Indigenous urban food in the 21st Century:
Researching Aboriginal peoples’ relationships with food

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Macquarie University Fellowship for Indigenous Researchers, Department of Geography and Planning, Macquarie University
Aims

• Explore Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Aboriginal) households experiences of food insecurity:
  • coping strategies that households and families use to create food secure households,
  • Aboriginal knowledge, culture and protocols plays in the use of these strategies

• To empower Aboriginal participants - understand the cost of their own food basket, their relationships to food, and factors which may influence both of these

• Develop a deep and broad understanding of the experiences of Aboriginal households’ food insecurity

• Extend current knowledge on Aboriginal health as it relates to food security
Why urban Indigenous food?

• one in five (20% cent) Indigenous Australians were living in a household where someone went without food*
• compared to one in twenty (or 3.7 %) people in the non-Indigenous population*
• ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote areas were more likely than those in non-remote areas to be living in a household that had run out of food and couldn’t afford to buy more (31% compared with 20%)’ ¹

BUT

• The proportion of the Indigenous urban population increased from 44% to 76% between 1971 and 2006^
Why coping strategies?

• coping strategies approaches argues that food insecurity is a ‘managed process’ – which is a series of predictable stages that people move through and that indicates increasing food insecurity *


Why coping strategies?

• Hadley and Crooks* argue that this sequence involves:
  • limiting the meal size;
  • reducing the number of meals;
  • consuming less of preferred food;
  • consumption of wild food;
  • borrowing food from others;
  • utilise credit to purchase food;
  • skip food for a whole days’
  • send family members away
  • begging

Why coping strategies?

- understanding the coping strategies that people use can provide insights to the level of food insecurity people experience

- International tools for measuring food insecurity (that is based on understanding coping strategies) that make data collected in Australia comparable to other places
  - *US Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM)*

Why cultural protocols?

• I’m fascinated by protocols as tools or rule for setting social norms

• They can tell us about Aboriginal food practices and give an insight into food security
Why cultural protocols?

‘the colonial impact on indigenous people’s food practices was cataclysmic and its effects still reverberate today’

‘Whether households across different cultures or even within the same culture follow any fundamentally similar response pattern when confronted with a food-related constraint remains a debate’

Why cultural protocols?

‘Whether households across different cultures or even within the same culture follow any fundamentally similar response pattern when confronted with a food-related constraint remains a debate’

METHODS & ANALYSIS
Methods

• Case study: Geraldton, Western Australia

• Pilot testing:
  • US Household Food Security Survey Module (with two additional parts: demographic module, cultural protocols module)
  • Photovoice
  • Food basket method
Geraldton
Geraldton
HFSSM (plus modules)

- HFSSM (with CFSSM for children)
- 12 month recall period
- 30 day recall for CFSSM

Demographic module

Cultural protocols module

*Household Stage 1: Questions HH2-HH4 (asked of all households; begin scale items).*

[IF SINGLE ADULT IN HOUSEHOLD, USE "I," "MY," AND "YOU" IN PARENTHEticals; OTHERWISE, USE "WE," "OUR," AND "YOUR HOUSEHOLD."]

HH2. Now I’m going to read you several statements that people have made about their food situation. For these statements, please tell me whether the statement was often true, sometimes true, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months—that is, since last (name of current month).

The first statement is “(I/We) worried whether (my/our) food would run out before (I/we) got money to buy more.” Was that often true, sometimes true, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

[ ] Often true
[ ] Sometimes true
[ ] Never true
[ ] DK or Refused
HFSSM (demographic)

Questions on:

- Age
- Gender
- No. adults living in the household
- No. children living in the household
- Highest level of education main source of income
## HFSSM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Q No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Screening Stage 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household in the last 12 months: — enough of the kinds of food (I/we) want to eat; — enough, but not always the kinds of food (I/we) want; — sometimes not enough to eat; or, — often not enough to eat?’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household Stage 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried whether <em>food would run</em> out before I/we got money to buy more</td>
<td>HH2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <em>food that bought just didn’t last</em>, and I/we didn’t have money to get more</td>
<td>HH3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couldn’t afford to <em>eat balanced meals</em></td>
<td>HH4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Screening Stage 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘If affirmative response (i.e., &quot;often true&quot; or &quot;sometimes true&quot;) to one or more of Questions HH2-HH4, OR, response [3] or [4] to question HH1 (if administered), then continue to <strong>Adult Stage 2</strong>; otherwise, if children under age 18 are present in the household, skip to <strong>Child Stage 1</strong>, otherwise <strong>skip to End of Food Security Module</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Adult Stage 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ever <strong>cut the size of your meals</strong> or <strong>skip meals</strong> because there wasn’t enough money for food</th>
<th>AD1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ever <strong>eat less</strong> than you felt you should because there wasn’t enough money for food</td>
<td>AD2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever <strong>hungry but didn't eat</strong> because there wasn’t enough money for food</td>
<td>AD3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever <strong>lose weight</strong> because there wasn’t enough money for food</td>
<td>AD4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Adult Stage 3

| Ever **not eat for a whole day** because there wasn’t enough money for food | AD5 |
## Child Stage 1

- Relied on only a few kinds of **low-cost food** to feed their child/children because they were running out of money to buy food
  - CH1

- Couldn’t feed their child/children a **balanced meal**, because we couldn’t afford that
  - CH2

- Child/children were **not eating enough** because they just couldn’t afford enough money
  - CH3

## Child Stage 2

- Ever **cut the size** of (your child's/any of the children's) meals because there wasn't enough money for food
  - CH4

- Ever **skip meals** because there wasn't enough money for food
  - CH5

- Was your child/were the **children ever hungry** but you just couldn't afford more food
  - CH6

- Your child/any of the children ever **not eat for a whole** day because there wasn't enough money for food
  - CH7
HFSSM (protocols)

- ‘Are there any cultural factors that influences how you secure and share food?’

- ‘Are there any protocols that influences how you secure and share food?’

- ‘Do you use any other strategies to secure food?’
ANALYSIS & RESULTS
Demographic

- n=23 (15 female adults, 4 male adults, and 4 children and young adults)

- Adult age range: 20 to 81

- Household composition: ranged from one adult and no children in the household, to five adults and four children

- Majority lived in households with children (n=15), with a large number (n=12) living in a household with 2 or more children
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### Food security scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of affirmative responses (Out of 18)</th>
<th>Food Security Scale Values (Out of 18)</th>
<th>1998 Food Security Scale Values</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Child food security pilot survey (based on CFSSM)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Households With Children</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Food secure</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Secure</td>
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<td>1.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
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<td>Insecure, with hunger</td>
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<td>Insecure, with hunger</td>
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<td>8.7</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>Insecure, with hunger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>Insecure, with hunger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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HFSSM

Food security scale

- Affirmative responses ranged from 0 to 13
- Food security scale values ranged from 0 to 7.2
- ‘food secure’ n=2
- ‘food insecure without hunger’ n=7
- ‘food insecure with hunger, moderate’ n=7
- ‘food insecure with hunger, severe’ n=3

Note: those in the later category included two households with children and a sole occupant household
CFSSM

Food security scale

- Affirmative responses ranged from 6 to 8
- Food security scale values ranged from 7.2 to 10.3
- ‘insecure with hunger’ n=4 (i.e. all child respondents)
HFSSM

• Better delivered by the ACCHO

• Developing training module for ACCHO’s
  • (interest in Geraldton and Qld)
Cultural protocols

• Families, friends and community

• Bush foods, wild foods and growing your own

• Charities, churches and the State

• Financial strategies
As long as my kids got food, I'll share what if I've got stuff. And if I can't do that I'll just tell them to come and have a feed with the rest of us.

When we used to make a feed we used to make a big pot [Yeah] pot of stew and a damper, a couple of dampers. You know what we used to do? [What?]. All the kids that lived around where we were [yeah], they used to know that there was feed in that house. So they used to come and we used to feed the whole lot of them. [Wow]. Yeah. [That's amazing]. And that was their main meal for the day.

It puts fuel in my car. And sometimes they chuck me a couple of bucks, ask me what I might need from the shop, if I need anything at home, and stuff like that.
- Kangaroo
  - Road kill
  
  Used to make dampers and swap for kangaroo meat for us. But my kid can make them better than me [...]. In [town] you pay someone $20 [...] or pay someone for a kangaroo you know. It come back with no tail. It's still part of the kangaroo you know.

- Rabbits

  Participant: Lately it's been pretty scarce. They're being nasty. True. Like they.

  Raven: Why are they nasty?

  Participant: They all coming from that way, and they've got all the roos out there, and I'm like can you bring me like, I need a tail from you fullas. Come on. I'm hungry. I want my mullo there look. I need my googah. Give me some feed here you fullas. Been hanging out for kangaroo for that long. Oh true.

- Goats

- Veggie patch

**Bushfoods, wild food & growing your own**
Churches, charities & the state

• Food vouchers

• Food boxes

I just thought nup, I'm going to make my food last and I don't care. I'm sick of these people telling me you know, rejecting me you know.

It's very expensive. With that $30 you can survive for like two days.
Financial strategies

- Bulk buy and cheap foods

- Direct debit/shop credits

- Short-term loans

So a few weeks back um I got one of them loans online, my daughter done it [...]. It ended up taking all of my money, like $500, and I was literally on $60 a week [...]. And I got on the phone and told them, you know, I'm in a worse position than I was when I got the loan. It was only a $200 loan and I ended up paying $500 [...], and that was disappointing. So we out to $60 a week you know. [...]. I had to ask some family that I'm talking to for help for food. So that was like a one off, and I don't want to be like that again.
Food basket

- Mobile phone apps in Indigenous research
  - If they can’t afford food, forget about using apps

- Paper based FACS foods survey
  - Food recall diaries
Photo voice

- Camera’s get lost
- People pull out
LESSONS
Lessons

• Be guided by the ACCHO, but a locked gate means a dog
• Mobiles: people won’t have credit, or answer your call.
  • You’ll have to call (and text people) at least 6 times before you get a response
  • Food App research won’t work unless you provide funds for people to use the apps (i.e. an internet card)
• Take food when you visit people
• People still eat bush food and fairly regularly
• You can only make a small amount of money go so far. The social security payments need to be increased.
• Build participant payments into your budgets
Photovoice

- Choice of methods
- Camera (colour, or bnw)
- Given 3-8 weeks

- Workshop 1: What is photovoice?
- Workshop 2: Discussion of photos
Food basket

- Choice of method

- Based on Food Access Cost Survey (FACS), WA

- Workshop 1: What do you purchase from FACS
  - Used printed copies of FACS food list
Food basket

- Workshop 2: Apps to support other purchases
  - Apps
  - Website’s for Coles and Woolworths