Article

Immigrants' "Role Shift" for Sustainable Urban Communities: A Case Study of Toronto's Multiethnic Community Farm

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Abstract: As the ongoing health crisis has recently revealed, disparities and social exclusions experienced by immigrants in cities are now critical urban issues that can no longer be overlooked in the process of building sustainable urban communities. However, within the current practices aiming for social inclusion of immigrants, there has been an underlying assumption that immigrants are permanent "recipients" of their host society's support, rather than potential "hosts" with abilities to support others in their society in the long-term. To question that assumption, this paper aims to identify immigrants' degree of involvement by taking a multiethnic community farm in Toronto, Canada, as a case study to discuss the scope of the long-term inclusion of immigrants. Conducting a set of 15 life story interviews with participants of the Black Creek Community Farm (BCCF), the study identified what roles immigrants played within the group using the longitudinal analysis of individuals' role-taking processes between 2010–2018. The paper identified three types of roles—*recipient*, *assistant*, and *facilitator*—taken by the participants during their involvement. The timeline of individual role types by year showed that more than half of the immigrants at the BCCF underwent a "role shift" to take an *assistant* and *facilitator* role that required higher engagement. The findings suggest immigrants' orientations towards the BCCF have shifted from being the ones to be included to the ones including others in the local community over time, which confirms our hypothesis.

Keywords: social inclusion; urban agriculture; community farms; role shift; life story interview

1. Introduction

In discussions of various pathways to sustainable urban communities, alongside the economic and environmental dimensions that are typically approached by physical interventions (e.g., energy, transit, and ecology), there is a social component that merits attention [1]. In particular, the recent global coronavirus pandemic over the past few months has shed light on the social dimensions of ethnic disparities in urban society, which had manifested in the pursuit of economic growth over the past decades [2]. The pandemic has exposed the ongoing reality of social exclusions of immigrants in various segments of urban society of the Global North, ranging from limited access to health services and secure jobs to facing growing hostility in hosting cities as ethnically "othered" [3,4]. While a number of urban design solutions have been proposed for making cities more livable and resilient, city planners show a growing concern over the potential to further exacerbate urban inequality between the "haves" and "have nots" of resources, calling for the recognition of the needs expressed by the most at-risk people in cities [5]. While there have been efforts to address the significance of inclusion in the discourse of

sustainable cities [6], this ongoing crisis has proven that social exclusion experienced by ethnically marginalized populations in cities can no longer be overlooked as a minor issue. In order to envision sustainable future communities in a post-coronavirus world, it is vital to seek legitimate solutions to address the ongoing exclusions and promote social inclusion of immigrants.

Notwithstanding the significance of advancing social inclusion of urban communities, there has been a growing assumption that immigrants are permanent "recipients" of support and that accepting them poses a net "welfare burden" on the host society [7]. While this assumption has been recently challenged from the perspective of economic and welfare studies [8,9], at the community level, immigrants are still often positioned as passive, or "fringe" actors of services within community-based activities [10,11]. Although these activities, with a mission of advancing social inclusion of immigrants, aim to fulfill various social and health needs of immigrants [12], they offer limited opportunities to immigrants to engage in more active, contributing roles as "hosts" in the local community [11]. Similar to how Al-Husban and Adams (2016) described the existing migrant hosting approach as a model of containment and charity [13], such an approach may result in another form of exclusion which separates those getting helped and those helping in the community, hindering immigrants' ability to fully integrate into the host society in the long term. Thus, in order to create sustainable future communities, there is a need for opportunities where immigrants can undergo "role shift" from being simply "recipients" of various support to being "hosts," acknowledging immigrants' human capital as key local assets [14]. Departing from a similar perspective, the recent approach calls for more collaborative community building that promotes a more active involvement of immigrants [15,16]. What the existing studies indicate is that immigrants' involvement is not static but rather a dynamic process; immigrants who initially sought numerous services later came to play more active roles [11,17]. However, there are limited longitudinal studies that aim to understand the process of immigrants' "role shift" at the individual level, or what services and activities are effective for encouraging immigrants' "role shift."

In recent years, urban agriculture (UA) has been increasingly adopted as a multifunctional urban community space which enables vulnerable populations in cities to get involved with the local community through the act of food cultivation [18,19]. Defined as "the growing, processing, and distribution of food and other products through intensive plant cultivation and animal husbandry in and around cities" [20], UA is tied to an urban economic and ecological system involving various actors [21] and there are several studies addressing UA's health benefits on urban residents [22,23]. Among various typologies, common types of UA include community gardens and community farms, led by public sectors, non-profit organizations, and resident groups, which put a greater emphasis on the aspect of community building compared to home gardens [24]. On top of its general health benefits [23,24], immigrants' motivations towards UA vary by the scale and regional context where some perceive UA as home-making and socialization opportunities [25–29], while others view UA as means for local ethnic businesses [30,31]. The act of collectively managing a piece of land for food cultivation carries an important meaning for immigrants in particular [32,33]. As studies suggest that major foreign-born ethnic groups in cities are likely to have former agricultural experiences in their home countries [26–30], UA is increasingly viewed as a space where immigrants can utilize their former skills and knowledge. These suggest that immigrants may be leveraging UA not only to receive health benefits but also to mobilize their social positions, enabling them to act more as "hosts" through everyday agro-activities. In the midst of the global pandemic, while there have been studies documenting the roles of UA in improving food security of cities [34,35], studies aiming to posit UA as a potential tool to redress more indirect, yet expectedly severe and long-lasting social impacts of the pandemic on urban societies are still insufficient in number. In that regard, the discussion regarding the roles of UA in advancing immigrants' social inclusion is still underdeveloped, particularly through the lens of generating immigrants' "role shift" in relation to the host community [36].

Toronto, Ontario, is now one of the most multicultural cities in the world, with more than half of the city's population born outside of Canada [37]. While Toronto has been often lauded as

a successful model of a culturally diverse city with its multicultural practices at federal, municipal, and neighborhood scales [12], there has been a growing concern over immigrants' social exclusion experiences in Toronto, particularly in the city's inner suburbs where racialized communities are highly concentrated [38,39]. As a response to a growing concern over the economic and health disparities across the city, Toronto incorporated UA aligned with its food-oriented planning [40]. The development of Toronto's UA movement is considered to date back to the foundation of the Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC) in 1991 as a subcommittee of the Toronto Board of Health to advise the city on food policies [40]. Having placed "food sovereignty" as the key objective, the TFPC had offered numerous supports to communities intending to directly engage in production and consumption of food [41], and a number of grassroots community gardens had been established across Toronto, many of which reflected cultural identities of local residents in each community [42–46]. Despite the growing public interest in UA across Toronto, however, no study has addressed immigrants' involvement with urban agriculture through the lens of the "recipients"–"hosts" perspective as we framed earlier.

Hence, by taking a multiethnic community farm as a case study, this research aims to identify immigrants' degree of involvement to discuss the scope of the long-term inclusion of immigrants through the lens of the immigrants as "recipients"–"hosts" paradigm. The paper focused on what types of *roles* immigrants acquired during their involvement as a key indicator, showing one's motivations and behaviors towards others in a specific group [47]. A person's role indicates a set of behaviors for a certain goal [47] and is situation-specific and known and understood through interaction [48]. This study identifies roles acquired by the participants during their involvement through their activities and associated motivations. Drawing from the findings, the paper discusses what motivations the immigrants had for each "role shift" process and how the immigrants' orientation towards the multiethnic community farm changed through the lens of immigrants' inclusion in the local community.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Case Study

This study adopts a single embedded case study design which is "preferred in examining real life and contemporary events where multiple sources of data can be collected to investigate a distinctive situation" [49]. As Yin (2017) stated [49], the study does not anticipate generalization, but aims to examine the unique case to identify context-related knowledge.

The case study site is Black Creek Community Farm (BCCF) in Toronto, Canada (Figure 1). The BCCF operates on an eight-acre public farmland that is situated at the north end of Black Creek neighborhood, part of the city's inner suburbs with a foreign-born population of 58.9% (as of 2016) [50] and with a persistent struggle over its high crime and poverty rate [51,52]. The farmland belongs to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), a quasi-government organization responsible for regional natural conservation, and the TRCA initiated the community farm project as part of its recent urban agriculture scheme [53,54]. As a result, the BCCF was co-founded by Everdale Environmental Learning Centre, FoodShare, and AfriCan FoodBasket in 2012 with a mission of "improving food security, reducing social isolation, and improving employment and education outcomes" [55]. Compared to the conventional community gardens, the BCCF is characterized by its community-oriented activities and spaces [55]. Utilizing its relatively large site, the BCCF provides a wide range of recreational, educational, and training programs that reflect the needs expressed by the locals including immigrants from various countries. In addition, its "farm park" concept led the BCCF to have open hours in which anyone can enter the site to emphasize its physical openness to the local community. As the focus of this paper is placed at a wide range of involvement presented by immigrants with various ethnic backgrounds, the BCCF was found as a suitable case to conduct our study.

The BCCF operates on an eight-acre public farmland surrounded by a woodland extending down to the Black Creek ravine on the east side [56]. There are certified organic vegetable market fields,

a forest trail, a food forest, year-round greenhouses, an outdoor classroom, a pavilion, a mushroom garden, a chicken and duck coop, and beehives on site. The farm takes the form of a social enterprise that is operated by grants, fundraising, and revenues generated through community programs. The BCCF offers community programs including a children's outdoor education program, youths' education program, seniors' gardening program, team-building program, and a mothers' and kids' gardening program (Figure 2). As of 2018, BCCF is operated by 17 full- and part-time staff, in addition to volunteering members. The BCCF runs a "workshare" that exchanges volunteer time for vegetables.
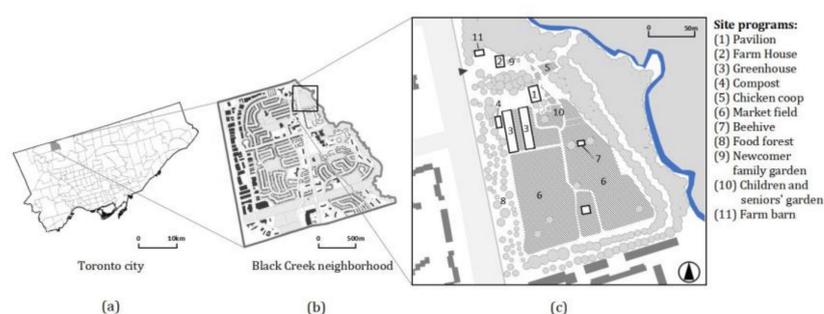
Figure 1. The study area: (**a**) the city of Toronto by neighborhood borders (data source: [57]), (**b**) the Jane–Finch/Black Creek neighborhood (data source: [58]), (**c**) the plan of the Black Creek Community Farm (created by authors). The case study has communal farming spaces collectively managed by members.

Figure 2. Examples of activities at the Black Creek Community Farm (BCCF): (**a**) farming volunteering at the food forest, (**b**) a residence council meeting in the farmhouse, (**c**) a garden space used for children and seniors' programs, (**d**) a farmhouse used for holding workshops and gathering (photograph by Akane Bessho, 2018).

2.2. Data Collection

Data collection was conducted in June 2017, October 2017, February to March 2018, and June 2018. The snowballing technique was used to approach the informants (*n* = 15). The informants included part-time staff, full-time staff, and regular volunteers. The informants' ages ranged between 16 and 66 years old, with the largest age group 30–39 years old, followed by 20–29. The informants were categorized into four groups: 1st generation established immigrant (Informant 1–9), 1st generation recent immigrant (Informant 10), Canadian-born 2nd generation immigrant (Informants 11 and 12),

and Canadian-born Caucasians (Informants 13–15). In Canada, established immigrants are defined as immigrants who have lived in Canada more than five years [59]. The study also included three Canadian-born Caucasians because they were involved in running programs with other foreign-born participants, and their descriptions about their collaborative processes with foreign-born participants were found helpful in understanding roles that foreign-born participants took within the project.

The research collected data using a life story interview method with 15 BCCF members in addition to a series of participant observations on-site (Table 1). The life story interview method is a qualitative, ethnographic method for gathering information on the subjective essence of one person's entire life experience, and is used in life course perspective research [60]. The life story interview method is useful for interviewers to understand an individual's life in detail and how the individual plays various roles in society [61]. The life story interview was conducted through three steps. Step one asked the participants to describe their educational, career, and migration backgrounds. During this step, members were asked to describe their initial motivations to visit the BCCF. In step two, the members were asked to describe activities they had participated in at the BCCF (e.g., attending farm events, volunteering in community programs, attending meetings, and proposing community programs) in chronological order. Similarly, members were asked to describe the reasons why they started or quit certain activities, or suggest if there was any influence by other members (e.g., a referral to a new position, grant application, or encouragement). Finally, the members were asked to describe what the BCCF means to them personally. The interviews were conducted in a free form where topics could be changed to allow members to provide further background information. The length of the interviews ranged from 20 to 70 min, and interviews were conducted on-site or indoors. All the interview methods followed ethical guidelines provided by the Graduate School of Frontier Science, The University of Tokyo. The interviews were audio-recorded.

Table 1. Informant profiles (*n* = 15).

ID	Region Born	Ethnic Group	In Canada	Reason of Migration	Gender	Age	Position
1	Hong Kong	Hong Kongese	30 years	Accompanying family	Female	38	Full-time staff
2	Colombia	Colombian	10 years	Accompanying family	Female	39	Volunteer
3	Ghana	Ghanaian	22 years	Family reunification	Female	35	Full-time staff
4	Jamaica	Jamaican	14 years	Family reunification	Female	29	Part-time staff
5	Philippines	Filipino	24 years	Accompanying family	Male	63	Volunteer
6	Philippines	Filipino	13 years	Family reunification	Female	44	Part-time staff
7	Philippines	Filipino	35 years	Accompanying family	Male	47	Volunteer
8	Dubai	Somali	23 years	Accompanying family	Female	31	Full-time staff
9	Somalia	Somali	28 years	Family reunification	Female	34	Part-time staff
10	Brazil	Brazilian	4 years	Accompanying family	Female	31	Part-time staff
11	Canada	Guyana	-	-	Female	40	Full-time staff
12	Canada	Jamaican	-	-	Male	29	Volunteer
13	Canada	Caucasian	-	-	Male	29	Full-time staff
14	Canada	Caucasian	-	-	Female	34	Full-time staff
15	Canada	Caucasian	-	-	Female	66	Volunteer

2.3. Data Analysis

To identify types of roles, we applied grounded theory methodology in our study. Grounded theory is a research methodology in social sciences that involves construction of theories from empirical, or "grounded," qualitative data [62]. In particular, this study refers to a constructivist grounded theory by Charmaz (2006) which involves a construction of analytic codes from data instead of a preexisting category or hypotheses and uses of memo writing to explore concepts and relationships [63]. The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the data were coded using MaxQDA software. Codes were developed from former life experiences, change of involvement, and associated motivations for each change, and reasons for each change.

In the context of intra-group interaction, scholars conceive a person's role not as a static interpretation, but rather as a temporary "position" taken by a person in a particular individual or group activities through interaction [47,64]. Roles are composed of (1) a set of tasks and (2) a person's attitude, or a motivation, towards one's actions, usually tied with a goal within a group a person

taking a certain role belongs to [65,66]. The analysis process involved identifying common types of activities associated with key motivations. Such a pattern was generated by creating a note, for instance, saying "she started volunteering in the senior's program because I wanted to gain hands-on skills on agriculture" or "he started a new program because he felt a need to provide more specific services to the high school students." Based on the patterns of actions and associated motivations, three types of roles were generated.

Additionally, based on the identification of roles and key changes of involvement of individual participants, a timeline of individual role types by year was generated between 2010 to 2018.

3. Results

3.1. Three Types of Role in the BCCF

Drawing from the grounded theory approach on the lifestory interview data, the study identified three types of roles taken by the participants of the BCCF. The following offer key characteristics of each role.

3.1.1. Recipient Role

From the life story interviews, the first type of role played by participants of the BCCF was identified as a *recipient* role. A *recipient* role was characterized by a set of behaviors associated with receiving social and educational benefits for one's well-being. The first group of participants with a *recipient* role described how they found the BCCF a suitable place to engage in community-based volunteering activities. Among them, there were several participants who described their former experiences of social isolation due to life-course changes, including migration (Informant 10), child-rearing (Informants 6 and 10), career change (Informants 13 and 8), and retirement (Informants 5 and 15), led them to seek community-based activities in a nearby area. For instance, a Brazilian female part-time staff (Informant 10), who had moved from Brazil to Black Creek neighborhood in 2014, described her initial motivation for joining the BCCF:

> "I was pretty much just going anywhere I could go that I could try to communicate with people. So I [was] always going to the school, [and] I started volunteering here, the farm."

A Somali female full-time staff (Informant 8), who was going through a career change from a social worker, described how she initiated her involvement with the BCCF:

> "When I got back, I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do. While I was trying to figure this out, I was talking to [Somali female staff E9]. And at that time, when we would speak, we would always spend time at the farm and stuff, and I wasn't really involved. It was a few years ago. And then so I was telling her. [It was] something that I got interested in."

Behaviors associated with a *recipient* role were related to the BCCF and were yet to have a relation to management activities, but those with such a role rather joined a wide range of recreational and social gatherings, including garden programs, volunteering, and social gathering. A Somali female part-time staff (Informant 9) who grew up in the Black Creek community described her reason for involvement during a recipient phase:

> "I think as I, myself, enjoy using services and being able to have access to the space and programs, and seeing the impact they had on the community."

3.1.2. Assistant Role

The second role type was an *assistant* role, which was characterized by a set of behaviors aiming to provide small support for other members in program operation, site management, and other social interaction on-site. In contrast to a *recipient* role, an *assistant* role was characterized by active

volunteering driven by a motivation to learn skills from other experienced members. Participants who embodied an *assistant* role described their involvement in on-site management and gardening programs, including a youth program, a seniors' program, and a children's program. Leading exercising activities as part of garden programs, helping with crop planning as part of the market field team, and preparing classes as part of the youth program are all part of supporting behaviors observed from the participants with this role. Notably, participants playing an *assistant* role showed a willingness to invest more time to master farming and educational skills needed to run the BCCF for the local community. A Filipino male volunteer (Informant 5), who was formerly a farmer and martial arts teacher in the Philippines, described his involvement with the BCCF:

> "I was the major [participant] because I never had absences. [I was] the first one to arrive, the last one to go home. And I did not want to miss anything. And before I went to sleep, I want to always remember what they did last night. Everyday. If I built that, then I can build it. Then I built one greenhouse there (pointing to the second greenhouse on-site)."

3.1.3. Facilitator Role

The third type of role played by the BCCF participants was a *facilitator* role. Compared to an *assistant* role, the BCCF engages in teamwork facilitation in community programs and proposing new ways of using the farm spaces based on his/her interest and resources. Compared to the two previous role types, participants with a *facilitator* role were engaged in tasks with a higher level of responsibilities, including laying out a concept for sections of sites, leading crop planning, creating a course schedule for educational programs, participating in the residence council meeting, and other administrative duties. The participants with a facilitator role described occasions when they had provided technical and social support to other members with a *recipient* or *assistant* role during the preparation of educational programs, site management, and other informal settings. The participants with a *facilitator* role described a sense of feeling "capable" of demonstrating their professional skills including social work, outdoor education, performance arts, martial arts, and agriculture into their everyday farm management.

The participants with a facilitator role utilized numerous tasks providing support, including training, allocating resources, planning inter-group gatherings and meetings, as ways of doing outreach and coordinating with social groups outside the BCCF (e.g., a group of newcomer Filipino high school students, a group of newcomer mothers and children, a performance arts group, professional farmers in the outskirts of Toronto city). Participants who played a *facilitator* role described their awareness of challenges faced by other social groups in the local community. Several of them had launched new programs aiming to offer services to the targeting social groups (also see Section 3.2.2.). A Jamaican female part-time staff (Informant 4) described the project she initiated targeting local youth:

> "You know [name of a youth] at the farm? I got him in. I used the farm to run the program. I was trying to teach them different areas of Caribbean folklore from storytelling, the dance, the music. It is a theater program, so they got to do some writing, get exercises."

Another example was given by a Filipino male volunteer (Informant 5) who introduced a group of newcomer Filipino high school students to his after-school youth agriculture program:

> "[We] advertised for a leadership program, and those people applied for it. So they are newcomers. Like two years ago. And I wanted them to be at home here, to have their own crowds, build their own community, to make them feel at home."

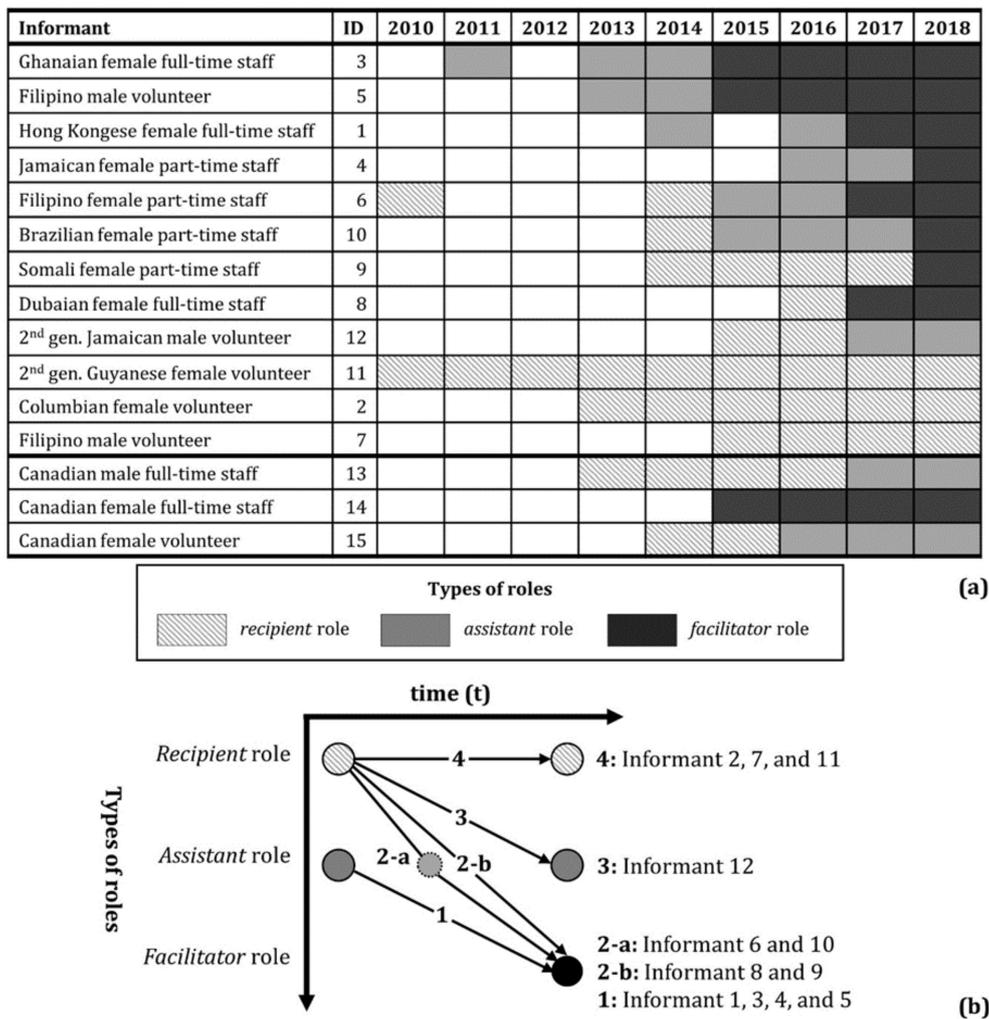Forms of participation, related actions, and key motivations presented in each role stage are outlined in Figure 3.

Types of roles	Reference images	Behaviors	Motivations
Recipient role		Attending events, programs, meetings and workshops	To gain recreational benefits for oneself
Assistant role		Supporting tasks while gaining skills and knowledge from other members	To gain one's technical skills for one's career development
Facilitator role		Offering technical and social support for less experienced members	To enhance the accessibility of space for community members

Figure 3. Characteristics of three phases of roles at the BCCF (created by authors).

3.2. "Role Shift"

3.2.1. A Timeline of Individual Role Types by Year (2010–2018)

Based on the life story interviews, the timeline of role-taking process of participants at the BCCF between 2010 and 2018 (shown in 4a) and "role shift" trajectories based on the timeline analysis were generated (shown in Figure 4b). First, it was found that 11 out of 15 members underwent a "role shift," and five key role trajectories were identified. The first trajectory, labeled as "1" in Figure 4, illustrates a "role shift" of the participants (Informants 1, 3, 4, and 5) from an assistant role to a facilitator. The second trajectory (2-a) illustrates the case of the participants (Informants 6 and 10) who experienced two "role shift" experiences, from recipient role to assistant role, and assistant role to facilitator role. The third trajectory (2-b) illustrates a "role shift" of the participants (Informants 8 and 9) from recipient role directly to facilitator role. The fourth trajectory (3) illustrates a "role shift" of the participant (Informant 12) from a recipient to an assistant role. The fifth trajectory (4) shows the experience of the participants (Informants 2, 7, and 11) without any "role shift" during their involvement.

Informant	ID	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Ghanaian female full-time staff	3		assistant		assistant	assistant	facilitator	facilitator	facilitator	facilitator
Filipino male volunteer	5				assistant	assistant	facilitator	facilitator	facilitator	facilitator
Hong Kongese female full-time staff	1					assistant		assistant	facilitator	facilitator
Jamaican female part-time staff	4							assistant	assistant	facilitator
Filipino female part-time staff	6	recipient				recipient	recipient	assistant	facilitator	facilitator
Brazilian female part-time staff	10					recipient	assistant	assistant	facilitator	facilitator
Somali female part-time staff	9					recipient	recipient		facilitator	facilitator
Dubaian female full-time staff	8							recipient	facilitator	facilitator
2nd gen. Jamaican male volunteer	12						recipient	recipient	assistant	assistant
2nd gen. Guyanese female volunteer	11	recipient	recipient	recipient	recipient	recipient	recipient	recipient	recipient	recipient
Columbian female volunteer	2					recipient	recipient	recipient	recipient	recipient
Filipino male volunteer	7					recipient	recipient	recipient	recipient	recipient
Canadian male full-time staff	13				recipient	recipient	recipient	recipient	recipient	recipient
Canadian female full-time staff	14						facilitator	facilitator	facilitator	facilitator
Canadian female volunteer	15					recipient	recipient	assistant	facilitator	facilitator

Types of roles　　(**a**)

▨ *recipient* role　　　▨ *assistant* role　　　■ *facilitator* role

Figure 4. (**a**) Timeline of role-taking process of participants at the BCCF (*n* = 15). The informant's role is recorded based on the life story interviews in yearly change. (**b**) "Role shift" trajectories based on the timeline analysis of the immigrants at the BCCF (*n* = 12). The model illustrates four trajectories of "role shift" and two trajectories without any "role shift." The *x* axis represents time (t), and the *y* axis represents the type of role played by the participants where the further the trajectory goes down, the higher one's engagement becomes (created by authors).

The following section provides examples of how the BCCF members experienced a "role shift."

3.2.2. A Recipient to an Assistant Role

A Canadian-born, second-generation Jamaican male volunteer (Informant 12) started visiting BCCF when he was accepted for a free entrepreneur program that took place at BCCF in 2015. After the internship program, he was asked by the Ghanaian female farm director to continue his involvement through the initiation of a culinary program for local youth. Referring to his experience in helping the program development, he described his role in the process:

> *"It was a grant for healthy awareness cooking for youth. So we learned from [the farm director (Informant 3)] we applied and we are here now. We were helped by [the farm director] writing a grant, but it's been an interesting process. I will be involved, all over. Interesting course."*

He explained that he visits the farm whenever there is an opportunity for cooking. Based on his experiences at the farm, from being a participant of a free internship program to a culinary specialized member, his role at the BCCF has shifted from the *recipient* role to an *assistant* role.

A Brazilian female part-time staff's (Informant 10) involvement with residence council meetings as well as volunteering in a seniors' garden program is characterized by her intention of gaining familiarity with the community and people at the BCCF:

"Any meetings or any events I would go, and would learn more English, and I would practice more. I guess that really helped me to improve the language. At some point, I started to get really involved and actually participate more, after I understand what was happening... In the spring, I started volunteering again. And I got a work share on that year. It would be you volunteer, but you volunteer very regularly, and you get the vegetables from the farm."

3.2.3. An Assistant to a Facilitator Role

A Filipino part-time staff (Informant 6) started her involvement as a program volunteer, and later she was given an opportunity by the farm director to create a new garden program. In 2010, she participated in a nature conservation volunteering event at BCCF, and in 2015 she began visiting the farm as an occasional visitor. During this time, she was involved with the BCCF as a volunteer to interact with the local community with her child. Her motivation as a *facilitator* emerged around 2017. As she developed more teaching and farming experiences at the BCCF, she saw potential in connecting her Filipino mothers' group and the BCCF:

"We wanted to maybe influence others, and grow more and learn from others, and we say 'okay, there is a farm here, so let's start coming here and know more and help, whatever capacity."

In 2017, she applied for a grant in order to run a pilot project to create a space for the newcomer mothers and children she personally had a relationship with. She described the objective of the pilot project:

"These people are the first time to come and touch the soil ... And we touched the tools, and nobody was saying 'oh I'm bored.' So it was tackling that food problem, and solving two things, more than anything. Food, and social, physical aspect. See how much it brings a little, simple thing to bring them gardening. See the power of that ... And then it's the interaction to mom and kids. They can plant their own food they used to eat back home. And then I wanted to use the curiosity to try to eat right, so that was the idea."

For her new program for newcomer immigrant mothers and children, she had written a grant application and was offered a space behind the Farm House (as labeled as 9 in Figure 1). She had invited newcomer mothers and children for her pilot project, which led her to think that she could lead the project.

For a Hong Kongese female full-time staff (Informant 1) who migrated to Toronto in 1988, her role shifted from an assistant role to a facilitator role. Before 2014, she had received farm training from an internship, an apprentice program, and a two-year experience in operating her farming business. When her colleagues introduced her to a farm staff position at the BCCF in 2014, she decided to apply as she felt burnout from her own farming business. Between 2014 to 2016, while she attended a local graduate school studying environmental sciences, she kept her involvement with the BCCF as a grad assistant. She described:

"Some people they might help with the class to do tutorials, but I wanted to something still connected to the farm. And since my master's was food- and farm-related anyways, so I was 'oh I will do the placement at the farm,' and that keeps me connected to the farm."

Her motivation suggested that at this time, she was involved in an assistant role with an interest in providing her skills for programs while gaining familiarity with the farm. In 2017, she coordinated numerous programs including a garden resource network, the entrepreneur program, youth program, and crop planning as a full-time staff. Notably, she offered paid positions to other members including

a Canadian male staff (Informant 13) and a Brazilian female staff (R1) based on their interests and capacities. Referring to her experience supporting other members at the BCCF, she described what the site meant to her:

> *"I think a learning place and the place that inspires a lot of people. I've watched some of the interns come through here, and it sparks an interest or it feeds or sustain interest in food-growing and leads them to choose paths in their own lives that are food-related. So I remember meeting [informant 11] as a food intern, and so passionate about food now and he walks into to cooking-related stuff."*

3.2.4. Participants without "Role Shift"

Three participants did not undergo any "role shift" in the BCCF. The participants who did not change their roles were characterized by a motivation of "staying connected" with the farming community as a secondary social network, rather than a platform for their projects and learning opportunities. The Canadian-born second-generation Guyanese female volunteer (Informant 11) and the Filipino male volunteer (Informant 7) were the members of the local poverty alleviation initiative, and the Colombian female volunteer (Informant 2) was a manager at FoodShare Toronto, the partnered organization of the BCCF. Having their primary occupations outside the BCCF, they presented their primary sense of purpose outside the farm, including their freelance job, community activism, and food initiative which were all related to the BCCF activities. Thus, it is suggested that since they already had their primary communities which they belonged to outside the BCCF, their sense of belonging had been already fostered outside the BCCF. Rather, they perceived the BCCF as part of their important social network that they preferred to keep so that the communities they belonged to could enhance collaboration with the BCCF.

4. Discussion

In this paper, we have identified three types of roles taken by the participants throughout their involvement at the BCCF: recipient, assistant, and facilitator roles. The timeline of individual role types by year showed that more than half of the immigrants at the BCCF underwent "role shift" to take an assistant and facilitator role that required higher engagement (See Figure 4). Drawing from the findings, the paper discusses what motivations the immigrants had for each "role shift" process. Finally, the paper discusses how the immigrants' orientation towards the BCCF changed through the lens of immigrants' inclusion in the local community.

4.1. Taking a Recipient Role: Seeking Recognition as a Community Member

One of the first steps for promoting social inclusion of immigrants is to fulfill immigrants' emotional needs to feel being part of social life, which is posited as a fundamental aspect in ensuring their well-being [67]. The motivations described by the participants who played a *recipient* role indicate that immigrants perceived the community farm as a place for them to get accepted as a community member, as Wakefield et al. (2007) [44] and Baker (2004) [45] pointed out about immigrants in community gardens in Toronto. For those who initiated their involvement with a *recipient* role, there were moments of social isolation and challenges in building meaningful relationships with the community prior to their involvement. Notably, such needs remained even though they had positive ties to their family members and even after they had obtained jobs in a new country. Thus, they were subjectively in a socially excluded position, and the act of getting involved with the BCCF entailed their intention of changing that condition. Therefore, it is suggested that the participants decided to start their involvement in a *recipient* role so that they will be *included into* the BCCF as community members. This orientation can also be compared to that of immigrants who visit various community-based activities—religious groups for instance [68], where they can foster a sense of belonging and gain a sense of being part of the social life they value.

4.2. Taking an Assistant Role: Seeking Recognition as an Expert

Compared to participants in a *recipient* role, whose concern is about building a connection to the group, the participants with an *assistant* role were seeking recognition by others as experts using their formerly acquired skills and knowledge. The lack of opportunities to demonstrate their expertise in the host society is suggested to be a common barrier immigrants face, which negatively impacts their well-being [69]. The "role shift" from being a *recipient* to an *assistant* indicates the change in immigrants' needs from being accepted as community members to being recognized as experts within the group. The finding is in line with that of Ponic and Frisby (2010), showing how immigrants who have continued their involvement as recipients of services gradually gained a willingness to take more active tasks to remove a sense of guilt [11]. The results show that the participants with an *assistant* role started offering their experiences from vast fields including agriculture, social work, biology, teaching, performance arts, and psychiatry. Compared to the existing studies articulating contributions of immigrants' former agricultural knowledge [28,30], our findings indicate that the skills the immigrants provided included skills and education they acquired in Canada. Thus, while the participants with an *assistant* role were engaged with more active roles in the BCCF, they were intended to be *included* into the BCCF community more as valuable members with specific sets of skills. The BCCF served to fulfill immigrants' needs to be recognized as experts in the community, which is seen from immigrants in other community-based activities.

4.3. Taking a Facilitator Role: Seeking Opportunities to Provide Support to Others in the Local Community

The results suggest that there were participants who underwent a "role shift" to take a *facilitator* role after fulfilling their needs for recognition while staying involved in a *recipient* and *assistant* role. Their motivation differs in that they were interested in providing support to others in the local community, instead of being the ones given the support. The results show occasions where they got involved with the development of a new program with an intention to improve accessibility and add specific services for a particular social group. Examples include the Filipino female part-time staff (Informant 6) creating the newcomer family garden for the local group of immigrant mother and children, the Jamaican female part-time staff (Informant 4) inviting students from her performing arts group, and the Filipino male volunteer (Informant 5) introducing a free program for local newcomer high school students. Although this study looked at immigrants' engagement only within the community farm setting, this finding provides empirical evidence that immigrants can engage as "hosts" by providing support back to the community. This form of involvement is similar to the type of "Strengthening Community" participation that Nayer and Clair (2018) had observed among older Asian immigrants in New Zealand [17]. Essentially, it is suggested that their motivation indicates that their orientation towards the BCCF is distinct from the former two; the participants who played a *facilitator* role were intended to engage as the ones *including* others into the BCCF community, shifting from ones intended to be included into.

4.4. Immigrants' Shifting Orientations towards the BCCF

Figure 5 illustrates how the immigrants' motivations for shifting their roles and orientations towards the BCCF shifted between the year 2010 and 2018. Placing the removal of barriers as the primary goal, the conventional scope of social inclusion practices emphasizes recognition of immigrants' cultural values, customs, and skills that they have brought to the host society [12]. However, our findings on the immigrants involved in the BCCF show that among those immigrants who were initially receiving benefits were those who later came to play more active roles in the community farm. Our findings are in line with the study by Hondagneu-Sotelo (2017), which showed Latino participants shifting their motivations from creating their "home" to working for the betterment of the larger community [28].
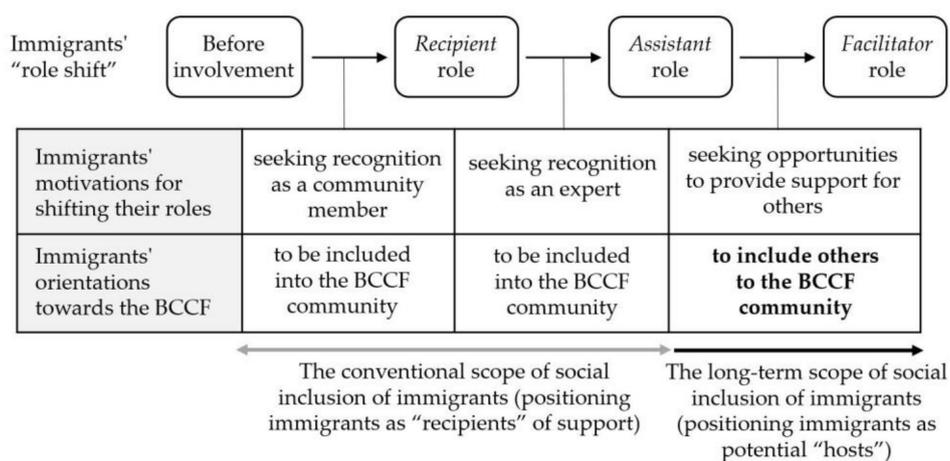
Figure 5. The conceptual framework of social inclusion of immigrants based on the findings from the BCCF participants (created by authors).

Furthermore, we address key positive characteristics of the case study community farm in attracting and retaining ethnoculturally diverse immigrants. As mentioned earlier, UA is suggested as a compatible space with immigrants in cities as immigrants often have cultural ties to agricultural practices in their home country [27,32]. Our findings suggest that the immigrants in the BCCF also utilized their formerly acquired agricultural and food-related skills and knowledge in taking more engaging roles in the local community. In addition, the BCCF was found to be relatively open to the local community, both physically and socially, a feature that is reported as not always the case in other community-based UA which have physical barriers or domineering attitudes against particular groups [70,71]. Lastly, its scale and secured land tenure of the community farm enabled the group to set up a wide variety of programs, offering more opportunities for the participants to interact with various social groups on site.

5. Conclusions

By taking the multiethnic community farm in Toronto, Canada as a case study, we have identified in this paper three types of roles (*recipient*, *assistant*, and *facilitator* roles) taken by the participants during their involvement. The timeline of individual role types by year showed that more than half of the immigrants at the BCCF underwent a "role shift" to take an *assistant* and *facilitator* role that required higher engagement. Drawing on the findings, we have discussed immigrants' motivations for "role shift" and how immigrants' orientations towards the BCCF have shifted from being the ones to be included to the ones including others in the local community over time, which confirms our hypothesis.

While significant efforts have been made to mitigate direct health impacts in the midst of the global pandemic, scholars warn of severe consequences of the potentially long-lasting social impacts of the pandemic which may exacerbate the current state with growing disparities and exclusions [5]. Not only do cities expect multifaceted challenges in achieving the sustainability goals, but the model that posits immigrants as fixed "recipients" of benefits is also said to be less feasible; the growing social costs would overstrain the capacity of cities to host newcomers, resulting in a growing public perception of immigrants as a societal "burden" across cities [72]. Our study shows that the immigrants in the BCCF who initially sought various needs gradually gained a willingness to start giving support for others in need in their local community. Understanding the extent to which receiving cities challenge the traditional "host"–"recipient" paradigm may be seen beneficial for community planners, settlement support practitioners, and place-based organizations in the development of sustainable urban communities in multiethnic societies.

Since we have adopted a single embedded case study design, further research is needed for generalizations. First, Toronto is said to be a city with relatively successful immigrant hosting systems

at federal, municipal, and neighborhood levels [12]. As the outcomes of a case study are significantly influenced by the city's socio-cultural contexts, further comparative research is needed to compare outcomes from studies conducted in other cities with different ethnic compositions and settlement policies. Moreover, the study selected the community farm setting as a case study. Other forms of community-based activities should also be part of the scope of future studies. Some studies suggest immigrants' long-term involvement includes health promotion activities [11], nature conservation [17], and religious activities [68].

Furthermore, we conclude by suggesting potential applications, potential impacts on the wider society, and future search directions surrounding the concept of immigrants' "role shift." First, policymakers involved with local immigrant settlement services in urban areas may consider incorporating the idea of net "roles" taken by local immigrants in communities as an indicator of local human capital and develop supporting systems to help local communities diversify and enhance their local human capital for strengthening the sustainability of the local communities. Practitioners of UA in culturally diverse cities also may conduct a series of interviews with immigrant gardeners about the extent to which they wish to be involved with the organization, not only within the scope of recreational activities but also including managerial activities that the immigrants may find suitable for them to take on. Secondly, it is important to explore how immigrants' localized engagement, fostered through community-based activities such as the involvement with the multiethnic community farm, may lead to a broader "role shift" of immigrants in the host society in the long-term. It is worth investigating whether accumulated immigrants' "role shift" experiences lead to a more positive perception towards immigrants by the hosting residents. As a number of urban scholars conceive UA as a potential infrastructure of cities, there needs to be research that systematically investigates the process and extent of immigrants' agency-building that UA can generate, with a comparative analysis between different typologies and socio-cultural contexts. Lastly, it is worth identifying a more nuanced categorization of a facilitator role, as well as investigating the existing networks between immigrants with a facilitator role across different sectors who may serve as key actors in generating a broader "role shift" of immigrants.

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Notes: According to Reynolds and Cohen (2016), community gardens generally consist of parcels divided into individual plots that are maintained by garden members [73]. Community farms have contiguous growing spaces that are managed by staff, apprentices, and volunteers. While food production is for distribution and sales, community farms often emphasize community and educational missions by offering leadership training and educational programs.

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