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Citation for published version:

Datta, K, Brown, T & Mutambasere, T 2024, "Road runners' and Fanta: Intersectional cultural food in/security among Zimbabwean migrants living in UK cities', *Global Food Security*, vol. 43, 100805, pp. 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gfs.2024.100805>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1016/j.gfs.2024.100805](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gfs.2024.100805)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Published In:

Global Food Security

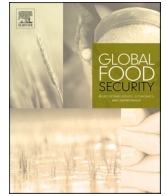
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'Road runners' and Fanta: Intersectional cultural food in/security among Zimbabwean migrants living in UK cities

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Cultural food insecurity
Intersectionality
Zimbabwean migrants and diaspora

ABSTRACT

The incidence of food insecurity among migrant and diasporic communities living in rich global North cities is growing. A key dimension of this is the absence of culturally appropriate food which is integral to both feeding *and* nourishing mobile bodies. In this paper, we deploy an intersectional approach to cultural food in/security to explore the foodscapes of Zimbabwean communities living in British cities. We unpack how and why food cultures are critical in shaping migrant experiences of food in/security and the diversification of food cultures over time and place and mediated by intersectional subjectivities. We map local, regional and transnational food supply chains as migrants seek to redress issues of access and availability to source foods familiar to them to maintain the cultural significance of food and food practices within families and diaspora communities.

1. Introduction: from feeding to nourishing migrant bodies

"Where would you get a road runner?" asked a woman [IDI6]¹ during an interview exploring food cultures among Zimbabwean migrants based in the United Kingdom (UK). In the absence of road runners – free-range chicken - she had learned she said "to eat English food. Yeah well, chicken ... It was not tasty. Yeah. But then I had no choice." Her male compatriot, [IDI4], expressed much the same opinion about Fanta, the soda drink, which was neither as sweet nor as fizzy as he was accustomed to. Reflecting on his continued consumption nonetheless, he observed that "maybe you are drinking the sentimentality rather than the product." These views, echoed by others in our research, illustrate complex migrant food environments. Both participants were nostalgic in their recollections of the familiar tasty food available back home and regretful of its absence in the UK.

Their observations allude to key conceptual frameworks deployed in food studies, namely security and culture, which are increasingly recognised as being intertwined. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO, 2010) highlights this in its definition of food security as "when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to

sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." Critical scholars, however, argue that the emphasis on preference does not adequately capture the significance of food cultures which not only shape access, availability and utilization which underpin food security but are also "repositories of traditions and shape cultural identity" (HLPE 2017: 4). Cultural food in/security is a lens through which these bodies of research can be bridged (Power, 2008), a concept that both aids an understanding of migrant foodscapes while being stretched itself to account for mobilities.

As (Abbots, 2016) reminds us "food cannot be considered in isolation but has to be situated in a wider context of movement, travels and flows across space," (see also Crush and Caesar, 2017). While a lack of food propels migration, mobility itself results in physical, emotional and sensorial dislocations which are dramatically heightened if migrants cannot access culturally recognisable food as they journey and settle (Bailey, 2017; Hayden, 2024). Familiar foods, and the preparation, cooking and eating of these, are vital in remaking place. Taste and smell evoke connections with home, and the social and emotional relations located therein, as well as enabling a reconfiguration of self, home and

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¹ We use alpha-numeric codes to identify anonymised research participants: IDI equates to in-depth interviews followed by the numerical order in which interviews were conducted.

community (Gingell et al., 2022). In turn, migration transforms food pathways in places of origin, transit and destination shaping access to familiar food² as well as pragmatic responses to their unavailability. The enactment of food practices potentially “reduces feelings of loss and distance ... in so far as the sharing of food cultivates a feeling of being in each others’ presence in each other’s households.” (Bailey 2017: 55; also (Moffat et al., 2017). Thus, it is often argued that while food feeds the body, satiates hunger and staves off undernutrition, familiar food nourishes emotional wellbeing, engendering a sense of belonging and connection. These processes play out across diverse spatial registers ranging from the body and interpersonal to the institutional, community and public policy, and from the local to the regional and transnational (Moffat et al., 2017).

However, this reflects a relative reification of food cultures, further entrenching the dominant traditional-marketized, home-outside, alternative-mainstream binaries which continue to characterise culture-security scholarship (see also Brouwer, 2023; Riley and Dodson, 2017). An appreciation that food is power (Piatti-Farnell and Brien, 2018) has led to more nuanced analysis attentive to intersectional subjectivities. Williams-Forsen and Wilkerson (2011: 11) cogently argue that “when we move from thinking of food as unraced, unclassed and unfettered by the binds of sexuality and physicality and therefore socially equal, to discussions of food as an inherent part of the social inequality of our lives, then the “real” complicated nature of our field begins to unfold.” Informed by Crenshaw’s (1989, 1991) seminal work on intersectionality, it is evident that food cultures interplay with gender, race, class, generation and urban-rural location, and are intimately related to ‘matters of the body’ (Piatti-Farnell and Brien, 2018). In a similar vein, Samal and Mishra, 2024 highlight the “meaning generating abilities” of food, referring to it as a conveyor of social structures and cultural systems.

Building upon this work, in this paper we seek to extend intersectional understandings of cultural food in/security. Drawing upon qualitative research undertaken with Zimbabwean migrants living and working in UK cities, we develop this argument in three inter-related arenas. We begin by unpacking how and why food cultures are critical in shaping migrant experiences of food in/security and how these experiences are inflected by intersectional identities. We detail the diversification of food cultures noting their evolution across time and space, and mediation by gender, generation, class and migratory trajectories. Furthermore, we map food supply chains as migrants seek to redress issues of access and availability to source foods familiar to them to maintain the cultural significance of food and food practices within families and diaspora communities. Here we highlight the importance, and marketisation, of local, regional and transnational food chains stretching from and between the UK and Zimbabwe. We detail our methodological approach and empirical context before considering these arguments.

2. ‘Soft landings’: empirical context and methodological approach

‘Soft landings’ was the term a man [IDI13] who had migrated to London in 2002 on a highly skilled visa used to describe the fact that having family and friends already living and working in the UK made for easier settlement in a foreign land. To an extent, his experience reflected Zimbabwean migration both to the UK and beyond. Recognised as a country of simultaneous immigration, emigration and transition, post-colonial out-migration from Zimbabwe has been driven by a

confluence of economic turmoil, political instability and environmental challenges (Crush et al., 2015; Datta et al., 2024). A quarter of the country’s population had emigrated by 2010 with two-thirds of Black Zimbabweans departing for neighbouring countries, constituting the ‘near diaspora,’ while others moved further afield comprising the ‘far diaspora’ (Bolt 2015; McGregor and Pasura 2014). Estimated to have grown by 300 per cent between 1990 and 2013, Zimbabwean communities are distributed across 100 countries including the UK (Chikwira, 2021; Chikanda 2019; Crush et al., 2015). Here, they are part of a ‘new African diaspora’ ranked as the third largest African population. This is a diverse community shaped by changing British immigration policies which changed dramatically from granting citizenship based on parentage – a right largely afforded to White Rhodesians - and free travel to the imposition of visas in 2002. The latter was prompted by the presumption of abuse of the asylum system rendering subsequent journeys and arrivals more torturous. It is also a maturing diaspora which has gradually feminised partly due to increased employment and training opportunities in the UK care and service industries, and spanning generations to include those who migrated to the UK as children or adolescents and those who were born here (Chikwira 2021; Mutambasere 2022; ONS 2019).

Our research participants – 28 in total - reflected this diversity (see Table 1 below). The authors conducted digitally enabled interviews necessitated by Covid-19 related social distancing measures. Snowballing from our research networks, we spoke with people involved in various capacities in the food industry from catering to farming, food bloggers as well as those who were part of the food chains. Interviews lasted for up to an hour with consent sought prior to, and confirmed at, the start of each interview. Conducted in a mixture of Shona and English, interviews covered migration trajectories, food norms and practices and reconfigurations of food cultures. Whilst ensuring that participants were not at risk of contracting the virus, digital interviewing also enabled us to reach communities spread out across UK cities. This said, we were constrained by connectivity issues which sometimes meant that conversations were (partially) completed with cameras turned off, people forgot about arrangements to speak as well as being constrained to those who were within our networks (e.g. Shona speaking people) and digitally connected. Nonetheless, this sample did reflect several of the community characteristics noted above.

As detailed in Table 1, our participants identified as female or male with an almost even split between those who arrived before and after the imposition of visas. Migration status on arrival varied with education emerging as a key factor shaping mobility but ranging from visitor visas to moving to the UK as dependent children. In some cases we were able to capture migration status over time, for example three people who had

Table 1
Migration histories of research participants.

	Number
Gender	
Female	11
Male	17
Arrival period	
1996–2002	15
2003–2017	13
Migration status (at arrival)	
Visitor	4
Student	12
Dependent child	4
Spousal visa	1
Undocumented	1
Refugee	1
Highly skilled visa	1
Not specified	4
Journeys to the UK	
Straight to the UK	22
Via South Africa	3
Via third destination (Canada, Ireland)	3

² A variety of terms are used to distinguish between ‘mainstream’ and culturally appropriate (or cultural) food. The latter is also referred to as traditional, alternative or home foods. Given the culturally reductionist connotation of these terms, we use ‘familiar food’ to describe Zimbabwean diets except where our research participants used different terms.

come to the UK on student visas went through subsequent periods of being undocumented before being regularised. Significantly, pre- and post-migration journeys were evidenced with many people moving internally to urban towns and cities including Harare and Bulawayo before journeying to the UK, while others lived in South African cities – sometimes referred to as staging posts - for anywhere between a few days to years before making the same journey. This mobility continued for some as they moved from arrival cities to places where they studied, worked and were living when we interviewed them including London, Sheffield, Birmingham, Leicester, Bradford, Coventry and Bournemouth. Demonstrating the global Zimbabwean diaspora, families and relatives were spread out over the UK, in Zimbabwe, South Africa, the US, Australia and Greece. It was UK based relatives who enabled soft landings.

3. “*Sadza*³ is always on the menu”: intersectional insights into cultural food in/security

We turn now to explore the relative significance of familiar – or what the women and men we spoke to referred to as traditional - food in shaping intersectional in/security. It is notable that Zimbabwean migrants were located at the nexus of an abundance of British/global food versus a relative scarcity of familiar diets although this imbalance shifted over time. Indeed, many arriving in Britain encountered an environment still characterised by an era of ‘cheap food’ (McMichael, 2009). Although ending following the global food crisis in 2008, this was in stark contrast to the scarcity, hunger, disrupted supply chains and inflated prices which had prompted migration from Zimbabwe. As noted by a woman [IDI7] who owned a catering business, “food [and especially meat] was abundant ... and affordable” in the UK. She continued:

You could go to a shop with a pound and come out with something that you could eat for a day, a good meal. So that was a shock because I came at a time when there was nothing in the shops or on the shelves because of the economic breakdown in Zimbabwe.

The proliferation of what subsequently came to be referred to as ‘tasteless and bland food’ by research participants sat alongside a different kind of absence, the absence of familiar foods. While “standard Zimbabwean food” was identified as “*sadza*, meat (*nyama*), dried vegetables (*muriwo*) and greens with peanut butter (*muriwo une dovi*,” [IDI11], the list thereon was diverse. It stretched from items that were considered healthy, ‘organic’ and ‘good for you’ such as pumpkin leaves (*muboora*), blackjack, dried vegetables (*mufushwa*) to food that people craved. This included beef, offal, cow’s feet (*mazondo*) and intestines (*matumbu*), oxtail, okra, cultured/sour milk (*amaso*), tripe (*maguru*), gizzards and mopani worms (*madora/amacimbi*). Food yearnings also included oily foods, snacks (popcorn (*maputi*), Lobel’s Lemon Creams biscuits) and drinks (Fanta and Raspberry).

Intersectional gendered and generational subjectivities undoubtedly shape cultural food in/security. Exhibiting similar biases as broader intersectional studies, gender is at the apex of much food studies analysis with scholars noting how gendered norms, values, beliefs systems underpin the preparation, cooking and consumption of food (Bastia et al., 2022). It is well accepted that in many societies, women and girls eat ‘least and last’ (FAO, 2017), and masculinities and femininities are enacted through the sourcing, preparation and consumption of food (Piatti-Farnell and Brien, 2018). An example of this in our research pertains to *sadza* which featured prominently in men’s food narratives, especially those of elder men. IDI3’s emphatic response to his children’s complaint that “this old man eats *sadza* every time” was “I grew up eating this ... I definitely have *sadza*, its definitely on the menu for me.”

³ It is debateable what participants meant by ‘organic’ food. They were referring to food grown in small gardens without the use of fertilisers or pesticides.

Indeed, going without it on a three-week holiday to the USA proved too much such that he “tracked down” some mealie meal. Put simply, he did not feel full unless it was part of his meal.

The necessary accompaniment to *sadza* was meat, also identified as a vital component of masculine diets. Two men who had moved as students to the UK in the late 1990s concurred that “if you took *sadza* and meat away from Zimbabwean men you have killed him” [IDI8] and “meat is culturally part of us, black men from ... Africa, Zimbabweans, we are like lions, meat is everything, without meat, you know, you haven’t had a meal, it is a staple food with *sadza*” [IDI3] (see also Lakika and Drimie (2019) on male Congolese migrants reflection that non-meat based diets ‘weakened’ them). Interestingly, some women’s ruminations on *sadza* were different. They noted the labour involved in its preparation commenting ruefully on the continued gendered expectation – even among younger men - that women continue to cook it. An older woman, [IDI2], noted that when her British raised daughter started dating a Zimbabwean man, one of the first questions he asked her was whether she would cook *sadza* for him. Women’s dietary preferences were mostly articulated in relation to food cravings associated with pregnancy and the inaccessibility of traditionally prescribed foods including iron rich clay taken from anthills which was deemed as resulting in much suffering.

Food in/security is also shaped by broader factors which extends beyond specific types in that food that is acceptable, and situated within familiar social contexts and relationships, can buffer against experiences of alienation. Irrespective of purported ‘soft landings,’ several people we spoke with experienced racism in the UK. Participants recounted being discriminated against because of the colour of their skins or their accent, of labour market vulnerabilities and exclusions as well as difficulties in accessing housing and education for dependent children. In this hostile environment, recognisable food was highly significant as recounted by IDI15 who had migrated to the UK in 1991 eventually acquiring a farm to grow Zimbabwean produce:

It is when you come to the UK from another country that you miss the food you grew up eating. And that alone can mean that you lose part of yourself ... I mean you are in a foreign land, and you know how difficult it is to start in a foreign [country]. And then the food is also foreign. But if you get something that you identify with, your food from your own country, it gives you the feeling that you can settle in that country. It gives you a feeling of home.

In an interesting reversal, from the distance of English cities, food that had previously been shunned because of its association with rural poverty in Zimbabwe was now emotionally and physically nourishing.

What rendered food ‘traditional’ – for both women and men - was its association with childhood, with home and with family members, especially mothers. Both a cleric and a woman who had sought refuge in the UK [IDI8 and 12] reflected on a Shona proverb *ukama igasva humo-zadziswa nekudya*, translating literally to ‘relationships are fulfilled through food’, which underscores the relationality and sociality of food practices whereby the sharing of food renders relationships meaningful. For IDI12, it was the photograph of her dead mother on her study table that prompted her to prepare Zimbabwean food for her English husband. The commensality engendered in and through preparing, cooking and eating traditional foods was important. Going on to detail the food served at Holy Mass, BBQs (*gochi gochi*), birthday parties and funerals, she commented that the sharing of food made these social occasions “full and complete” [IDI2]. Thus, although funerals were sorrowful, the sociality engendered by such practices ensured that “even people who are mourning feel like they are loved and not lonely.” Indeed, they cemented new social relations. Concurring with research which notes the role of commensality in demonstrating familial and community solidarity as well as creation of fictive kinship relations (Bailey, 2017), a man who was living in Coventry when we spoke with him commented that “our own culture, our own food, you know, it helps bring us together ... The people that I know now, although they knew me because

of my family background, I never knew them, but because of this group, you know, we became a family” (IDI7).

4. But is *sadza* always on the menu? Diverse trajectories of hybrid food cultures

While perceived wisdom is that migrants’ diets transition from ‘cultural’ to ‘mainstream’ foods, our intersectional analysis reflects more complicated trajectories arising from the before and after lives of migrants, and the mobility of food and related practices. The observation of a woman who had come to the UK in 2002 to seek asylum (IDI1) is notable in contextualising our discussion. She questioned what her compatriots identified as traditional foods/diets arguing that these were in fact shaped by settler colonialism and the violent disruption of traditional food systems, and norms and practices associated with it. Indeed, even indigenous grains – millet and sorghum - used to make *sadza* were replaced by imported maize which Tavuyanago and his colleagues (2010: 2) interpret as “part of a front – much like the activities of missionaries, hunters, and mineral seekers – in the capitalist penetration of pre-capitalist African societies.” Agricultural and food preparation activities were similarly disrupted as the basis for sharing of labour and resources to prepare ground for weeding, sowing and harvesting as well as cooking were marketized (ibid.).

More recent transitions to hybrid diets were firmly attributed to generational shifts in preferences and habits as observed by our Coventry based research participant:

There are many factors now affecting our dishes ... especially children who play a big role in changing the diet most of the time. I remember one time when we were cooking what do you call them, intestines, my daughter said, ‘it’s smelling, I don’t like the smell [of] those things.’ So most of the time because they ask for rice and pasta, we eat traditional *sadza* and things like that less frequently. [IDI7].

In his opinion, children who had either been born and/or raised in the UK “despise our food” adopting pejorative terms and attitudes to what they perceived as smelly food. Thus, while elder generations relished the prospect of eating traditional food at social occasions, hosts had to cater for younger guests by providing alternative culinary options.

Yet other first-generation migrants argued that the passage of time had re-shaped their own food preferences. They reflected on the disappointment when food that they craved from their past failed to live up to their taste memories and was oily and indigestible. Their taste buds had changed, acclimatising perhaps to western, and certainly more hybrid, diets. Practices related to cooking had also shifted. Thus, while elder generations – and particularly men - concurred that there was a cultural expectation that “the kitchen belongs to the mother” (IDI7), several men observed that they had taken on their share of cooking – and other domestic responsibilities - as time went by. Some attributed this to the necessity of dual incomes to get by in the UK while for others it was a result of downward social mobility and the absence of ‘maids’ who had prepared meals for them in Zimbabwe. As such it was not only men but also middle-class women who had experienced considerable change in their domestic burden. Notwithstanding this a man who had lived in the UK since the late 1990s found it difficult to explain this role reversal to his father:

Ah, I share cooking with my wife, whoever is in [does] the cooking. You know, sometimes we cook together, sometimes I do it, sometimes she does it. It all depends, you know. That’s one thing also we’ve learnt that it’s not always a female’s responsibility to prepare [food] ... I know my father when he came [to visit] he said, ‘oh, you cook.’ And I said, ‘yeah.’ And I cooked for him. He asked, ‘oh when did you learn to cook?’ And I said, ‘I always cooked but it’s just I never had the opportunity [in Zimbabwe] because you had the maid doing all the cooking’ [IDI3].

While this shift in gendered responsibility was not universally accepted, for some like IDI7 it meant that he was no longer dependent on his wife to cook *sadza* having mastered “a few tricks of a certain dish that I can do now.” Another male participant [IDI10] had learnt to cook by “trial and error” with his mother and sister on standby on the phone. However, demonstrating how entrenched gender norms are, the mother [IDI2] who, while critical of the expectation that her British born daughter cook *sadza*, went to considerable lengths herself to impress her siblings, and especially her brother, when they visited her:

run[ning] around and show all my skills in the kitchen and prepare them a happy meal. I know he [her brother] likes this he likes that, when you know they’re coming, you prepare the foods that they like. And after that, everything is complete. Without that, people will not be happy.

Dietary transitions were further driven by health concerns which amplified as people got older. Even these transitions were complex with some participants eating less, and others more, traditional food due to perceived links with ill/health and changing cultural markers of good health and a ‘good life.’ Thus, IDI2 went on to ruminate “a long time ago it used to be very highly commended. If your woman was big, it showed that they [husbands] are good at providing for you, they’re good at giving a peaceful home.” This was no longer the case she said. The abundance of cheap food in the UK mobilised by “paparazzi delivering food” had significantly altered eating practices for the worse especially among younger generations (see also Marsden et al., 2018). Now instead of eating when one was hungry one could eat all the time. The resultant overeating of processed food, combined with lack of exercise, was resulting in obesity and diet-related health issues:

when my sister visits us from Zimbabwe ... [she] can see the difference because when [she visited previously] your children are like small size and they come back and they are now medium, they come back and they are now large, and they come back, they are now extra-large, they notice it [IDI2].

For her and others, (perceived) ‘organic’⁴ traditional food was better for one’s health. Reflecting on his own “crazy days of eating” when he first came to the UK and was overwhelmed with the variety of food available – “Chinese, Italian, Indian, other national foods and basic English traditional food,” the Zimbabwean man who lived in Coventry concluded that “you have to work and control what you eat otherwise it will kill you at the end of the day” [IDI7].

In addition to reducing portion size, mixed or hybrid diets were also recommended. A male research participant, IDI13, said he was “quite cautious about my diet because meat is culturally part of us ... here I mix it up, you know we eat vegetarian stuff ... So I’d say it’s a mixture of European English diet and African diet, but it’s all portioned appropriately. Yeah. And not overdone.” Indeed, the need for older men to be particularly mindful of their diets was regular debated among church congregations such that another man, IDI17, said: “It has become a pulpit message now. Yeah, to say, ‘guys, let’s exercise. It’s good for us. Let’s get into healthy eating.’ So it’s more common to talk about diet and health.” He ended by commenting wryly that while this might be the context they were living in presently, in the past “[when we] were in Zimbabwe we were actually requesting more food.”

5. From garden to shop: multi-scalar cultural food chains

There is a rich history of everyday food exchange in Zimbabwe explained by contexts of food precarity and insecurity. It is common for (internal) migrants to exchange food with non-migrant family members, and in situations of scarcity, to enable the import of food from neighbouring South Africa. While the role of migrants and diaspora in shoring up the food security of those ‘left behind’ is well noted, their own insecurities – particularly those pertaining to traditional foods – are less well observed (Crush and Caesar, 2017; Datta et al., 2024). In this

section we focus on the food chains which connect people illustrating the range of informal sourcing strategies deployed to access to familiar foods.

Migrants are of course not only originators of food aid but may also receive it albeit primarily in the form of food associated with home rather than dietary staples. This was evident among our research participants, especially in the early days, when family and friends brought back food items from visits to Zimbabwe with IDI10 noting that “I always look forward to people coming back from home.” Yet, such practices were not without risk as food unfamiliar to border control sometimes led to the confiscation of highly valued items. To this end, the woman we met earlier, IDI2, recalled that her (censorious) sister would bring dried meat and mopani worms when she visited her. However, on one occasion, immigration officials “inspected her bags and they took away all the food.” Her sister complained bitterly that the officials were “pretending to be very nice” whilst their intention was to “take my food. They just wanted to eat my food.”

A practice replicated transnationally in the UK was growing familiar vegetables in gardens and/or allotments for those able to access these spaces (see also Hughes, 2019). Widely prevalent in Zimbabwe, urban agriculture in colder and wetter British cities was challenging (Sithole et al., 2012). Yet, the availability of seeds and instructions encouraged some to persevere: “there’s been lots of Zimbabweans who are supplying seeds for rape, cabbage, for pumpkins or maize, and they are showing on social media how they are making their own small, small little plants grow in a small place,” [IDI2]. Gradual scaling up was evident with one woman [IDI1] sharing excess produce from her garden with friends while another couple, IDI3, had acquired an allotment and planted seeds, some sourced when they were in Zimbabwe, to grow a range of vegetables.

Improvisation as a response to the lack of availability of certain traditional foods was similarly evidenced. In some cases, this related to combining foods to create the closest equivalent such as “mixing yoghurt and cream” [IDI6] to substitute for cultured sour milk. Improvisation also extended to frequenting Asian, African (especially Ghanian and Nigerian) and West Indian grocers which stocked substitutes for Zimbabwean staples. Shops set up by East African Asians particularly catered for African clients selling mealie meal while sweet potatoes bought at West Indian shops were closer in taste to the Zimbabwean variety. In turn, the expansion of the diaspora had created a market for Zimbabwean shops which were springing up in cities with significant populations including London, Birmingham, Bletchley and Leicester. The demand for particular cuts of meat, although expensive, was such that a man recalled: “Years ago at Christmas you would be there for hours queuing for meat, especially the week leading to Christmas. You would be there forever queuing up,” [IDI3]. Functioning as spaces where home and community ties were (re)created, some shops bridged previously entrenched racial divides. Thus, a white Zimbabwean proprietor was “speaking Shona at times. So that’s really helped us identify with them. They really know the food and they also keep some of these foods for us,” [IDI7]. The combination of these tactics was that having to do without familiar food had dissipated over time to the extent that the woman who owned a catering business told us that when her relatives in Zimbabwe told her what they were eating, she could reply - perhaps with some satisfaction - “I eat the same as well” [IDI6].

6. Conclusion

In this paper we have argued for intersectional approaches to cultural food in/security drawing upon research conducted with Zimbabwean migrants living in UK cities. Speaking from the perspective of their lived experiences, we have highlighted how gender and generation in particular interplay to shape understandings and affiliation to familiar foods and diets, and how this transitions over time and generation in response to a range of factors including health concerns. We also discuss the wider function that familiar food plays in identity making and in

shoring up familial and community connections via food chains both locally and transnationally. Our research evidences that experiences of abundance and scarcity have shifted across the lifetimes of migrants as recognisable food has become more accessible, at least for those who can afford it. On this basis, we propose reconfiguring the FAO definition of food culture as relating to dietary needs and preferences in a way that more effectively captures a concern for its situatedness. Here we argue that thinking in terms of cultural food in/security not only necessitates attention to those other dimensions of food security – questions of access, availability, and utilization, that are inflected with intersectional power relations. Rather, it also demands that we pay greater attention to its temporalities and spatialities. The risk in not doing so is to consider cultures of food and experiences of cultural food in/security in terms that are too static and ignore the movement, travel, and flows that shape and reshape migrant lives.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Kavita Datta: Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Tim Brown:** Writing – review & editing, Methodology, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Thabani Mutambasere:** Writing – review & editing, Methodology, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the ‘Building Transdisciplinary Partnerships for exploring the impact of population displacement on nutrition interventions in rural Zimbabwe,’ funded by the UK Arts and Research Council [Grant award number: AH/T004428/1].

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