity is place based." When breaking down their identity as a Greek Montrealer, they said that as a Montrealer, "it feels like the city is very much a part of me." However, they added that their Greek identity "comes from my parents and comes from people in my own community." As explored above, place plays a strong role in the construction of cultural identity because the context of the local neighbourhood or school, for example, shape interactions, values, and lifestyles. But the 'heritage' aspect of 1.5- and second-generation immigrants' cultural identities have less of an opportunity to be directly influenced by their parents' countries or cities or villages, by way of their parents' emigration. Instead, that part of participants' cultural identities is largely shaped by what Milo referred to as "imagined geographies":

So much of how we define ourselves is based, on the one hand, on the physical places that we live and that we encounter every day, but also the imagined geographies of where other people are, where we've thought about. Greece is a real place I've been to. But Greece is also more than that. It's the place where my father was. And in a way, there are parts of it that are utterly inaccessible to me.

Since the physical places that shaped their parents are inaccessible to second and 1.5 generation immigrants, heritage foodways become an especially significant connection to their cultural backgrounds.

Apart from discussions of immediate family, Daisy, Sam, Natasha, and Edward all alluded to the idea of "feeling connected" to their cultural backgrounds in a more ambiguous sense through food. When putting together a mixture of *gochujang*, *gochugaru*, soy sauce, kimchi and tuna brine for a stew, Daisy explained that she had not done it according to any recipe, and joked that "I feel like I'm just guided by my ancestors." Sam said she recently bought

a mortar and pestle to grind her own spices because it helps her feel closer to Libya, which she considers home.

You feel so disconnected, and you're like, I want whatever, anything, that will connect me back. And just the grinding motion, I'm like, this is very similar. ... At least for me [food is] a constant connection back home. Back home, I *would* do this, I *would* do this.

For participants who talked about visiting their parents' homelands, what each person recalled perhaps the most clearly were food-related memories, such as eating nut mixes from bazaars in relatives' living rooms (Natasha) or being chased down by their aunt to bring dinner party leftovers home (Milo). AJ had closed his eyes and recalled a vivid memory from visiting Pakistan over 10 years ago:

My grandma putting together this, it was like fennel seeds and carrot juice and chopped up dates, into this mix to make my eyes better. It was pretty tasty, honestly. It was kind of sweet and tasty. And like, I also have this memory of going to this tandoori...they had these big clay ovens that they would slap naan basically into, on the inside walls of, to cook it. And then kebabs right on the coals, burning coals. So good. So that really stuck with me, even today. And my memory generally isn't very good.

Through a physical separation from place, food became a sensory and material representation of not just family, but of 'heritage culture' more broadly for participants. Once again, its synesthetic nature meant food-related memories both at home and in their parents' home countries stuck in participants' minds, allowing them to construct connections to heritage place despite not being immersed in its everyday environment.

### **Barriers to heritage foodways**

Although participants attributed food to be an important part of their cultural identities, five participants expressed barriers to recreating dishes they ate growing up, limiting their connections to their heritage cultures. This was largely because they did not grow up learning to cook from their parents, due to: not living in the same context in which their parents grew up,



difficulty with recipe translation, or priorities outside the kitchen. Only Daisy described actively helping cook family meals while growing up, but even so, said “I haven’t learned like 90 percent of my mom’s recipes.”

***Domestic food production & distance from parents’ homelands***

Sam attributed her lack of intrinsic ability to replicate parents’ dishes to a physical separation from the environment in which her parents grew up. For example, she said she had trouble making Libyan foods because she did not have the repetition and practice that people who grew up in Libya surrounded by family would have through intergenerational transmission:

Because they did it when they were young. Everyone’s like, “here, do this, I can’t do it anymore because I’m old,” and then you’d start doing it and it becomes your responsibility. (Sam)

Similarly, Rebecca said her grandmother’s cooking knowledge was simply a result of “having done it for however many years,” and AJ said his aunts would have learned to cook “just by watching [their] mom” back in Pakistan. Because domestic food production is a strong mechanism of cultural transmission due to its commensal and sensory character, not having this passed down has implications for cultural identity.

I really fear losing that connection to my family and my culture by not having that food. Literally all I need to do is just learn how to make it, but it’s one of those things that I feel like is passed down through your family. (Rebecca)

While the nature of the home economy is changing for everyone as social norms shift, participants expressed that they would have learned recipes more naturally had they grown up in their parents’ homelands.

By way of growing up in Canada and assimilating into ‘mainstream’ culture, another barrier some participants faced is only knowing how to cook using measurements, when their

family's recipes were often based on approximation. Sam, AJ, and Natasha all said they learned to cook from online sources such as YouTube, following recipes with measurements. For Sam and Natasha, the dishes they learned from the internet were cuisines their parents did not cook. Sam expressed difficulty learning how to make her family's Libyan food, when she was used to cooking in units:

[*Zumeeta*] also has no rhyme or reason. My mom will pour, and I'm like, "how many grams is that?" She's like, "What do you mean? Put stuff in!" ... It just, it makes it so much harder to cook this when you've learned in a way that you can't translate it to this. So like, you can't translate measurements to this because nobody can tell you a measurement. They're like, "just look with your eye." I'm like, I can't look with my eye, because when I learned, I wasn't trained like that. It wasn't like, 'cook to taste.'

Rebecca, AJ, and Ahmed shared similar stories of asking parents or grandparents to teach them how to make their favourite dishes without much luck, because of their lack of measurements. In the words of Ahmed, learning to make his dad's curry "was a nightmare" because of his father's lack of precision. Rebecca and AJ were both given measurements in units that, to them, carried no weight.

We all make fun of my mom for two sips of vinegar. Like, what is two sips of vinegar? What does that mean? ... Like when she describes recipes, she's like, oh yeah, just do it a little bit of this, a little bit of that, two sips of vinegar. And it's just like, how am I supposed to replicate that? (AJ)

The tension between participants' tendencies to cook empirically and parents' habits of cooking by eye are reflective of a dissonant acculturation between immigrant parents and children, in which second- and 1.5-generation immigrants adopt mainstream ways faster than their parents (Portes and Zhou, 1993). It is important to note that using measurements is not necessarily incompatible with heritage food production, and that it not only represents a dissonance between heritage and mainstream for second- and 1.5-generation immigrants, but also a generational shift in how we learn to cook. Nonetheless, the difficulty of recipe replication

for participants shows that second- and 1.5-generation immigrants must negotiate the desire to maintain heritage foodways with not always having the material skills to make this food, again pointing towards the in-between state this demographic often finds itself in.



Figure 8: AJ's chicken biryani

*“Biryani was always the special dish. It's the one food, with biryani, that I could eat every day for the rest of my life and never get sick of it. ... It embodies hospitality and celebration and all that stuff.”*

Meanwhile, AJ and Edward said the primary reason they did not cook growing up was because of parental and/or self-imposed pressures to spend that time studying.

Because [my parents] were also very much like, “oh you gotta focus on school, so don't worry about any of the cooking or any of that stuff.” Which in retrospect, I feel like I lost out on being able to hang out and cook with my mom. Because she was very much focused on trying to help us be the best we could be at school ... but as a consequence, we never really got to spend time in the kitchen. (AJ)

The value of education in Edward’s and AJ’s households, is, broadly speaking, reflective of first- and second-generation assimilation efforts for upward socioeconomic mobility and increased prestige. Although the desired assimilation outcome is selective acculturation or a ‘best of both worlds’ (Portes and Zhou, 1993), this example shows that some immigrant households may see

education, hard work, and success, and cultural transmission through heritage food production, as a trade-off, where stronger cultural connection may be sacrificed. Assimilative pressures therefore exist not only externally from peers, but also internally from the household, limiting second- and 1.5-generation immigrants' heritage identities.

### **Conclusion: Foodways as togetherness**

#### ***After a big meal, sit and digest***

Being a second- or 1.5-generation immigrant is full of contradictions. You are not fully entrenched in your parents' cultures, nor are you fully embedded in a dominant norm – and mechanisms like food simultaneously mitigate and accentuate cultural difference. Returning to my research question, “*What role do foodways play in the construction of cultural identity among adult children of immigrants?*” I found that foodways are sensory, material, and symbolic markers of belonging and difference that ultimately strengthen the notions of self that are otherwise rooted in in-between spaces. Findings are in line with literature on ethnic identity and foodways among diasporic populations, contributing a much-needed case study in a rapidly changing context of globalization.

First, heritage foodways mark difference from peers, but food adaptability marks belonging to Canadian ‘multiculturalism.’ Most participants expressed a rejection of heritage foodways due to a feeling of Othering from peers that stemmed from the smell or appearance of their food – but found an eventual acceptance of heritage foods and their heritage identity through a strategic reframing of ethnic boundaries (Barth, 1969) and of group inclusion/exclusion (Mintz and DuBois, 2001). Participants also celebrated their belonging to ‘multiculturalism’ in Canada through eating various cuisines, and contributed to multicultural foodscapes themselves through their maintenance of heritage foodways. This constant re-

negotiation of what ‘mainstream’ means in Canada – which is reflective of transculturalism (Ortiz, 1940) – shows that foodways influence the co-construction of culture and identity among second- and 1.5-generation immigrants. The “cultural stuff” that characterizes belonging indeed changes, but the boundaries between second generation, first generation, and ‘full Canadian’ remain (Barth, 1969).

Second, heritage foodways connect second- and 1.5-generation immigrants to their families, through the sensorial, commensal, and ritual nature of food. Participants chose to share dishes that reminded them of home, comfort, and eating together, and the multisensory process of cooking and eating provoked memories of childhood and the people they care about. Further, participants’ geographical detachment from their parents’ home countries amplified the importance of heritage foodways, connecting participants to the “imagined geographies” that held significance to them, but that they otherwise had limited access to.

Finally, participants faced various barriers to having full access to heritage foodways, particularly related to food production. While distance from parents’ homelands emphasized the importance of heritage foods, it simultaneously made it more difficult for participants to make its cuisine. The dissonance between parents’ and participants’ cooking techniques, along with assimilative pressures, created a disconnect between the desire to strengthen connections to heritage culture and the skills and resources to do so, showing the difficulty of achieving selective acculturation (Portes and Zhou, 1993). To gain a more robust understanding of foodways, cultural identity, and cultural transmission, future studies should more critically examine the relationship between second-generation immigrants and their parents. A gendered analysis of domestic food production among second-generation immigrants, and how it influences connections to heritage, would also offer intersectional nuance to the topic.

By having “feet in both doorways,” as Sam put it, the second-generation cultural identity is not defined by a single culture; it is in-between, here and there, and neither nor, all at once. Despite foodways reflecting intergenerational, interpersonal, and internal tensions, food remains a central way for second- and 1.5-generation immigrants to create belonging to the people that hold significance to them. Now, when I sauté onions, I think about Ahmed’s magical visit to his father’s village in Bangladesh. I remember Milo’s musings about the obligations of a Greek family. But, I also think of my own parents, because when they cook, the same sizzle hits my ears, and the same sharp smell goes up my nose, that connect me to a place I otherwise only know from imagination. Ultimately, cooking and eating with others remains a meaningful source of joy and community that has the capacity to bring people together, despite differences.

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## Appendix A: Participants' dishes

**Ahmed (55M, HRM, Irish Bengali, 2<sup>nd</sup> gen.):**

### **Chicken curry with potatoes**

*In a large pot, heat reduced chicken fat. Flavour the oil with spice mixture of kalonji, fennel, fenugreek, and mustard seeds, along with cinnamon and whole coriander. Add chopped onions, minced ginger and garlic, and marinated chicken legs and thighs. Dust with Dhana Jiru (coriander cumin spice powder). Fill pot halfway with water, add potatoes, and let boil for 20 minutes. Serve with rice and chapati.*



**AJ (27M, HRM, Pakistani, 2<sup>nd</sup> gen.):**

### **Chicken biryani**

*In an Instant Pot, add butter, onions, garlic, and whole spices. Once onions are soft, add boneless skinless chicken thighs and create spice blend. Dump in basmati rice, add water, and pressure cook. Serve with tomato cucumber red onion tossed with white vinegar and Greek yogurt. For bonus points, snack on cinnamon raisin toast and Soda Stream water while cooking. See full recipe here: <https://myheartbeets.com/instant-pot-chicken-biryani/>*



**Daisy (21F, HRM, Half Korean, 1.5 gen.):**

**Kimchi-jjigae (kimchi stew)**

*In a large pot, fry kimchi until soft. Add pork belly, tuna, and tofu before pouring in sauce mixture of gochujang, gochugaru, soy sauce, kimchi and tuna brine. Add water and let simmer.*

*Finally, add dangmyeon (glass noodles). Serve with rice and yuja-cha (yuzu tea).*



**Edward (21M, Richmond, Chinese-Hong Kong, 2<sup>nd</sup> gen.):**

**Dim sum**

*Ordered: Green tea, BBQ pork buns, shrimp dumplings, phoenix claws, siu mai, steamed rice noodle rolls, custard buns, bean curd roll, beef balls, spareribs, beef tripe, claypot with Chinese sausage...and more!*



**Milo (30NB, Montreal, Greek, 2nd gen.):****Yemista (stuffed peppers)**

*Scoop out seeds from bell peppers. Prepare filling by sweating onions and garlic in a pan before adding ground beef, mint, cumin, tomato paste, salt, and cooked basmati rice. Stuff peppers with filling and bake in dish filled to your fingertip with water. Serve with feta olive oil, and oregano, and bread. After dinner, enjoy mountain tea, Turkish Delight and halva.*

**Natasha (21F, HRM, Lebanese, 2<sup>nd</sup> gen.):****Gochujang crispy tofu with steamed rice and broccoli**



**Rebecca (29F, Toronto, Eastern European, 1.5 gen.):**

**Pelmeni (meat dumplings)**

*Add frozen pelmeni to pot of boiling water. When done, toss in bowl with butter, balsamic vinegar, salt and pepper. Serve with fresh cucumbers to add bite to the meal.*



**Sam (20F, HRM, Libya, 1.5 gen.):**

**Zumeeta**

*Drizzle extra virgin olive oil into a bowl of ground barley. Mix together with fingertips until powder is hydrated. Add sugar to taste. Slowly pour in water, until able to press together to form a bite-sized ball.*



## Appendix B: Recruitment posters

**Do you identify as a visible minority?**

**Did your parents immigrate to Canada,  
or did you immigrate to Canada as a  
young child?**

**If yes:**

# **LET'S SHARE A MEAL!**

Please consider participating in an anthropological study about food and cultural identity. Participation would include cooking and/or sharing a meal with the researcher and/or one interview.

This research is being conducted by an undergraduate honours student at Dalhousie University.

---

Contact Michelle Wang  
([michelle.wang@dal.ca](mailto:michelle.wang@dal.ca)),  
or scan the QR code:





DO YOU IDENTIFY AS A VISIBLE  
MINORITY?

DID YOUR PARENTS IMMIGRATE TO  
CANADA, OR DID YOU IMMIGRATE TO  
CANADA AS A  
YOUNG CHILD?

IF YES:

# LET'S SHARE A MEAL!

Please consider participating in an anthropological study about food and cultural identity. Participation would include cooking and/or sharing a meal with the researcher and/or one interview. This research is being conducted by an undergraduate honours student at Dalhousie University.

CONTACT  
[MICHELLE.WANG@DAL.CA](mailto:MICHELLE.WANG@DAL.CA)  
OR SCAN THE QR CODE:





## Appendix C: Consent form



### CONSENT FORM:

Study title: Con-fusion?: Exploring Food and cultural identity among visible minority second-generation immigrants

You are invited to take part in research being conducted by me, Michelle Wang, an undergraduate student in Social Anthropology, as part of my Honours degree at Dalhousie University. The purpose of this research is to use participant observation and interviews to better understand the relationship between food and cultural identity in visible minority children of immigrants in Halifax. I will write up the results of this research in a paper for my class, called the Honours thesis.

As a participant in the research, you will be asked to answer a number of interview questions about your cultural identity and background, and about what particular foods mean to you. In tandem with the interview, you are also given the option to cook and/or eat a meal of your choice with me, the researcher, as I employ the method of participant observation to gain a fuller understanding of your relationship with food and related practices. Depending on whether you would like to cook together, and what you would like to cook, the process should take approximately one to four hours. If you are willing, it will take place at your home and kitchen. You are welcome to have family members, roommates, or others from your household around during the process, if that is convenient to you. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded, and I may take notes while cooking or sharing a meal. I may also take photos of the meal we cook/eat at different stages of the process. These photos will not include any people or anything that may identify you. If I quote any part of it in my Honours thesis, I will use a pseudonym, not your real name, and I will remove any other details that could identify you from the quote.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You do not have to answer questions that you do not want to answer, and you are welcome to stop the interview, meal-making or eating at any time if you no longer want to participate. If you decide to stop participating after the interview and participant observation are over, you can do so until March 1 2024. I will not be able to remove the information you provided after that date, because I will have completed my analysis, but the information will not be used in any other research.

Information that you provide to me will be kept private and will be anonymized, which means any identifying details such as your name will be removed from it. Only the Honours class supervisors and I will have access to the unprocessed information you offer. I will describe and share general findings in a presentation to the Sociology and Social Anthropology Department and in my Honours thesis. Nothing that could identify you will be included in the presentation or the thesis. I will keep anonymized information so that I can learn more from it as I continue with my studies.

The risks associated with this study are no greater than those you encounter in your everyday life in relation to cooking, eating, and talking about food and cultural identity. However, if you disclose or I witness potential harm or abuse of a child or an adult in need of protection, I have a duty to report it to the child welfare agency or the Minister of Community Services, respectively.

There will be no direct benefit to you in participating in this research and you will not receive compensation. The research, however, will contribute to new knowledge about identity and belonging in visible minority children of immigrants, and the role of food and place in shaping and reflecting identity. If you would like to see how your information is used, please feel free to contact me and I will send you a copy of my Honours thesis after April 30.

If you have questions or concerns about the research please feel free to contact me or the honours class supervisor. My contact information is [michelle.wang@dal.ca](mailto:michelle.wang@dal.ca). You can contact the honours class supervisors, Dr Martha Radice at (902) 494-6747 or [martha.radice@dal.ca](mailto:martha.radice@dal.ca), or Dr Karen Foster at (902) 494-3130 or [karen.foster@dal.ca](mailto:karen.foster@dal.ca), from the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Dalhousie University.

If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this research, you may contact Catherine Connors, Director, Research Ethics, Dalhousie University at (902) 494-1462, or email [ethics@dal.ca](mailto:ethics@dal.ca).

**Participant's consent:**

I have read the above information and I agree to participate in this study.

Name:

---

Signature:

---

Date:

---

Researcher's signature:

---

Date:

---

## **Appendix D: Screening questions**

### **Screening survey:**

Thank you for your interest in my thesis research project! In this anthropological study, I am interested in better understanding the relationship between food and identity in children of immigrants.

This is a short screening to ensure your eligibility for this study. After receiving your response, I will reach out to you to discuss next steps. Your participation will be confidential and any personal information you share here will be protected.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to me at michelle.wang@dal.ca.

Thanks again!

- Name
- Email address
- Phone number (optional)
- Are your parents immigrants to Canada?
  - Yes
  - No
- Were you born in Canada?
  - Yes
  - No
- If you answered "no" to the question above, how old were you when you immigrated to Canada?
- Do you identify as a visible minority?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Unsure
- Do you live in the Halifax Regional Municipality?
  - Yes
  - No
- For this study, you have the following options (you may choose to take part in one, two, or all three!):
  - Cooking a dish or meal that is meaningful to you together. It can be anything of your choosing, at a time and place convenient to you – but ideally at your home.
  - Eating a meal meaningful to you together, at a time and place convenient to you
  - Doing one interview (~1 hour), at a time and place convenient to you – but ideally at your home.
- Are you interested in cooking a dish or meal meaningful to you together, at a time and place convenient to you?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Maybe
- Are you interested in eating a meal meaningful to you together, at a time and place convenient to you?
  - Yes
  - No

- Maybe
- Are you interested in doing one interview (~1 hour), at a time and place convenient to you?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Maybe

## Appendix E: Interview guide

### Demographic information

1. Tell me about your parents' background and their immigration here.
  - a. What country/countries are your parents from?
  - b. How long have they been in Canada? In Halifax (if applicable)?
  - c. Do they speak other languages? Do you?
  - d. Do you have other family here? In Canada?
2. Taking your heritage background into consideration, how do you label yourself? What is your ethnicity?
  - a. Do you identify as a racialized person/visible minority? Do you prefer one of these terms, or a different term?

### If cooking:

1. What are we making?
2. Why did you choose this meal?
  - a. When do you typically make this meal? Is it something you eat often or is it eaten on special occasions?
3. How did you learn to cook? Who taught you how to cook?
4. Do you feel that this meal/these ingredients are representative of your culture?

### On the chosen meal:

1. What are we eating?
2. Why did you choose this meal/dish?
  - a. What memories do you associate with this meal/dish?

### Food experiences in general, and commensality:

1. What kinds of foods did you most commonly eat growing up?
  - a. Who made them?
  - b. What did you think about the food your parents made?
2. Describe a typical dinnertime growing up.
  - a. What did you eat/drink?
  - b. With whom?
  - c. Who cooked?
  - d. How did you eat?
    - i. Where?
    - ii. Serving -- where you served? Did you serve yourself?
    - iii. What kind of table etiquette did you use?
    - iv. What time did you eat?
    - v. Did you have any routines? If so, what? (e.g. prayer, taking turns cooking/doing dishes/serving...)
3. What kinds of foods do you typically eat now?
4. What do you consider a balanced meal?
5. What foods do you typically crave?
6. What is your comfort food?
7. Do you typically eat alone or with others? With whom?
  - a. Do you eat the same foods by yourself vs with friends vs with family?
8. How do the foods you eat compare to the foods that your peers or friends eat?
  - a. Growing up, did you ever get made fun of for the foods you ate?
9. How are the foods you eat connected to your culture?

10. Is food meaningful to you?

Heritage/culture/identity:

1. How connected do you feel to your heritage culture (\*insert heritage culture\*)?
  - a. What makes you feel the most connected to your heritage culture?
  - b. What makes you feel the most connected to Canadian or western culture?
2. Do you feel more Canadian or more \*insert heritage culture\*?
3. Would you say that you have a strong sense of self?
4. How is your sense of self impacted by your generational status of having immigrant parents?
5. What was it like growing up as a visible minority?
6. What was it like growing up with immigrant parents?
7. Do you consider yourself assimilated into mainstream society?
  - a. What sorts of barriers did you face in assimilating?

Further demographic questions:

Do you have a religious background that is important to your cultural identity?

Do you live alone or with other people? Are they family/roommates/partner? Do you eat/cook with them?

**Appendix F: REB final report****ANNUAL/FINAL REPORT**

Annual report to the Research Ethics Board for the continuing ethical review of research involving humans / Final report to conclude REB oversight

**A. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

|                                                                   |                                                                                                       |                      |                                                  |                |                                           |  |                                                    |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------------------------|--|
| This report is ( <i>select one</i> ):                             |                                                                                                       |                      |                                                  |                | <input type="checkbox"/> An annual report |  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A final report |  |
| REB file number:                                                  | 2023-6952                                                                                             |                      |                                                  |                |                                           |  |                                                    |  |
| Study title:                                                      | Con-fusion?: Exploring food and cultural identity among visible minority second-generation immigrants |                      |                                                  |                |                                           |  |                                                    |  |
| Lead researcher (named on REB submission)                         | Name                                                                                                  | Michelle Wang        |                                                  |                |                                           |  |                                                    |  |
|                                                                   | Email                                                                                                 | michelle.wang@dal.ca | Phone                                            | (902) 299-6118 |                                           |  |                                                    |  |
| Current status of lead researcher (at Dalhousie University):      |                                                                                                       |                      |                                                  |                |                                           |  |                                                    |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employee/Academic Appointment            |                                                                                                       |                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Former student          |                |                                           |  |                                                    |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Current student               |                                                                                                       |                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain): |                |                                           |  |                                                    |  |
| Supervisor (if lead researcher is/was a student/resident/postdoc) | Name                                                                                                  | Martha Radice        |                                                  |                |                                           |  |                                                    |  |
|                                                                   | Email                                                                                                 | martha.radice@dal.ca |                                                  |                |                                           |  |                                                    |  |
| Contact person for this report (if not lead researcher)           | Name                                                                                                  |                      |                                                  |                |                                           |  |                                                    |  |
|                                                                   | Email                                                                                                 |                      | Phone                                            |                |                                           |  |                                                    |  |

**B. RECRUITMENT & DATA COLLECTION STATUS**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Instructions: Complete <b>ALL</b> sections relevant to this study</p> <p>Study involves/involved recruiting participants: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No<br/><i>If yes, complete section B1.</i></p> <p>Study involves/involved secondary use of data: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No<br/><i>If yes, complete section B2.</i></p> <p>Study involves/involved use of human biological materials: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No<br/><i>If yes, complete section B2.</i></p> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                       |     |                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----------------------------------------|
| <b>B1. Recruitment of participants</b>                                                                                                                |     | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable |
| B1.1 How many participants did the researcher intend to recruit?<br><i>(provide number approved in the most recent REB application/amendment)</i>     | 6-8 |                                         |
| B1.2 How many participants have been recruited?<br><i>(if applicable, identify by participant group/method e.g. interviews: 10, focus groups: 25)</i> |     |                                         |
| a) In total, since the beginning of the study: 8                                                                                                      |     |                                         |
| b) Since the last annual report: 8                                                                                                                    |     |                                         |
| B1.3 Recruitment for this study is:                                                                                                                   |     |                                         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> complete; or                                                                                                      |     |                                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> on-going                                                                                                                     |     |                                         |
| B1.4 Data collection from participants for this study is:                                                                                             |     |                                         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> complete; or                                                                                                      |     |                                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> on-going                                                                                                                     |     |                                         |
| B1.5 Communication with participants related to this study is:                                                                                        |     |                                         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> complete; or                                                                                                      |     |                                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> on-going                                                                                                                     |     |                                         |

|                                                                                                                                                                             |  |                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>B2. Use of secondary data and/or biological materials</b>                                                                                                                |  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable |
| B2.1 How many individual records/biological materials did the researcher intend to access?<br><i>(provide number approved in the most recent REB application/amendment)</i> |  |                                                    |
| B2.2 How many individual participant records/biological materials have been accessed?                                                                                       |  |                                                    |
| a) In total, since the beginning of the study:                                                                                                                              |  |                                                    |
| b) Since the last annual report:                                                                                                                                            |  |                                                    |

### C. PROJECT HISTORY

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Since your last annual report (or since initial submission if this is your first annual report):</i>                                                                                                                                                |  |
| C1. Have there been any variations to the original research project that have NOT been approved with an amendment request? This includes changes to the research methods, recruitment material, consent documents, study instruments or research team. |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |
| If yes, please explain:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |  |
| C2. Have you experienced any challenges or delays recruiting or retaining participants or accessing records or biological materials?                                                                                                                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |



|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| If yes, please explain:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| C3. Have you experienced any problems in carrying out this project?<br><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No<br>If yes, please explain:                                                                                                                                         |
| C4. Have any participants experienced any harm as a result of their participation in this study?<br><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No<br>If yes, please explain:                                                                                                            |
| C5. Has any study participant expressed complaints, or experienced any difficulties in relation to their participation in the study?<br><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No<br>If yes, please explain:                                                                        |
| C6. Since the original approval, have there been any new reports in the literature that would suggest a change in the nature or likelihood of risks or benefits resulting from participation in this study?<br><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No<br>If yes, please explain: |

#### **D. APPLYING FOR STUDY CLOSURE**

*Complete this section only if this is a FINAL report as indicated in section A*

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| D1. For studies involving recruitment of participants, a closure may be submitted when:<br><br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> all research-related interventions or interactions with participants have been completed<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> N/A (this study did not involve recruitment of participants)                                                                                               |
| D2. For studies involving secondary use of data and/or human biological materials, a closure may be submitted when:<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> all data acquisition is complete, there will be no further access to participant records or collection of biological materials<br><br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A (this study did not involve secondary use of data and/or human biological materials) |
| D3. Closure Request<br><br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I am applying for study closure                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

#### **E. ATTESTATION (both boxes *must* be checked for the report to be accepted by the REB)**

I agree that the information provided in this report accurately portrays the status of this project and describes to the Research Ethics Board any new developments related to the study since initial approval or the latest report.

I attest this project was, or will continue to be, completed in accordance with the approved REB application (or most recent approved amendment) and in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2).

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