University of Alberta

"…I don't forget my traditions…" Exploring barriers and facilitators of food

security among low income newcomer Latin American families in Edmonton,

Alberta

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

Centre for Health Promotion Studies

Dedication

To the Latino mothers who participated in this study: *Mil gracias* [a thousand thanks] for sharing your valuable stories and insights with me. I pray many blessings to you and yours.

Abstract

Food insecurity is an important public health concern as 2.7 million Canadians live in food insecure households (CCHS, 2004). My research aimed to explore facilitators and barriers to food security among Latino mothers in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, as research in this realm is limited.

My study used Photovoice, a methodology by which participants express their views through visual means. Six eligible newcomer Latino mothers were recruited. The data collected included photographs, transcripts, and field notes. Data were analyzed using latent content analysis.

The study findings support the multidimensional nature of food security within the acculturation process of Latino families. Mothers show resourcefulness in maximizing the household's resources for finding culturally relevant products. Barriers for accessing these products include limited English proficiency, which is linked to their socioeconomic and psychological adaptation, access to adequate employment and income, and limited flexibility of migration policies. Recommendations for policy and practice are provided.

Acknowledgments

I would like to offer my infinite gratitude to my supervisors Dr. Lory Laing and Dr. Kim Raine for their endless support, patience, guidance and mentorship. It has been a great honour to work with them and learn from their expertise and passion for health promotion and research.

I want to acknowledge Sara Borquez and Yvonne Chiu, as they are both incredible women deeply dedicated to helping recent immigrants integrate to the Canadian society. Thank you for allowing me to work with the Multicultural Health Brokers, and for being the key gatekeepers for this study.

I also want to thank Dr. Maria Mayan for running the extra mile after the qualitative course I took with her in providing expert advice and support throughout my research process. She has inspired me in many ways and I hope she continues to encourage others to find their niche in qualitative research.

A very special acknowledgment to Ruth Wolfe, Roxanne Felix, Candace Nykiforuk, Laura Nieuwendyk. Tinatin Gumberidze, Janis Geary and Elaine Hyshka for sharing their resources, expertise and support when most needed.

My research has been funded by POWER (Promoting Optimal Weights through Ecological Research).

Last, but certainly, not least I want to acknowledge my family for believing in me and teaching me about social justice and equity since my early years. To my beloved fiancé, thank you for being there every step of the way.

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CHAPTER 1. Introduction and overview

1.1 Introduction

Food security refers to "the availability of food, equitable access to food and adequacy of the food supply in terms of culture, nutrition and sustainability" (Rideout, Riches, Ostry, Buckingham & MacRae, 2007, p. 566). Although Canada is food secure at an aggregate level (Riches, 1999), the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) found that by 2004, 2.7 million (8.8%) Canadians lived in a food insecure home (Health Agency of Canada, 2007). The survey also identified that newcomers and recent immigrants, living in Canada for less than five years, experience greater levels of food insecurity than their non-recent counterparts and Canadian born households (Health Agency of Canada, 2007). Latin Americans are a growing immigrant group in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2007). Despite the socioeconomic and cultural role Latino immigrants play in Canada, emerging research has identified that low income Latino households experience high levels of food insecurity (Rush, Ng, Irwin, Stitt, & He, 2007; Vahabi, Damba, Rocha, & Montoya, 2010). This may not come as a surprise as Latinos are more likely to have lower incomes than Canadian-born individuals and experience significant inequality in relation to employment and education (Statistics Canada, 2007). In addition, there is evidence in the United States of the changing dietary patterns for low income Latino immigrants. These patterns are reduced consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables after arriving to the host country, largely due to cost and perceived poor quality (Cason, Nieto-

Montenegro & Chavez-Martinez, 2006). These changes are associated with health deterioration, as poor diet quality and food insecurity have been linked to chronic diseases (Seligman, Laraia & Kushel, 2010; Seligman & Schillinger, 2010). Therefore, navigating the dimensions of this issue, as well as protective factors that may play in the context of nutrition and acculturation of Latino immigrants, is of vital relevance. This is congruent with the World Health Assembly's 2008 resolution which requested the member states, including Canada, to explore means for advancing the health of immigrants (Health Agency of Canada, 2010).

Enhancing our understanding of food security in the context of Latino immigrants is imperative, given that current literature on food insecurity and Latino immigrant groups in Canada is scarce (Rush et al., 2007; Vahabi et al., 2010). This dearth of research certainly underlines the need for exploring the dimensions and dynamics of food security among Latino groups, whose experience may be different from that of Canadians, due to their various adaptation patterns and diverse cultural backgrounds.

In the midst of this knowledge gap, my research aimed to shed light on the facilitators and barriers to food security among low income newcomer Latin American families living in Edmonton, Alberta. In addition, my study intended to yield evidence for policy makers and service providers to help them implement more comprehensive policies and programs, which can improve the wellbeing of Latino families.

1.2 Literature review

1.2.1 Latin Americans: conceptualizations and nuances of this 'ethnic identity'

The terms "Latin American" and "Hispanic" have been used interchangeably in the literature (Thomson & Hoffman-Goetz, 2009). Yet their conceptualization suggests important nuances and in countries, such as the United States, there are political, ideological and social implications attached to the use of these terms (Landale & Oropesa, 2002; Martin-Alcoff, 2005). As noted by Martin-Alcoff (2005), when referring to a narrative in the context of Mexicans in the United States linking social status and ethnic categorization, "[it] reveals an acute awareness that the process of ethnic and cultural naming is bound up with struggles of power and equality."

In addition, it is difficult to clearly define both of these terms given the different historical and ethnic backgrounds of Latino groups, as well as the diversity of perceptions of ethnic identity Latino immigrant groups have (Landale & Oropesa, 2002). Furthermore, although Latin Americans tend to be identified as one ethnic group, they represent over 20 countries, with substantial differences in language, traditions, and political and economic structures within each country (Castex, 1994).

One of the definitions of the term *Hispanic* is "of or relating to Spain or to Spanish-speaking countries, especially those of Latin America" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2011, para.1). This would include nationals of Spain and Spanish speaking people in Latin America and would exclude other

Latin American groups such as Brazilians. On the other hand, the term "Latin American" does not include people from Spain, but individuals from Central and South America and the Caribbean who speak languages derived from Latin (Spanish, French and Portuguese), as well as indigenous groups living in the mentioned areas. Therefore, it is a more comprehensive term as it includes all relevant groups and acknowledges diverse cultural roots represented within these groups (Charán & Charán, 1996). These definitions show the gradient in terminology and the importance of using a specific term. In addition, contextual features of Spain and Latin American countries may substantially vary, and this may influence migration journeys of people from these countries differently. For instance, there are important socioeconomic differences between Spain and most Latin American countries, reflected in the affluence of Latin American immigrants that choose Spain as a host country (Martinez-Brawley & Gualda, 2010).

Therefore, given that the term "Latin American" or "Latino" is more inclusive and comprehensive of the population focused on in my study, I will use these terms throughout my research.

1.2.2 Migration policy context in Canada

Given that my study focuses on newcomer families who are bound by the immigration regulations and laws of Canada, I will briefly overview the migration policy and legislative context of Canada.

In Canada, immigrants are classified in a category based on specific criteria including their main motivation to settle in Canada, their familiar ties

within the country and economic and professional capital. Before becoming a Canadian citizen, a person planning to remain in Canada must apply to become a permanent resident. A permanent resident is a person who is legally entitled to live permanently in Canada and falls within one of the following groups: (1) economic immigrants, who may be skilled workers or business immigrants; (2) family class immigrants, which refers to family members sponsored by another permanent resident or Canadian citizen such as spouses, parents, children; and (3) refugees, that refers to people who migrated due to extremely dangerous circumstances in their countries which means that Canada provides literal refuge (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010). Temporary residents include visitors and persons on study permits and temporary work permits, who are allowed to stay in the country for a limited amount of time (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009). Immigrants may also be classified in relation to the number of years since they have landed in Canada. For instance, newcomers or very-recent immigrants are those with less than five years in Canada, and recent immigrants are those who landed six to ten years ago (Statistics Canada, 2010).

In addition, relevant migration legislation includes: The Canadian Multiculturalism Act, *The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (2001), The *Citizenship Act* and Regulations (1985), ministerial instructions, among others[1] (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). The federal authority responsible for ensuring the implementation of migration policies and laws, as well as the

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[1] A full list of Laws and Policies related to Canada's legal framework can be found at: http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/laws-policy/index.asp

administration of migration procedures, is Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Among the objectives of Canada's migration legal and policy framework are to facilitate the reunification of families, the processes involved in allowing entry for temporary visitors, the successful incorporation of permanent residents to Canadian society, as well as fostering multiculturalism (Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, 2001). In addition, the Report and Plan on Priorities by Citizenship Canada (2012) has clearly expressed that migration authorities seek to increase the efficiency of the system to strengthen Canada's economic goals and labour market growth, as well as to continue to serve its humanitarian goals.

An evident effort to maximize the economic benefits of migration is the "points system", which aims to increase the efficiency of the selection of immigrants by prioritizing skills and occupation. This system was a measure to offset the challenges in relation to recruiting skill focused immigrants arising from the newly applied universal admission policy (Beach, Green & Worswick, 2006). As explained by Beach, Green & Worswick (2006): "Canada was in the process of shifting towards a more urban-industrial economy and the labor force had to be brought into line with the skill levels needed to support this transition. Immigration policy had to be shifted as well. The solution was the creation of the Point System…" (p.8). The point system assess eligibility of applicants based on key demographics, including age, education, professional skills, language proficiency, and most importantly the occupational demand (Green & Green, 1995). The rationale behind this approach is that the system "gives a concrete form for steering composition of inflow towards those occupations and skills

believed to be in high demand in Canada" (Green & Green, 1995, p. 1008). To be

eligible to settle in Canada the person must accumulate a minimum of points of 70

out of 100 (Green and Green, 1995). The point system is mainly geared to

economic immigrants, such as professionals and skilled workers.

A recent initiative related to Canada's migration policy is the super visa,

which was implemented in December 2011. This is a response to facilitate family

reunification , given that currently more than 165,000 parents and grandparents

are waiting to be sponsored to become permanent residents, and wait times are

estimated to be over seven years (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011).

The super visa grants a 10 year multiple entry visa to those parents and

grandparents awaiting sponsorship (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011).

1.2.3 Latin Americans in Canada: General Figures

According to the 2006 Census, Canada has over 6.1 million people who

are foreign born, which represent 19.8% of the total population (Statistics Canada,

2006). Latin Americans represent one of the fastest growing immigrant groups in

Canada (Statistics Canada, 2007). The most common countries of origin are

Mexico, Chile, El Salvador, Peru and Colombia (Statistics Canada, 2007).

According to the Census Data (Statics Canada, 2006) there are 386,545

individuals who reported Latin American ethnicity[2], accounting for 1.2% of

Canada's total population (Statistics Canada, 2006). Some experts estimate that

total number of Latin Americans is substantially larger than the figures provided

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[2] The figure provided is an estimate based on "Topic base Tabulation of ethnic origin of the census data, 2006. "Ethnic Origin (247) Single and Multiple Ethnic Origin Responses". For more information, see Ethnic Origin Reference Guide, 2006 Census: http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/ref/rp-guides/ethnic-ethnique-eng.cfm

by the Census, mainly because some Latin Americans without their migration paperwork in place would be skeptical to complete the census and/or may not do so due to language barriers (Schugurensky & Ginieniewicz, 2007; Vahabi et al., 2010). Latin American immigrants settle mainly in large cities and metropolitan areas, are relatively young, have basic conversation skills in one of the national languages, and are somewhat overrepresented by women (Statistics Canada, 2007).

Alberta is one of the main provinces selected by people of Latin American origin, along with Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia. An estimated 22,000 Canadians of Latin American origin resided in Alberta by 2001 and almost 1% of the total population of Calgary and Edmonton were of Latin American origin (Statistics Canada, 2007). The data provided by Statistics Canada includes foreign born (those born outside of Canada) as well as Latin Americans who are born in Canada. Despite relative high education of Latin Americans, they are more likely to experience unemployment and underemployment when compared to their Canadian counterparts (Statistics Canada, 2007).

1.2.4 Acculturation: the construct and dimensions

It is widely accepted that when individuals leave their home countries and settle in a new society, there are inevitable changes in their behavior, values, norms, and other aspects of their lives as a result of the need to adapt to the new environment (Berry, 1997; Berry, 2004; Lara, Gamboa, Kahramanian, Morales, & Bautista, 2005). The vast majority of cross cultural research around acculturation has been developed mostly through social science fields such as Psychology and

Anthropology. Initial conceptualizations of acculturation placed an emphasis on group level processes (Lopez-Class, Castro, & Ramirez, 2011), which later evolved to include processes at the individual level (Graves, 1967; Berry, 2004). One of acculturation's many definitions reflects the influence of Psychology around this construct: "A process of cultural and psychological change resulting from contact between cultural groups and their individual members" (Berry, 2004, p. 27). Differentiating acculturation processes at the group and individual levels is particularly important, given that every person may experience acculturation changes to different extents – as well as respond differently to the challenges of the new context – and these unique experiences can help better measure and understand relationship at both levels (Berry, 1997).

Acculturation models have been classified in two main categories based on the approach and conceptualization of acculturation: unidirectional and bidimensional (or multidimensional) models (Lara et al., 2005; Thomson & Hoffman-Goezt, 2009). Unidirectional models illustrate acculturation as a process that is to a great extent predictable given that the acculturating individual assimilates all aspects of a new culture and his/her original cultural identity fades (Lara et al., 2005). An example of a unidirectional definition of acculturation is when it "refers to the process by which immigrants adopt the attitudes, values, customs, beliefs and behaviors of a new culture" (Abraido-Lanza, Chao, & Florez, 2005, p. 1244).

Bidirectional and multidimensional models are more flexible and nuanced in their approach to the process of acculturation and challenge unidirectional

models as these "propose that acquiring or adhering to a new dominant culture is independent of maintaining the original culture" (Lara et al., 2005, p.370) and embrace dynamic scenarios of how acculturation may play out including adopting elements from the new culture and preserving original customs, or mixed patterns (Thomson & Hoffman-Goezt, 2009). A bidirectional definition of acculturation "is a process of cultural adaptation that happens when groups of persons from different cultures come into continuous contact with each other. Acculturation is not, however, a linear process because it does not necessarily lead to assimilation and a loss of a person's ethnic identity" (Beck, Froman, & Bernal, 2005, p. 300).

Despite the helpfulness of bidirectional models of acculturation, most of the existing measurement tools are based on unidirectional models (Lara et al., 2005). In addition, recent reviews call for a multidimensional approach that can help measure the acculturation concept accordingly (Lopez-Class et al., 2011).

Berry (1997, 2004) has proposed an acculturation framework illustrating how individuals or groups deal with the demands and features of the new environment, based on two main dimensions: cultural maintenance and involvement in the adoption of features and ways of the new context. Individuals or groups may assimilate, which means they that do not wish to preserve their own customs and identity and instead try to adopt the new cultural identity in all its aspects. Or they may integrate, which encompasses a merging process of keeping their cultural heritage to some degree, yet at the same time, adopting some aspects of the new culture. Some individuals and groups may respond using a 'separation strategy', which includes preserving cultural ties and voluntarily

avoiding participation in the new culture. Although all of these strategies have an overt emphasis on how the individuals or groups respond to the environment, Berry acknowledges that the strategies are based on the assumption that individuals or groups can decide to carry on a particular strategy. Yet, this is not always the norm given that the 'dominant' society or other contextual factors may influence them differently (Berry, 1997). For instance, for individuals or groups to be able to use the strategy of 'integration', it is necessary that the host society encourages diversity and is culturally inclusive (Berry 1997). In addition, Berry's last proposed acculturation strategy, which is marginalization, overtly acknowledges the role of the environment, including the previous context and the new one, as it refers to, "when there is little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance (often for reasons of enforced cultural loss), and little interest in having relations with others (often for reasons of exclusion or discrimination)" (Berry, 1997, p. 9). The author (Berry, 1997; Berry, 2004) posits that an advantage of these strategies is that they can serve to evaluate the host country's immigration framework by identifying which strategy of acculturation the country's policies and regulations are promoting or fostering. For instance, are those policies and subsequent programs assisting in the successful integration of the immigrant groups by encouraging and celebrating diversity? Do the country's structures and policies force the immigrant groups to assimilate, or are these policies a means of marginalizing groups?

Extensive research on the acculturation dynamics of Latin Americans is greatly concentrated in the United States as this group represents one of the

country's largest minority groups (Lara et al., 2005; Viruell-Fuentes, 2007; Rudmin, 2009). In regards to the literature on health and acculturation of Latin American groups in the United States, Lara et al. (2005) concluded that there is enough evidence-based support to the negative impact of acculturation, such as patterns of substance abuse, dietary behaviors, health care use, and birth outcomes. Nonetheless, the authors also found that a large group of studies lacked depth and presented important methodological inconsistencies (Lara et al., 2005). Some of the methodological challenges to studying acculturation and health in Latin American groups – and other minorities – include inconsistent use of acculturation measures, overemphasis of language as a proxy to acculturation and a high concentration of studies with Mexican groups when Latin Americans include other important groups such as Cubans, Dominicans, Salvadorans, Colombians, and others (Lara et al., 2005; Thomson & Hoffman-Goezt, 2009; Lopez-Class et al., 2011). To date, researchers identify similar challenges in our understanding of health and acculturation, as noted by Lopez et al. (2011): "Based on wide-ranging variations in the conceptualization, measurement and application of the construct of acculturation, conflicting outcomes and conclusions have emerged regarding the effects of acculturation on health-related outcomes" (p. 1,556). For instance, although more subjective yet relevant elements of culture such as values, perceptions, and attitudes have been included as part of the definition of acculturation, the measurement of such elements has been weak and unclear (Thomson and Hoffman-Goezt, 2009).

1.2.5 Food Security

Food is far more than a biological demand. It includes a diverse myriad of constant human, economic, social, economic, and cultural activities translated into routines of food production, distribution, preparation, consumption and sharing. Food is a fundamental human rights issue linked to one of the most basic needs of the human beings (Riches 1997); it is a social and cultural issue as it relates to our daily interactions, socialization, and day-to-day activities with important social meanings (Raine, 2005; Delormier, Frohlich, & Potvin, 2009). Food is a political and economic issue as it relates to the dominant political discourse, which determines distribution of opportunities and living conditions (i.e. income, employment, welfare, access to childcare, working conditions, etc.) (Power, 2005). Furthermore, it is a health issue, as the quality of diet relates to people's wellbeing and long term health (Seligman et al., 2010; Gorton, Bullen, & Mhurchu, 2009). The list is vast and far more interconnected than what I have presented, yet the aforementioned aspects are an illustration of the scope, breadth and implications around the issue of food.

Food security in the Canadian context has been defined as the "the availability of food, equitable access to food, and adequacy of the food supply in terms of culture, nutrition and sustainability" (Rideout et al., 2007, p. 566). Building on the Rome Declaration on World Food Security, another comprehensive definition of food security has been developed, in which all five components must be met to attain food security. These components are: (1) 'availability' of sufficient food for everyone on a consistent basis; (2)

'accessibility' to economic and physical means for such access to happen; (3) 'adequacy' of food should be met in terms of nutritional quality of the food and food production methods should be environmentally friendly; (4) 'acceptability' relevant to culturally appropriate food that is accessed in socially acceptable ways; and (5) 'agency' in relation to policy efforts to enable means to food security (Rocha, 2007; Centre for Studies in Food Security, 2012). In addition to these two definitions, food security at a household level has over two hundred definitions in the literature (Smith, Pointing, & Maxwell, 1992). Maxwell (1996) argues that although the affluence of definitions may indicate 'limited usefulness' and lack of consensus, it is rather more an expression of the complexities behind the issue. For the purpose of my study, I will use the above mentioned two definitions by Rideout (2005) and the Centre for Studies in Food Security as they not only account for issues of access, but also include social, cultural and equity dimensions.

1.2.5.1 Food insecurity in Canada

According to the CCHS (Health Agency of Canada, 2007), in 2004 over 2.7 million Canadians experienced some level of food insecurity. This survey identified groups at higher risk such as lone parents, aboriginal populations, and recent immigrants. Over the last three decades, rates of food insecurity have continued to escalate (McIntyre, 2003; Rideout et al., 2007) and food bank usage in Canada has increased 26% since 2008 (Food Banks Canada, 2011). These figures show a striking reality for a country that is known to be one of the wealthiest countries in the world, and one of the leading countries providing aid to

nations experiencing food insecurity (Canadian International Development Agency, 2012). In March 2011, it was identified that 58,735 individuals used the services of a food bank in Alberta, with an overall increasing trend of 74.9% since 2008 (Food Banks Canada, 2011).

The steady increase of food insecurity in Canada has been linked to the dramatic reduction of social investment and spending from welfare reform in Canada (Coburn, 2000; Riches, 1997). The consequences of the changes in the welfare system have increased levels of inequality in Canada (Coburn, 2000) and substantially weakened social safety nets (Riches, 1997). This reality is intrinsically associated with food security, as beneficiaries of welfare in Canada have been found to be three times at increased risk of being food insecure than other social groups (Rideout et al., 2007). Therefore, economic difficulties are exacerbated leading to restricted food expenditure and lower quality food purchases, thereby leading and enhancing food insecurity (Riches 1997; Rideout et al., 2007; Gorton et al., 2009).

1.2.5.2 Implications of food insecurity

Healthy eating is one the most important preventable risk factors linked to chronic diseases. Therefore, consistent restricted access to a nutrient rich diet can lead to chronic diseases (Seligman, et al., 2010; Seligman & Schillinger, 2010). Indeed, food insecurity has been linked to a myriad of health outcomes such as obesity, hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and depression (Seligman et al., 2010; Seligman & Schillinger, 2010). Chronic diseases in Canada are a growing problem as they account for 89% of all deaths; in 2005 it was projected

that over the following ten years over 2 million people would die from a related cause (World Health Organization, 2005). In addition to the physical and psychological problems attached to chronic diseases, the economic costs place a significant burden on the Canadian government (Integrated Pan Canadian Healthy Strategy, 2005). Although Canada has made a priority of reducing the incidence and prevalence of chronic diseases, the lack of a national strategy and response from the policy level to support nutritionally vulnerable groups, indicate a field in need of resource allocation and intersectoral collaboration (McIntyre, 2002). Partly, the problem is linked to greater availability and access to foods which are high in sodium, fats and calories, specifically for those living in less affluent areas (Hemphill, Raine, Spence, & Smoyer-Tomic, 2007). This risk is also amplified for those in lower socio-economic standing as they face pressing demands such as housing, childcare, underemployment or unemployment (Travers, 1994; Power, 2005; Gorton et al., 2009).

Thus, food insecurity has been clearly identified as a relevant public health issue and as a social determinant of health (McIntyre, 2003), which requires an in depth reassessment of the shortcomings in order to develop effective interventions (McIntyre, 2003; Rideout et al., 2007; Gorton et al., 2009).

1.2.5.3 Food banks: addressing or intensifying food insecurity?

There are diverse strategies to address food security, both at community and household levels (Tarasuk, 2001) and the traditional response is food banks. Gaining prominence in the 1980's as an emergency and temporary measure to respond to community and individual food insecurity, food banks have been

largely institutionalized with usage rates and normalization (Riches, 1997; McIntyre, 2003). Although food banks provide a momentary alleviation to hunger, they are a 'band aid' solution that intensifies the problem of food insecurity (Rideout 2005, Riches, 1997). Continuing to rely on food banks displaces the debate from rights and legal responsibilities of political structures (federal/provincial government) to an issue of charity relying on the community's altruism (Rideout et al. 2007). As noted by Riches (1997), the constant increase in food insecurity levels is evidence that these issues have been depoliticized from the public policy agenda. Riches (1997) also points out that the implications of this comes with "profound personal, health, social and moral consequences not just for those in need but for society as a whole" (p. 53). In addition, relying on food banks perpetuates a narrow conceptualization of the problem as this frames the food insecurity problem as one merely limited to hunger and poverty (Ontario Public Health Association, 2002), when it is in reality is greatly linked to structural and more complex conditions (Travers 1997; McIntyre, 2002; Rideout et al. 2007).

1.2.5.4 Health, food security and acculturation

The health of immigrants in Canada is an issue of importance as immigrants constitute a large, growing section of Canada's total population and projected population growth (Health Agency of Canada, 2010). Their wellbeing relates to Canada's migration structures and policies, which could potentially burden Canada's health care system (McDonald & Kennedy, 2004). Research around health transitions of immigrants continues to progress, and increased

attention has been given to the 'healthy immigrant effect' identified in recent immigrants. The 'healthy immigrant effect' refers to an initial health advantage of foreign born individuals when contrasted to Canadian born; however, it appears that this benefit is lost over time (Gee, Kobayashi, & Prus, 2004; McDonald & Kennedy, 2004).

Furthermore, immigrants from low income countries have been found to experience a 10% increase in body mass index after a relatively short time in Canada, which is a relevant marker for assessing chronic disease risk (Ng, Wilkins, Gendron, & Berthelot, 2005). This increase might be associated to their living conditions once they arrive in Canada, as immigrants, for despite educational level and skills, they are more likely be in a low income standing (Koc & Welsh, 2002; Alberta Human Resources and Employment, 2005). Income, has been consistently linked to food insecurity (Power, 2005; Gorton et al., 2009) as food becomes a discretionary household expense given more stringent economic demands such as paying for rent, childcare, heating, etc. In addition, limited income can shape dietary behavior in that it can lead to increased consumption of energy dense, high fat and high sodium food given that these food options are more prominently accessible, particularly in low income areas (Raine, 2005; Hemphill et al., 2007).

The literature on food insecurity and newcomer Latin Americans in Canada is scarce. Yet, the existing studies in Canada have identified levels of food insecurity in low income Latino households. A study with Colombian food bank users identified that all the participants experienced some level of food

insecurity (Rush et al., 2007). The authors also found that length of stay in Canada was associated with food insecurity in that those with less time in Canada were more vulnerable (Rush et al., 2007).

Vahabi et al. (2011) found high levels of food insecurity in newcomer low income Latino groups who had recently migrated to Canada and highlighted a substantial increase in food insecurity from the figures provided by the CCHS in 2004 (Vahabi et al., 2011). This increase may be associated not only to mounting levels of food insecurity in the mentioned groups, but also to language barriers. The CCHS is developed using official languages in Canada (French and English) and many Latino immigrants lack proficiency in either of these languages (Vahabi et al., 2011). Furthermore, limited English proficiency was found to be linked to lower income levels, reliance on social assistance, and food bank usage (Vahabi et al., 2011). The linkage of income and food insecurity was also supported by Rush et al. (2007) and has been consistently identified in the literature (Power, 2005; Gorton et al., 2009).

A key issue for Latino immigrants, and one that is experienced by other immigrant groups, is that income levels and employment are not consistent with educational levels and skills, which impacts the household's food security (Vahabi et al., 2011). Evidently, there are additional dimensions to the issues of health and food security in low income immigrant groups, which include language barriers, challenges in the recognition of credentials, and other integration difficulties that might add to the already existing triggers of food insecurity in relation to access to adequate employment and income.

1.2.7 Purpose and research questions

1.2.7.1 Purpose

The purpose of this research was to explore the perspectives, concerns and experiences of low income newcomer Latin American families around food security, in relation to access to sufficient, nutritious, and culturally appropriate meals. Additionally, this study aimed to understand how these perspectives, concerns and experiences relate to Latin American families' lives, communities, and integration process to Canadian society.

1.2.7.2 Research Questions

My study aimed to answer three research questions: (1) What are facilitators and barriers for accessing sufficient, nutritious, and culturally appropriate meals among low income newcomer Latin American families living in Edmonton, Alberta? (2) What are the perspectives, concerns, and experiences of low income newcomer Latin American families around the issue of food security? (3) How does access to food relate to their lives, communities, and integration process to the Canadian society?

CHAPTER 2. Methodology

2.1 Overview of photovoice

The study used photovoice to navigate the research questions and views of participants. The method was developed by Wang and colleagues working with women in rural China (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001) and has recently been used in studies with immigrants (Schwartz, Sable, Dannerbeck, & Campbell, 2007; Stevens, 2010). The ontology and epistemology of photovoice are rooted in a constructivist paradigm, which argues that there are multiple ways to grasp and explain the processes within a determined social reality. Furthermore, the constructivist paradigm assumes more than "one" social reality, but multiple expressions of realities that are socially constructed (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). As explained by Schwandt (as cited by Denzin & Lincoln, 2005): "constructivists emphasize the pluralistic and plastic character of reality- pluralistic in the sense that reality is expressible in a variety of symbol and language systems; plastic in the sense that reality is stretched and shaped to fit purposeful acts of intentional human agents". Inquiry within the constructivist approach unfolds in the time and context of the relevant setting and actors and includes the creation of knowledge with the interaction of researcher and the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Using the photovoice method to identify perceptions around food security seemed appropriate given the complexity and nature of the issue, as noted by Maxwell (1996): "Understanding food security requires explicit recognition of complexity and diversity, and that it necessarily privileges the subjective perceptions of the food insecure themselves" (p. 156).

The philosophical underpinnings of photovoice are grounded in three major theoretical traditions: Paulo Freire's theory of empowerment education, feminist theory, and community based participatory approaches. Freire posits that people can gain profound sensitivity and awareness in recognizing and evaluating the structural forces affecting and oppressing their lives, and that this leads them to promote dialogue and negotiation for timely change (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). Second, feminist theory notes a contradiction in Freire's approach revealed in the tendency of participatory research to focus on men's perspectives, thus neglecting the voice of women; photovoice confronts this by making visible the ideas, concerns and views of marginalized groups (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). Lastly, photovoice is a tool for community participation in their solution seeking process (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001).

Photovoice is particularly valuable given that it "links needs assessment with community participation" (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 371). It allows participants to express their views and pressing issues, as well as positive aspects, in their lives and communities through visual means, in order to communicate their findings to policy makers that could mobilize change (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001; Mayan, 2009). In addition, an important asset of this method is that the participants, as insiders, are able to better identify the true needs in their community, as "their familiarity with their surroundings gives community members a distinct advantage over professionals in their ability to move through the community, portray its strengths, and concerns" (Wang &

Redwood-Jones, 2001, p. 561). Furthermore, photovoice has been identified as a potentially useful method in nutrition research (Martin, Garcia & Leipert, 2010).

2.2 Context

This study was conducted in Edmonton, Alberta. Edmonton has a population of approximately 817,498 inhabitants, with projected increasing trends, primarily comprised of an aging population (City of Edmonton, 2012). Its economy is mainly service based, the energy sector being a key driver of Alberta's robust economy, and immigrants are expected to increase their participation in Alberta's workforce (Edmonton Socio Economic Outlook, 2011). Calgary and Edmonton, the main cities of Alberta, are two of the top living choices of Latin immigrants when arriving to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2007).

2.3 Sampling

The principles of purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) guided my interest of gaining insights from the experiences of low income newcomer Latino families living in Edmonton, Alberta. For the purpose of this research, newcomers were defined as those immigrants who have been in Canada for less than five years based on the classification by the Statistics Canada (2010) and the Canadian Community Health Survey (Health Agency of Canada, 2007). In addition, the definition of low-income was guided by Statistics Canada "Low Income Cut-offs" (2011). By 2010, the Low Income Cut-offs for metropolitan areas according to Statistics Canada are detailed in Table 1. This table was attached to the invitation letter so that families could identify if their income status made them eligible for the study.

Table 1. Low Income Cut-offs Before Tax (Statistics Canada, 2011)

Size of Family Unit	Metropolitan Areas 500,000 inhabitants or more
1 person	22,637
2 persons	28,182
3 persons	34,646
4 persons	42,065
5 persons	47,710
6 persons	53,808
7 or more persons	59,907

2.4 Accessing the community

My initial contact was with the Multicultural Health Brokers (MCHB), which is located in a low income area of Edmonton, Alberta. MCHB is a community organization that has been providing integral social and health services to immigrant families for over fifteen years. They serve immigrant families with qualified and culturally competent staff. MCHB has worked numerous times with the University of Alberta on diverse research projects. This presented an advantage to access the organization, yet it also posed challenges as some previous research experiences 'parachuted', working only towards achieving their goal and neglecting the side of giving back to the organization. As a researcher, being aware of this since the beginning was helpful to build trust with the organization and participants, as I made my intentions clear from the onset, as well as my desire to reciprocate their support. I met the Director of the organization in January 2011, and then later May 2011. In May, we reviewed more specific details of the study and she directed me to Sara Borquez, the

Perinatal Health Coordinator. She was very supportive of the study and also provided community engagement ideas so I would familiarize better with them and at the same time, strengthen the organization's work.

2.5 Recruitment

Invitations were sent by email to organizations working with recent immigrants in Edmonton. Mothers from the Latin American collective kitchen organized by the MCHB were invited as well. Invitations were also posted on a website (www.edmontonlatinchannel.com) dedicated to Latin Americans. Invitations were open to men and women, yet only women responded to the invitations. Six low income newcomer Latino mothers were recruited. Five participants were recruited from the MCHB and one participant responded to the invitation posted on a website for Latino immigrants in Edmonton (http://edmontonlatinchannel.com).

2.6 Data Generation

The main data generation activities consisted of an orientation meeting, time given to participants to take photographs (2 weeks), an individual interview with each participant, a group meeting to share photographs among the group, and a final group meeting to review results and obtain group feedback from participants. Participants received a small compensation for each of the main activities, except for the orientation meeting, including 20.00 CAD grocery gift card, bus passes and childcare during meetings. Although I meant to provide childcare for our last meeting, the member check meeting, this was not possible due to logistical challenges.

2.6.1 Orientation Meeting

This meeting included a detailed orientation of the study, such as the purpose of the study, methodology, responsibilities, etc. We reviewed the definition and goals of photovoice, ethical guidelines in the use of photography (i.e. photographing individuals), time frame of the project activities, detailed description of sessions, how to use the disposable camera provided to them, their right to keep negatives, and responsibilities involved. At the end of the meeting, we shared refreshments. Participants received a friendly manual prepared based on Families First's Photovoice Manual (Lo, Mayan, & Gray, 2007) and a presentation with all the details pertaining to the project based on Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) guidelines.

Participants were asked to take photographs and express their ideas around the following questions:

1. What things from your life, family, community or other helps you find products from your country and healthy meals?

2. What things from your life, family, community, work, or other makes it difficult for you to find products from your country and healthy meals?

3. What things concerned you in relation to food and your family?

Although I gave them these questions, I emphasized that the most important thing was to share with me about food in their lives, before and after Canada, and that there were no right or wrong answers.

2.6.2 Photo taking process

Participants received a disposable camera with 24-26 photos (Kodak). Participants kept the cameras for two weeks; at the end of this period, I collected the cameras. Some of the mothers preferred to be interviewed the same day that they provided the cameras to me. In those cases, I printed the photographs, and went back to their homes. Before interviewing, however, they had some time by themselves to pick their top 5 to 6 photos.

2.6.3 Individual Interviews

Interviews aimed at capturing participants' views and ideas within and beyond photographs in relation to various aspects of their lives. As the native language of participants and me is Spanish, I conducted all interviews in Spanish, and interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 1 hour and a half. Usually, photovoice activities are based on group discussions. However, as a researcher, I preferred to have at least one individual encounter with each mother, to ensure that each of their perspectives would be clear and properly contextualized, given that sometimes in groups, it can be challenging to obtain full details of each person`s story. This issue is further elaborated in 2.9, Reflections on Methodology section of my study.

I prepared a semi-structured interview (see Appendix 1) that would help me have a conversation with the mothers. The guide covered questions relevant to the research topic. Yet, at the same time, I tried to use this guide with flexibility so that it would not limit the scope of our conversation and would help the study

participants discuss any aspects of their family and their migration journey they would want to share.

As recommended by Ojeda et al. (2011), I ordered the questions, from general aspects (i.e. demographics) to more specific or confronting ones (i.e. coping with economic constrains). To review the photographs, I preferred a more broad approach than the traditional SHOWED guide provided by Wang (1997). More details and rationale are explained in section 2.9, Reflections on Methodology.

2.6.4 Focus group to share photographs and ideas

After all mothers were interviewed, I coordinated a focus group so mothers could present their top five pictures and explain the stories behind them. The meeting was held at one of the mothers' homes and was recorded for data analysis. The duration of the meeting was approximately 2 hours. That day, I provided each mother with the transcripts of their interviews, so they would let me know if there was anything that needed to be changed, modified or expanded. Only one mother asked to change her transcript, which was done accordingly. Later on, photographs in digital format were also sent.

2.6.5 Participant check meeting

Member check in qualitative research is a key aspect of the credibility of a qualitative study, as it allows participants to review how they have been represented and request changes or modifications to ensure their proper representation (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Mayan, 2009). Six months after original meetings, I met with participants again to review a summary of the preliminary

results of the study, assess consensus, retrieve feedback, and ensure findings could be validated. The meeting had two main objectives. The first one was to give participants a closer idea on how they were being represented and how the overall results were organized. The second objective was to thank the mothers for their time, recognize the collective work, and have some closure to the project.

2.7 Ethical aspects of the research

The study proposal was approved by the Health Research Ethics Board of the University of Alberta via the online platform of Human Ethics Research Online (HERO) two months after submission (September 2012). In April 2012, an amendment for the member check meeting was approved.

Informed consent (see Appendix 3) was obtained individually from the participants who wished to participate in the research at the end of the first meeting. The informed consent was presented in Spanish as this is the mother tongue of the study participants. Using the native language of the participants has been identified as an advantage for depth and reach in studies with immigrants as it reduces participation barriers, miscommunication, and other important issues that can compromise the quality of the data collected (Vahabi et al., 2011).

The informed consent comprised the rights and responsibilities of the participants, purpose of the study, risk and benefit details, and expectations during and after the study. In addition, it was important to have a brief conversation on the social change expectations from the study. As a result of this study, improvements in areas of participants' concerns might not happen or more importantly, the timing of the change might not affect them. Notwithstanding, it

was essential for the participants to know that their perspectives were critical to initial efforts and visibility to the issues affecting the low income Latino community in Edmonton.

Core principles of the consent and this study include: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). The study adhered to the required ethical standards when using photovoice, outlined by Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001). During the first meeting, aspects of privacy and taking pictures of individuals were emphasized. For instance, if the study participants wished to take a photograph of a person, obtaining written consent before taking the picture was necessary (see Appendix 5: Photo Release Form).

Participants were informed of all the potential ways the information collected would be used and that they would have decision-making capacity around their photographs. For example, they could choose whether or not they wanted to have their names attached to their photographs. Before signing the consent form, we discussed that if they wished to receive credit for their photos, I would respect it, but in this case, their anonymity would be waived. Participants were aware of this situation, yet still desired to receive credit for their work. As a result, all participants provided written and oral consent to have their names associated with their photos. I elaborate more on these issues on section 2.9.6, Ownership versus Anonymity. Nonetheless, pseudonyms were given to the study participants to protect, at least to some extent, their identities and numerical codes were used for recorded interviews and transcriptions. Also, to protect the participants' statements and detailed stories, all collected information will be kept

in a password locked folder for up to seven years in the computer of the Centre for Health Promotion Studies.

2.8 Rigour

As mentioned in 2.1, Overview of Photovoice section of this paper, my study used the methodology and tools of qualitative inquiry, which is a fundamentally different paradigm than the positivist school of thought. I mention this not to downplay the importance of quantitative studies, but to explicitly allocate the context of rigour within my study, that should be understood in the light of qualitative principles. As noted by Krefting (1991), there are significant differences between experimental studies and qualitative ones. As she explains: "the key to qualitative work is to learn from the informants rather than control for them". Assessing rigour of a particular study is critical to evaluate the study's quality, yet there is a lack of consensus on what exactly principles of rigour ought to be (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Rigour has been defined as "demonstrating how and why (through methodology) the findings of a particular inquiry are worth paying attention to" (Mayan, 2009, p. 100). Although there is lack of consensus on terminology and other issues associated with rigour in qualitative research, I will draw on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) approach of using a separate terminology from the quantitative orientation (i.e. internal validity, generalizability, and reliability). Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined their approach to rigour as "trustworthiness" which relates to "arguments, criteria and questions" that yield findings which are "worth paying attention to and worth taking account of" (p. 290). My study has strived to achieve and maintain adequate levels of rigour

guided by the principle of trustworthiness as evaluated in the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability by Lincoln & Guba (1985). In the next paragraphs, I will briefly explain each criterion and provide some insights on the activities and approaches taken to enhance each principle.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) referred to credibility as a dual effort of seeking to "carry out the inquiry in such way that the probability that the findings will be found to be credible is enhanced, and second, to demonstrate the credibility of findings by having them approved by the constructors of the multiple realities being studied" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility addresses the following questions: do findings make sense? Are the findings a truthful representation of the participants and data? (Mayan, 2009). These questions resonate well with the main purpose of photovoice, which is to give visibility to participants' concerns or priorities and build on their ideas to encourage political will and action. Throughout each of the steps of the study, I have continuously asked myself these questions, not only for the sake of rigour, but because the mothers in my study have trusted me to do so, have taken their time to share their views and perceptions, and honouring their trust was very important to me. As the study unfolded, I started to create a mental map of the meanings embedded in their interviews and photos. I kept on wondering, if they read my thesis in the future, what emotions it would trigger in each one of them? Would they think I have represented them accurately? And more critically, was I trying to portray them as I would like others to see me –as a recent Latin American in Canada myself? I tried to be aware of this last question to avoid representing myself through the

participants and to ensure this; I kept going back over and over again to their transcripts and photos at different times. Furthermore, other strategies were taken to guarantee the credibility, including participants' checks that would help answer the key questions, abundant use of participants' quotes and photographs, and detailed descriptions of findings in within their context. At the end of our group meeting in October, where they shared the photos they took, I provided them with their interview transcript. And at the end of the study, we also had a member check group meeting. During the member check meeting I provided them with a presentation and we agreed that they would have two weeks to review it and let me know of any changes or comments. Both activities acted as verification strategies that allowed participants to assess how they were represented in the results, as well as filter and refine the emerging results and to ensure a sharper representation of their perceptions and ideas. All participants showed great enthusiasm when we reviewed the results and witnessed how their perspectives were materialized and how they were presented as a group. One of the mothers requested to eliminate some of information on how she was portrayed, and this was implemented accordingly. Finally, when one negative case was identified, I spent considerable amounts of time trying to understand it and make sure the data analysis would reflect the nuances of the case.

Transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is concerned with applicability of findings by aiming at answering the questions of "to whom" or "where" these findings will be applicable and pertinent. To comply with this standard, purposeful sampling was used in order to recruit participants with specific

characteristics and experiences relevant to the research questions and responding in depth to the aspects I wanted to grasp (i.e. newcomers, low income, living in Edmonton, Latin American and with at least one child – see section 2.3 on Sampling). In addition, as recommended by Mayan (2009), detailed descriptions of the sample group and its context have been provided throughout the study. Nonetheless, it is important to note that there is the possibility that the views collected might not be fully representative of other low income newcomer Latin American mothers in Edmonton (see section 5.3 on Limitations).

Dependability is concerned with the consistency of the research and well justified decision making throughout each step of the process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As the research developed, my supervisors and I engaged in an iterative process of reflexivity and consultation on different aspects of the study. I also discussed methodological and ethical aspects of my study with Dr. Maria Mayan (peer debriefing). For instance, after discussions on approaches to the analysis with Dr. Mayan, she recommended me to do the analysis in Spanish because the data is in this language, and as a native speaker I would reduce misinterpretation or risk in misrepresenting participants' ideas. This was indeed the correct approach, as it allowed the data and interpretations to be more familiar and avoided misinterpretations that could occur when engaging in translation dynamics. I documented the research processes and dynamics since my study's early development, in order to provide rationale to each course of action and to be able to remember why I decided to take a particular approach at that moment in time. This way, I ensured to have the audit trail necessary for rigour. Although a

journal might be perceived as a document only for personal insights, I kept a journal of methodological issues, challenges and opportunities, as well as my own impressions and insights of diverse aspects, not only methodological, but related to the overall research of the process. In addition, several data units were collected that helped contextualize the study including photographs, interviews, and observations from the field. In the Methodological Reflections section of my study, I present how the method was adapted and why, and other important issues.

Confirmability aims at ensuring the accuracy of the "products" of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Using the analogy of an accounting audit, Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain the assessment of confirmability: "the inquiry auditor also examines the product –the data, findings, interpretations, and recommendations- and attests that it is supported by data and is internally coherent" (p. 318). Mayan (2009) adds that confirmability aims at warranting that findings are logical and that interpretations of the data collected are sound (Mayan, 2009). Verification strategies as mentioned above seek to enhance rigour and reflexivity throughout the study; thereby these strategies are also applicable to the principle of confirmability.

2.9 Methodological reflections

2.9.1 Modifications to Photovoice

Some modifications to photovoice were made to accommodate the context of participants and maximize depth of data. The importance of being sensitive to participants' context and modifying the method accordingly is an essential part of the research process, that does not happen in a vacuum, but in a social, cultural

and political context. As noted by Ojeda et al. (2011), "poorly executed and insensitive approaches can be harmful to researchers' efforts and can lead to the mistrusting of researchers" (p. 186).

2.9.1.1 Adapting SHOWED

Photovoice traditionally uses a guide of questions, named SHOWED, when reviewing photographs with participants. This guide consists of the following questions: What do you **s**ee here? What is really **h**appening? How does it relate to **o**ur lives? Why does this problem or strength **e**xist? What can we **d**o about it? Although this guide has been widely used and it has proved to be a great advocacy tool, some researchers have opted for using a slightly different approach to be sensitive to cultural nuances and/or participants' needs (Jurkowski and Paul-Ward, 2007; Castleden & Garvin, 2008). Adapting SHOWED was important in order to depersonalize the questioning of their social world to some extent, so that participants would not feel uncomfortable or skeptical as making overt statements on social concerns might be problematic for the study participants. Wang and Burris (1997) acknowledge how photovoice participants are exposed as they are literally engaged in a political activity by identifying priorities and concerns affecting them.

Furthermore, the Latino culture is very friendly and open to sharing things as long as it does not affect the perception of their family. Therefore, the study participants might be apprehensive of the disclosure of sensitive information around the family's budget constraints or difficult family dynamics, regardless whether affected by structural factors or not. This is congruent with the Latino

values on *el qué dirán - what will people say* - which refers to their reluctance to providing personal or intimate information about their families fearing this could affect how they or their families are perceived. This value is also associated with another Latino value *familiarismo* (Ojeda et al, 2011). *El que dirán* – what would people say – would also influence the frankness of their opinions. This is because, Latino immigrants do not want to be perceived by the society, that is opening doors to them, as people who complain about the system, particularly when these perceptions can enhance existing misapprehensions of immigrants being scroungers of the system (e.g. taking away jobs or not paying taxes or having access to free healthcare) (Ojeda et al., 2011). There are also levels of paranoia from Latino immigrants when participating in research, that the study results could be linked back to them and affect their migration status, particularly, becoming a permanent resident (Paniagua, 2005). Therefore, in the spirit of balancing those social, cultural and political dynamics, I adapted the questions and approach, as follows:

When I sat with participants to talk about the photos, instead of using the SHOWED method to discuss them, I used open ended questions that proved helpful to elucidate the motivations and views behind the pictures. Questions asked included: Why did you pick this as a favourite? Tell me about your photos/what is happening there? Why did you decide to take a picture of this?

I was still interested in the social change component of the study and the participants' perceptions of it. However, the questions were framed to fit the participants' context by depersonalizing them (placing the responsibility of

change on someone with power, a politician for instance). The questions were: If you had in front of you, someone of influence, someone with power to change things, let's say a politician, and he/she would ask you: "what things from your life or community do you need so you and your family have better access to food", what would you say?

Using an illustration and depersonalized approach was helpful as the participants' responses were rich and the rapport during the interview was maintained. This approach is congruent with recommendations for cultural competence when working with low income Latino immigrants: "Maintaining flexibility in restructuring questions and formulating additional questions is important. If restructuring is needed, we recommend being more descriptive and developing additional ways to explain concepts…" (Ojeda et al., 2011, p. 9).

2.9.1.2 Integrating the use of interviews

Traditionally photovoice activities are based on group discussions. Yet, I opted for group activities and individual interviews, which have been used in other photovoice projects (Castleden & Garvin, 2008). This decision was based on several reasons. First, I was anticipating that if any sensitive issues were to arise, they might be suppressed during group discussions. Second, I wanted to ensure I could appreciate the uniqueness and depth of each of their stories and context, which could have been difficult during a group discussion. This is congruent with Warren and Karner's (2010) vision in which "interview narratives are more than a simple mirror of life events; they are embedded in temporal, geographical, political, cultural, and social fields-all of which lend shape and form

to the story" (p. 22). Third, it was important to explore non-tangible issues and key aspects of food security that might be difficult to portray through photographs given their visual nature, or were simply overlooked by the participants, willingly or not.

2.9.2.1 Interview Guide

The interview guide was updated as the interviews ensued, building on each past experience and observations. This was a helpful activity, as it allowed for reflection after each interview on what I felt was missing or what could be improved for the next interview, or what elements the mothers had mentioned that I had not considered before that were worth exploring during the next interview. This not only improved the quality of the information, but also my confidence in asking questions. One lesson learned was that using an illustration of the question, as opposed to clear-cut questions for participants, was quite helpful in the overall rapport of the interview, because it made the question open to the participants' context. For instance, to identify what they normally cooked and their routines, instead of asking them: what do you cook normally? Do you cook meals from your home country? I would ask them: Can you please take me through a day in your life...what do you cook for breakfast, lunch and dinner? Or if I wanted to know what kinds of products they bought at the store (and perhaps identify the nutritional value behind those products), I would ask: when you go to the store, what things do you *always* put in your cart? What is never missing in the cart?

For me, at this point as a researcher in development, it would be hard to say that there is a "recipe" for good interviews; there are certainly skills that are important, but each interview is different, from the interviewer's end and the participants' end. For instance, some mothers would answer strictly what I would ask with some level of details, and others would provide greater level of detail and information at their own pace. This also applied to the photographs. Most of the group discussion participants reported that they enjoyed taking photographs and sharing them later with me and the group. However, for one mother, it was not as easy or enjoyable. Yet, her interview was rich in detail, suggesting that some people are more comfortable talking. Finally, using different methods and approaches to generate data, such as group and individual meetings, interviews and photographs, seemed important to my study, as some of these methods worked better for some participants, while other participants preferred other methods and approaches.

2.9.2 Use of photographs

The use of photographs in addition to interviews and focus groups was very beneficial to my study. It was instrumental in understanding the context of these photographs literally through the participants' lens and elucidating their insights as participants themselves decided what to portray in the photos. The photos acted as a good trigger for discussion, a starting point, by which I could build on to explore the participants' ideas and perspectives. Additionally, these photos were a tangible marker of their participation in the study, which also contributed to their sense of ownership. As described by Clark-Ibañez (2004):

"researchers can use photographs as a tool to expand on questions and simultaneously, participants can use photographs to provide a unique way to communicate dimensions of their lives" (p. 1507). Other authors have also argued the usefulness of photos in research to facilitate conversation and reflection (Wang & Burris, 1997; Nowell et al., 2006).

Photographs were extremely vital in facilitating participants' interaction and keeping and drawing attention to the purpose of the study, the participants' insights and perceptions. For instance, our photo sharing meeting consisted of each mother sharing her top five (or more) pictures to the group and talking about each of the pictures. Some of the questions posed were: Why did you take it? Tell us more about it.

Avoiding a structured agenda and remaining flexible were essential for our photo sharing meeting. We started with the participant that did not know the rest of the group because she was sitting next to me. Although she barely knew the people in the room, she was a very outgoing and sincere person and this was shown as she started talking. *"I took this picture (empty dining room) because I really miss my family…I miss meeting on Sundays to make a special meal. I wish my mom, my dad, my sister were sitting there...it's just so hard. You don't know anyone; I can't speak with anyone."* She continued sharing how she felt disconnected with Canada due to her limited English skills. And although my focus was to discuss the pictures around "food security" issues and opportunities, the most salient topic discussed, was the one they all related to: English.

2.9.3 On informed consent

Although the purpose of the informed consent is to protect the participant, the study participants may have a different perception of it. First, it is likely that they are not familiar with this type of document, unless they have participated in a study before. This might be associated with Canada having a more systematized process of research due to liability issues that might be treated with more informality in Latin America. Second, and linked to unfamiliarity of the document, the process might be intimidating. For instance, when we shared about the study they seemed to be fine with all the details; however, in writing the details are presented in a more structured way, which can be intimidating. Third, as noted earlier, the group I was working with included low income immigrants that have not yet received their permission to be legal residents of Canada. Therefore, they might be sceptical of signing documents or being involved in research. As Ojeda et al. (2011) note while discussing a research approach sensitive to the experiences of Latino groups: "researchers need to attend to the sociopolitical climate that shapes potential participants' perceptions about research and people from the university community…some immigrants' perceived researchers from a university to have ties with the government because of a government-issued vehicle…Unfamiliarity with research, prior experiences of being exploited or deceived for research purposes, concerns about language fluency, or fears that information they provide for a study will be reported to "immigration" may contribute to Latino immigrants' consideration of participating in research" (p. 189). I would add that all those elements can also

influence the participants' behavior and perceptions of research once they are involved in it.

Therefore, when presenting the informed consent, as well as throughout different stages of the study, it was important to be thoughtful of how to present it without causing any scepticism. It was also essential to make sure they understood the purpose of the document, its relevance, and most importantly, they would sign it voluntarily. To show participants that I was also part of the commitment and reduce some anxiety, I gave them a copy signed by me.

I had to deal with different scenarios with regards to obtaining the informed consent from the study participants. For instance, one of the participants, who could not join the first group meeting, asked me to visit her to explain the details in person. As I presented her the study using the manual I prepared for participants, everything was going very well, until I got to the final section on the consent form. I explained what the document was, and that the school needed this to be signed as a guarantee of her protection and to ensure she was aware of her rights and responsibilities. I gave her time to read it and let me know if she had any questions. She seemed a bit afraid and explained to me that although it was not personal, she needed to read it carefully, because they had lost an important asset when they lived in another province after they signed all these documents, and were not aware of some nuances of the agreement. At that moment, I realized why she was so sceptical of any documentation. Understanding how immigrants face these extra layers of challenges due to

language or how unfamiliar things are here in Canada made me feel sad and impotent. At the end, she decided to sign it.

Another important issue with one of the other participants was that until we met in person (we had talked on the phone and participated in the Multicultural Health Brokers before) to review the details of the study, I had not expressed to her that there was a section of our meeting dedicated to the consent. Maybe if I had, she would have at least known beforehand of it and would have been expecting this.

What I had learned from my first encounter with her, helped me to improve the orientation meeting with the group. First, I introduced the concept of informed consent at the beginning of the meeting, and then I read the document with them section by section, asking if they had any questions. I also gave them concrete examples on how the document would protect their rights. For instance, posting their photographs on the internet for commercial purposes would be a violation of the "contract" we had agreed to and the university would only use these photos for educational and research purposes.

2.9.4 On access and involvement

The School of Public Health had previously worked with the Multicultural Health Brokers, and this relationship facilitated the access to the organization. I approached the director of the organization in early winter of 2011 to start building a relationship and get to know the organization. The second time we met (May, 2011), we focused on concrete aspects of my study. I was aware that I needed to respect the organization's autonomy in deciding whether or not they

could support the recruitment of participants. Therefore, I explained the ways I could reciprocate their support, based on their needs, because I was clear I did not want to 'parachute' as a researcher and that they already had high demand for their services. I specifically offered my help in any task that could be needed. We agreed that I would volunteer with them on an as-needed basis (i.e. fundraising and/or organizational meetings) and other activities. Working with this organization, I learned that it was important to be sensitive to the organization and patient with my own agenda. I volunteered with the Latino collective kitchen, where I met many Latino mothers and I also engaged in other activities. The collective kitchen weekly meetings aimed at sharing recipes from their countries with one another. Although the collective kitchen was a great opportunity for interaction and learning, I was afraid of being labelled as an outsider, and it required an important investment of time. However, at the end, it added great value to my experience with the organization expanding beyond the research experience.

2.9.5 On recruitment

After I explained my study to a community worker from Latin America, he shared with me: *"you know the issue with recruiting Latinos, is that they are very busy, they have several jobs and many responsibilities."* Ojeda et al. (2011) have also identified that Latino immigrants do not have the "luxury" of time to participate in research. Recruitment of the study participants, nonetheless, did not take too long as I had already built community connections that helped in spreading the word. An important lesson is that recruiting is not an isolated

activity from the implementation of a research design and it requires building relationships and community involvement prior to the recruitment.

2.9.6 Ownership versus anonymity

Participants expressed their desire to receive credit for their photographs, therefore waiving anonymity. I deemed it important to respect their request, as it was a matter of ownership and building trust. The Tri-council Policy Statement (2010) makes a brief reference to this kind of situation, giving preference to participants' desire: "In some instances, participants may waive anonymity (e.g., if they wish to be identified for their contributions to the research). Researchers should obtain the consent of these participants, and negotiate agreements with them that specify how they may be identified or recognized for their contribution" (p. 58).

The principle of privacy, as explained in the aforementioned statement provides additional insights to the ethical approach to an individual's decision on how his/her information should be used: "Privacy is respected if an individual has an opportunity to exercise control over personal information by consenting to, or withholding consent for, the collection, use and/or disclosure of information" (Tri-council Policy Statement, 2010, p. 56). Therefore, participants requested their names to be attached to their photographs explicitly in the informed consent, and after a discussion in our orientation meeting, they also expressed those wishes orally. I explained to them, both in the first meeting and at our member check meeting, that they had the right to receive credit for the photos. I also clarified that this would impede me as a researcher to protect their identity and anyone who

would see the photos, could know who took them. Therefore, they were aware of the implications, yet all requested to have their names on their photographs, which is understandable given these photos were their own creation. Credit is given to participants on Appendix 1.

Poudrier & Mac-Lean (2009) faced a similar situation in their photovoice project and documented their experiences, which resulted in giving the women power over the decision making of how the photos would be presented. This led to reapplying to their ethics department – as initially they were expecting to fully protect the women's identities – in order to respect and comply with the women's desire. These issues are seldom addressed or discussed in the photovoice literature, which to some extent is surprising, as photos are tangible products and participants may want their work to be acknowledged.

2.10 Journal Notes

2.10.1 Membership and belonging: tracing insider/outsider dynamics

As many researchers have documented insider/outsider dynamics while working with communities and groups in qualitative research, I also experienced similar tensions and found myself in the paradox described by Mykut and Morehouse (1994): "The qualitative researcher's perspective is perhaps a paradoxical one: it is to be acutely tuned-in to the experiences and meaning systems of others—to indwell—and at the same time to be aware of how one's own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand" (p. 123). In some cases, I was more an outsider than an insider, and in others, vice versa. In every instance, it was never one state or the other – it was

always a hybrid of both. Early in the process of accessing the organization and through the research process, I reflected and thought about my standing and how participants and community would label me. I evaluated myself to identify what things made me an insider and what things made me an outsider. Several characteristics were 'in my favour' to be that insider. I am a young woman from Latin America who speaks their language, comes from a third world country, is a recent immigrant seeking better quality of life, and shares similar values (representation of faith, interpersonal values, etc.). Despite all these similarities, some other features would quickly label me as an outsider. I am a woman, but not a mother (this was something evident as I joined them in their group, they would ask me: why are you here if you don't have a baby?). I am a newcomer, but I am an immigrant going to school in Canada. This also implied that I had very good English, and this would distance me from understanding their struggles with language barriers. Additionally, the fact that I am pursuing a master's degree in Canada meant that my credentials would be recognized, and this could also, to some extent, imply that I would have better opportunities for socioeconomic mobility. I knew all of these and somehow wanted to conceal it, although deep down I knew this is part of who I am, and I needed to be honest about it without letting these things limit the access and work with the Latino families.

Before each meeting, I reflected nervously over what I was going to wear (demeanor), what words I would use, and how I would interact, not to completely change who I was, but to build a healthy relationship I needed to be accepted as one of them. Crowley (2007, p.606) explains this neatly: "if researchers present

themselves in ways that resonate with their potential participants, then their studies are likely to proceed. If, however, the researchers' self-presentation does not align with the participants' image of their own worth and valuation, then their proposed studies are likely to be rejected."

The irony is that when I started my master's degree in Canada, I soon realized that I had to work hard to learn a great deal of jargon and the mechanics of graduate writing and academic culture. But here I was, trying to put all that aside and be "a simple Dominican;" it was almost like switching identities every time, and sometimes it was exhausting.

2.10.2 Roles in the field

One of the things I ended up doing while volunteering with the group, prior to the formal beginning of the study, was light babysitting. I had to let go of any pretension or attachment to title (i.e. the researcher) and just become a helping hand for the mothers to have a break, a moment to breathe, chat and cook among their friends. In my case, I love children, so it was enjoyable. However, this might not be the case for all researchers and this should be anticipated by researchers who wish to work in this type of setting with low income groups that have limited access to childcare. Yet, it is not only about the people we work with; it is the realization that we as researchers step in their realities, which adds more value to our work and should be taken as an honour that participants allow us into their lives.

2.10.3 Communicating with partners

The group coordinator was a vital instrument for endorsing my research and helping me build trust among the mothers. Additionally, she provided me with feedback on important aspects of the recruitment, namely when, where, and how. For instance, at some point, I considered doing the first group meeting at 6:00 p.m., mainly because there was childcare available from the MCHB (it was only available after 6:00 p.m. or Saturdays). However, when I consulted with the group coordinator, Sara Borquez, she insisted that this could create difficulties for the mothers since they needed to be home with their families at that hour, and the area where the school was located was not safe at night. This once again reminded me of the importance of maintaining constant communication with her and consulting with her, as she knew these groups very well and was also looking out for their best interests.

2.10.4 Logistics

Designing and planning research entails dealing with many logistical challenges, particularly in terms of balancing resources, coordinating activities and administrative tasks. For instance, the use of an online platform for applying for ethics was challenging in many ways. Initially, I underestimated this part of the study because I felt I was competent using different software. Nonetheless, HERO demanded a great amount of time and knowledge of diverse nuances, which I was not aware of and had to learn as the study ensued.

The research process is time consuming and planning activities should be sensitive to the needs of each party involved (participants, community

organization, supervisors, and researcher). Balancing timing and implementation in relation to the context and people involved was challenging at times.

2.11 Data Analysis

To analyze the data of my study, I based my approach on latent content analysis, which is used to identify recurrent patterns, themes, and ideas surrounding the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of the group (Wang & Burris, 1997). This type of analysis also provides the opportunity to explore the nature and context of the patterns, gaps, and perceptions (Mayan, 2009). The units of analysis were the interviews, photos and transcripts from the final group meeting. Concurrent data collection and analysis was possible by collecting field notes and journal notes that provided context and depth to this analysis and supported a rationale for adapting the method to work with Latin Americans. This process aims to be an inductive analysis, in order to ensure that the essence and content of the data guide the emergence and nature of findings (Patton, 2002).

I started to read, re-read and read again the transcripts in order to familiarize myself with the data. While reading, I started to code line by line and/or sentence by sentence. The coding involves a process of acquaintance to trace words, images, phrases, and ideas. I also highlighted sections that caught my attention and added comments reflecting my impressions, interesting facts or things that happened during the interview (non-verbal language, setting of interview), and cultural nuances. As interviews were in Spanish, I did most of the initial coding in Spanish to remain intimate with the content, although in some cases if a word or phrase in English came to my mind, it was also noted.

After reading transcripts several times and doing some coding, I listened to the interviews one by one and read along each of the transcripts, to ensure nothing was missing in the participants' comments. After this, I did a preliminary grouping of the sections, ideas, verbs and phrases into groups that emerged from the data, or salient topics corresponding to the questions.

My initial attempt at categorizing the data adhered to some extent to the questions I had asked, and in other cases, to elements that emerged from the interviews. I presented the draft to my supervisors, and was advised to go back to the data and continue to immerse myself in it with no expectations on what I wanted to find, but what participants had said and how they had said it. This process was crucial in allowing my voice as researcher to be passive and letting the data tell the story, presenting the similarities, loopholes, differences, as well as expected and unexpected things. Although I did not dismiss my initial analysis, I put it aside for two months, and focused on spending time immersed in the transcripts. I refrained for a while of creating categories or groups. I just wanted to deepen my understanding of each of the participants' stories and nuances. In addition, I focused on finding the meanings of nuances or folk phrases that I did not know but they had mentioned in their narratives (i.e. *frijoles parados* (whole beans) and *frijoles colados* (Strained beans)) in order to understand the whole picture. I transcribed the final group meeting in search of more depth of understanding, and this was very helpful given that this meeting was more informal and the participants led most of the discussions.

Both of these processes presented above were similar in that I was aiming at understanding the participants' perceptions and views. The first one, that is immersing in the transcript, allowed me to get an initial comprehension of their stories. The second, finding the meanings, was more demanding in terms of time and effort, but was instrumental in allowing me to deepen my understanding. This resulted in categories of stronger nature, more in depth detail and contextualization of their stories.

The word *iterative* gained a new meaning for me, as I had advanced my second draft of analysis; I spent some days without looking at the draft and going back to the interviews, performing another coding round and then contrasting it with my earlier work. Things I forgot existed emerged as critical, and some things I considered to be important seemed to take a lower profile. At all times, I kept questioning: am I representing the participants' lives as they are? Or am I drawing a picture of what seems to me they experience? After refining new categories, I reviewed them once again to make sure they would stand on their own and would be consistent. Some categories were eliminated, others were merged, and subcategories emerged as well. Finally, I prepared a table depicting the categories and subcategories. Additionally, I prepared some diagrams presenting key insights for some of the categories, and a final diagram depicting relationships among all categories.

CHAPTER 3. Findings

Six low income Latin American newcomer mothers currently residing in Edmonton, Alberta were recruited. All participants had lived in Canada less than five years with at least one child (see Table 2).

Table 2. Details of Participants

Participants[3]	Country of Origin	Age range	Years in Canada	# of Children
Katy	Cuba	20-30	Over 2	1
Maria	Colombia	20-30	5 years	3
Michelle	Colombia	31-40	Over 4 years	3
Carolina	Guatemala	20-30	Over 2 years	1
Isabel	Mexico	20-30	Over 2 years	2
Sara	El Salvador	20-30	3 years	1

The following pages will include a description of categories and subcategories identified in the data collected. At the end of each category there is a brief summary of what was discussed in the category. In some cases summaries include a diagram depicting main aspects of the given category, particularly in cases where a graphic could aid illustrate those aspects.

3.1 "…I don't forget my traditions…"

This category presents the meanings of food as identity for these mothers and their adaptation in relation to demands of the new environment.

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[3] Pseudonyms have been used for interview transcripts and quotes cited. Photo credits are given as per request from participants (see Anonymity versus Ownership section).

3.1.1 Food as identity and adaptation dynamics

This subcategory describes the dimensions of food as cultural identity and its relationship with the way these mothers acculturate.

Preparing traditional meals is an important part of the Latino mothers' lives, as this is a reflection of the concept they have of 'home' and is a tangible way to preserve their customs. Katy, who has not been able to visit her country in several years, proudly shared with the group in our last meeting: "If you want Cuban food, you can come to my house, we always cook Cuban…even if we add different things from here or there, most of the meal is Cuban." Their meals portray their identities capturing an essential part of the cultural capital they bring to Canada. This culinary identity represents memories of distinctive flavours and dishes that are intrinsically connected to the mothers, as noted by Katy when sharing about her country's meals: "You will always miss what you used to eat home." The aforementioned was also reflected in the photos they presented to me. Sara, from El Salvador, introduced me to the Pupusas, a dish that Salvadorians would consume on a daily basis.

Image 1. Pupusas
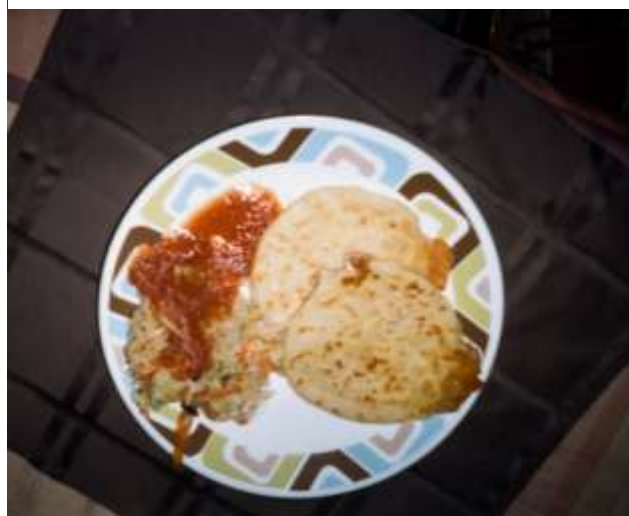
Katy shared with me a typical dish from Cuba and how it is prepared:

Image 2. Congrí

"This is the CONGRÍ….you cook the rice with the black beans, you
condiment it….you eat with salad that is only tomato, or avocado or
cucumber…but here they put more ingredients in the salad… this is a beef
meat that is called ropa vieja [*old clothing*]… it is very famous in Miami,
you use garlic, onion, aji [a kind of pepper] and cumin"

Maria from Colombia also conveyed pride in her culture based on her
city's fruit heritage with one of her favourite pictures:

Image 3. Pineapples

"I took this picture to show you where I am from. My town
is Bucaramanga and it is the city of pineapples and many
other fruits"

The desire to honour their cultural ties was not strictly limited to meals and food, but it is linked to others habits associated with food. For instance, Carolina, who has been in Canada for over two years, explains her dinner routine with her photograph:

Image 4. Setting the table

"I set the table every day with all Guatemalan stuff: the
tablecloth, dish sets, etc. It is really important to me"

Setting the table is an action which demonstrates her attempts to preserve her ties to her traditions and cultural identity.

Nonetheless, the participants' determination to maintain their cultural identity through food is challenged by the marked differences of flavour, and in some cases, the limited access to traditional and familiar products. Michelle, a mother of three children who came to Canada as a refugee from Colombia, explains: "When I came to Canada I tried buying the **normal** food that we used to eat there, but when I noted that it didn't have the same flavour, *we started to un-adapt to the food from our country without stopping to eat it...*we changed a bit. Since we are here we don't eat with pleasure, we eat it because we have to and because I make it." Michelle's comment, expressed with deep sadness, reflects

the value of food as cultural identity, and familiar flavour as a source of enjoyment and mental health, which is now impaired given that she and her family have gradually modified their traditional eating habits implies some detachment from what she would prefer honoring, her cultural identity. Additionally, she presents the image of a newcomer in quest of finding familiarity through food and flavours as a way of feeling closer to home and to her family's cultural heritage, and how the new changes undermine her eagerness to remain close to her cultural identity.

Maria, who is also from Colombia, describes her experience on this realm: "in Colombia, we have diversity of fruits, meat, vegetables... here things have complicated it a bit, because some things are hard to get... But I have adapted to the food here, although I don't forget my traditions so I try to continue in the same rhythm." Although Maria's comment shows her level of flexibility to deal with environmental demands, yet it once again highlights the importance the newcomers give to honoring and keeping their traditions, and an underlying fear of losing their identity.

It is noticeable in the mothers' accounts that some of them might deal with the challenges of the dietary acculturation differently. For some it was difficult and even hurtful to face the changes, yet other mothers would deal with the changes with more flexibility. One possible explanation is that their capacity to show flexibility and integrate the new changes to their lifestyles might be mediated by their length of stay in the province and personal context. For instance, Michelle had lived three years in Quebec and only three months in

Alberta, living now in Edmonton represented almost a new adaptation for her, and this may be associated with her reporting greater challenges with her adaptation. The rest of the mothers seemed more acculturated and flexible. They had also lived in Alberta for a few years, which might suggest that they had overcome initial shocks and challenges. This was evident because when Michelle shared her challenges with the group, all the mothers were empathetic and stated having struggled with very similar challenges when they first arrived in Alberta.

Timing played an important role in their dietary acculturation. Sara explains on her own journey adapting her cultural and eating habits: "I miss most of the meals from my country, here we try to make our recipes but it's not the same. When I came to Canada it was very hard, all the seasonings I found were different. It took me hours to season something that was not worth the time. With time I have adapted, now I prepare the pupusas and the tortillas."

Her narrative highlights her desire to preserve her culinary identity and depicts different phases of her dietary acculturation: First, the nostalgia around her traditional meals; second the attempt to recreate those recipes soon contrasted by the reality that achieving the same dish and taste is not possible; third, over time, developing the skills to use the available spices and ingredients that results in a similar recipe to what she would eat at home.

Later in her interview, she presented the picture of her kitchen's cabinet with the spices she cooked; she displayed this picture with pride as she had mastered skills to use these ingredients effectively (Image 5).

Image 5. Spices

To further illustrate the metamorphosis of some basic products (i.e. tortilla) as a result of adapting recipes, Carolina, who came from Guatemala, where tortilla is also an everyday meal as in El Salvador (Sara's home country), explained the differences of tortilla in her country and in Canada:" [It is made of] white or yellow corn, you cook the corn first, then you grind it and you make the tortillas, here of course, you use the mazeca [corn flour]...there you make it with fresh corn, here it is with a powder, which very likely has preservatives."

Image 6. Mazeca and beans

"This the Mazeca and the beans we use. The Mazeca is what we use
here to make tortillas"

Although the freshness and quality of the meal is compromised to some extent, Carolina, Isabel and Sara still consumed tortillas on a daily basis as it is an essential component of their traditions. As noted by Carolina, "[for dinner] something that is never missing is the tortilla." Other products strongly linked to the participants' cultures and fairly accessible in Canada are consumed on a consistent basis including rice, beans, corn flour, plantain, etc. Nonetheless, there was a change in consumption of certain products; for instance, it was noted that the participants ate less fruits in Canada due to access and/or quality barriers, coupled with an increase in vegetable intake.

Changes around dietary acculturation not only include how meals are cooked or which products are selected, but also changes in the frequency of preparing traditional meals. Carolina explained: "In Guatemala, for breakfast and dinner you eat eggs and beans, here we don't always have them for breakfast but always for dinner, we have beans with eggs, in all kinds of ways, frijoles parados ["standing beans" which are whole beans with stock], frijoles colados [blended beans], we have every night, and something that is never missing is the tortilla."

The acculturation process requires creativity and being practical not only in terms of preparing the meals, but also, in terms of securing food. This is illustrated in the next excerpt from Carolina's interview section on food bank usage:

"They give you two boxes with onions, potatoes, fruits, cans in exaggeration, milk, juice, and diapers if you have babies. [Interviewer: How long does it last?] It lasts quite long, for example we eat a lot of

bread and they have a section outside where people put things they do not want to take like bread, so I always take extra. And I freeze it if I have too much. If there is snow I put it in the snow so it's not spoiled. [Tell me more about that…] I put many things in the snow…bread…chicken… one day I was cooking so I asked my husband to get me the chicken and he could barely find it [laughs], he said that for next year he will make labels [Laughs]."

Meals and food are more than dishes and flavour for the Latino mothers. Food is a catalyst for uniting the family, enabling communication, and an essential ritual embedded in the family's dynamics. As described by Maria, "sitting at the table every day means union as a family, we share how our day was, what we did...food is our moment to meet." Furthermore, sharing meals for the mothers has an added value and meaning related to the concept of family; it is about quality time with the family, including the extended family, translated into frequent routines to share special dishes. As Maria described this: "In Colombia, [we eat] the sancocho when all the family gets together, the mom makes it and it has many vegetables and you eat it with rice". For Michelle, these family centered traditions are incredibly important and now are just memories that bring great nostalgia to her life in Canada. She shared her photo (image 7) with tears in her eyes.

Image 7. The table

"This picture means a lot to me…I think that if that dining room was full especially with my mom, my dad and my sister, I would be much happier. I would have much more motivation for everything…the dining room is where the family reunites…I cherish that and yearn for it. I always set the table nice...but now I don't think I cook good anymore, before I used to cook very good… yes the ingredients are important, but I just wish I would wake up a Sunday morning and find my mom there and prepare arepas with her".

Michelle's homesickness is linked to her self-worth and her motivation to cook and find pleasure in food, all of which influence her mental health. In her interview she expanded on this:

"The problem I have is that I get home and I don't want to do anything…I just want to lie down. Is something odd, I have no mood…sometimes I go to the street to look around, I wish I would do it the whole day, I don't want to go back home. I go to the store and buy many things thinking I will be cooking, but and as soon as I get there I lose motivation."

Her depressed mood and nostalgia are enhanced by the disconnection she feels from the world around her due to lack of English language skills and also

cultural differences in interaction. As she noted, "the difference between Canada and Colombia is that you enter a store and there is the Hello! How are you? What's up? What are we going to do tonight? Here you enter a store and it's like you never did, no one sees you go in or go out...it's terribly cold." For her it was not only the lack of interaction, but literally feeling invisible. Dimensions of language proficiency are developed further on category 3.3 "... I need to learn to buscarme la vida [find my own way in life]...".

3.1.2 Self-efficacy with media and cooking tools

This subcategory describes the use and integration of different tools in the process of dietary acculturation.

Meal preparation is a dynamic process that relies on the knowledge grounded in their traditional practices. Yet, it incorporates the use of environmental resources that facilitate an effective use of ingredients, learning new recipes and recreating traditional dishes. Sources of information such as the Internet and television can play an important role in the family's food security and effective use of products, as Sara explains with her following photo:

Image 8. Youtube

"The computer makes it easier for me; sometimes I have ingredients and have no idea what to do with them, or I want to make something new…so I go to the YouTube or the web and ask what to do with those ingredients."

YouTube, a website providing a large collection of videos around a myriad of topics, is a particularly helpful tool for finding recipes and learning new ways to deal with different products.

Television is another source of information identified by the mothers as helpful. Isabel shared her own thoughts: "I see the Food Network all the time; I have learned many tricks with them. I really never cooked much at home, it is here that I have started cooking because I now have my own family and I am home most of the time." She took the photograph below to illustrate her point.

Image 9. Food network

Katy also pointed at the television as a resource to help her bridge culinary traditions.

When sharing about her dietary habits, Katy also added: "For breakfast, always eggs, for lunch always Cuban food. Now I still add a touch of Canada or a touch of Mexico or from the things I have learned in TV…like adding ingredients to the potatoes". She also reflected this in her photo, image 10.

Image 10. Mashed potatoes

"For example, look at this picture: it is mashed potatoes with fried eggs. Very typical in Cuba, now in TV I have seen how they add mayo and cream cheese to the potatoes and make a nice salad to accompany it. I did it here."

Furthermore, the mothers have not only learned new recipes, but have incorporated the use of new cooking tools such as the barbecue and the oven to cook their traditional meals. As Isabel noted with her photo, image 11.

Image 11. BBQ

"These are meat brochetas [beef kabobs] something that we eat a lot in Mexico, we would eat it every weekend, here we make them with barbecue and in Mexico we make them in the *asadero* [roaster]"

Katy also shared about this in her photograph:

Image 12. Tamales

"These are the tamales well cut, and meat cooked on the
BBQ. In Cuba we use the oven to cook the meat because
we don't have BBQ's there"

Other cooking tools such as the stove, coffeemaker and the pressure
cooker were used in their home country, and the participants continued to use
these in Canada. Pressure cookers can be particularly helpful to soften fresh
beans fairly quickly, allowing them to adhere to their customs of using fresh
beans, as opposed to canned ones. The mothers also used cafetera (coffee maker),
which is highly used in Cuba, to prepare coffee. Katy shared her picture about
coffee and Cubans:

Image 13. Cafetera

"The Cuban coffee is also very
typical in Cuba and in Miami. It
is a very strong coffee, you make
it with a cafetera which comes
from Italy but you can also buy it
at the Cuban mercados. There are
people in Cuba that cannot
survive if they don't drink their
strong coffee everyday"

3.1.3 Contrasting contexts

This subcategory describes the main differences of Latin America and Canada in relation to products and access as identified by the mothers.

To continue framing the adaptation processes of these families, I drew on their accounts of the main differences between their countries and Canada. The first difference was the ready, *a la mano* (arm's-length) access to diverse fruits and vegetables. As Michelle explained, "in Colombia, we complain about the silver [money] so much, and they say the economy is bad, but in Colombia people don't go hungry, everything is *a la mano* [arm's-length], fruits, plantain, *you don't even need to buy it*." Due to the accessibility and diversity of fresh fruit in Latin countries, preparing fresh juice for the family was a common practice. Nonetheless, Canada's food environment differed in that the variety of culturally relevant fruits was limited. Even when fruits are available, the access is restricted due to their cost or the low quality. This situation constrains the newcomer immigrants' ability to prepare fresh juices and leads to buying processed juices, which are lower in nutritional quality and greater in cost. As Michelle pointed out, "[in Colombia] you only go outside and there is the tree with those mangos, or the passion fruit or the guava, and you prepare your juice for the whole day, here you need to buy the juice concentrated and add water, it tastes like nothing, and the ones that come in boxes, they cost you 8 dollars and last for two days, you can't live that way, with the *silver* [money] income you have you can't buy juice for the whole week".

The mothers' access to fruits and vegetables relied not only on the type of soil and weather Latin countries had, but also on the way they related to the land as a means to growing produce and collective responses to the family's food security. As noted by Sara, "[in El Salvador] it was easy [to get fruits and vegetables] because there was no need to buy them, my grandfather had his garden of vegetables, chiles, bananas, and when you needed something, you would just go get it directly".

The second difference between the mothers' countries and Canada is the way products are sold (i.e. fresh versus frozen), which impacts the products' quality. Isabel explained that "[in Mexico]…You can ask for a quarter of meat for the day's meal, but here you have to buy the large chunk of meat and it's frozen". Isabel would buy her meat daily or every two days while in Mexico, but in Canada she buys large frozen quantities.

In addition, most of products in Latin American countries are accessed fresh; the use of cans is infrequent. Thus, the prominence of the use and accessibility of canned food in Canada was one of the most shocking and preoccupying things for these families. As noted by Isabel, *"What concerns me about here [Canada] is canned food, I hope I never get used to that…they make a soup and it just means opening a can."* I will expand on the issue of canned food in the section on the mothers' perceptions around food.

Finally, there is a difference in the food flavour as well. Michelle, while explaining her adaptation process built on this:

"When I came to Canada I tried buying the **normal** food that we used to eat there, but when I noted that it didn't have the same flavour...the difference is that here prepare some beans or a sancocho and it doesn't taste the same as in Colombia."

The difference in flavour fosters a constant reminder of not being home or close to home, and this can be challenging.

For Katy, the scenario was completely different when coming to Canada. She still

missed the food from her home country and recreated them. However, thinking of her Cuba intrinsically evoked memories of her food insecurity challenges:

"[How does the food provision process work in Cuba?] Each family has a notebook, named the "Libreta de abastecimiento" [Provision Notebook], which gives each family the chance to buy an amount of products at very low prices, very very low at a specific store. For instance, each family is allowed 6 pounds of rice, three pounds of beans, sugar, eggs…is something that does not last the whole month, but at least is enough for fifteen days. [What happens if you run out of food and need to buy more?] There are other places where you can buy, but the prices are not too accessible."

Therefore, although Katy acknowledged missing her traditional dishes and flavours, Canada provided an opportunity to embrace new flavours and culinary traditions and find new pleasures. As she explained, "it is not that you starve there [in Cuba], but all you know is only what you have access to, the same

things...when you leave your country you realize of how many things you didn't even know they even existed." Deeply aware of her country's limited reality, this pleasure would sometime be mixed with guilt: *"Sometimes while I eat I think: Only God knows what they are eating..."* As noted by Katy, the adaptation process has positive highlights which include having access to meals and products that were once unavailable, and this was also identified by Michelle: "The quality is good [Canadian products] and you can get many things. Many vegetables are at good prices…and in Colombia I could not afford to eat seafood, it is extremely expensive in Colombia, here the fish is very affordable."

Once again, every migration journey is different and with particular interesting aspects. For instance, Katy and Sara had migrated to the United States first and lived there for less than 3 years. Interestingly, although they were not in their countries, their culinary and cultural experiences seemed very similar to their home countries and the real shift in culture came when they arrived in Canada. Sara, from El Salvador, met her husband in the States and recalled the following:

> "Being in the States is like being in El Salvador. In Los Angeles you have all the seasoning, the meals, there are many Latinos, Latin stores, and the American stores sell Latin products, popular products and cheap…it feels like El Salvador. You can get more variety of vegetables and fruits at a good price; here you can't make it even if they sell the fruit [you want]."

Katy also referred to this: "In Miami, you have the two options [Cuban and American food], there is a high Cuban influence and that is why we eat very

Cuban. The good thing about here is that there is influence from many countries, and what I love doing is making Cuban things and add things from here."

Katy, when talking with Michelle at our last meeting, also identified the lack of English assimilation in the States as she was mainly surrounded by Latin influence:

> Michelle: **Yes, but you knew some English before you came because you came from the States.**
>
> Katy: In Miami, you barely speak any English, where I used to work and live it was almost Latino, it is only few words you use…
>
> Michelle: **Yes, but at least your ear was a bit more sensitive because you lived there**.
>
> Katy: **There you speak very little English, but when I arrived here, I couldn't**
>
> **understand a word they said...**

3.1.4 Key findings from the category: "… I don't forget my traditions…"

Conservation of cultural ties and social values through food was identified as highly important by the mothers. This is mirrored by preparation of traditional dishes, décor, and consumption of traditional products available, as well as, the use of food as a means for family and community interaction. Due to the evident distance from their home countries, the value of food as a family experience is seriously restricted and could be detrimental for the mothers' mental health.

While every family's acculturation journey varied, there were common elements and patterns throughout their stories, initially characterized by a

manifest motivation to recreate traditional meals, which was followed by the realization that achieving the same flavor and accessing the exact ingredients it is not possible most of the time. Subsequently, a process of bridging families' culinary identity with their new context occurs. The use of media tools are sources of information facilitating dietary acculturation (i.e. for recreating their traditional dishes, learn new ones, etc.). Mothers have also integrated the use of new cooking tools (i.e. BBQ), as well as continued to use familiar ones (i.e. coffee maker, pressure cooker). Nonetheless, the referred openness to integrate elements from Canada and learn new dishes is coupled with a fear of a fading identity. The latter can be seen as a threat to their roots and familiar ways, as it means *"unadapting"* or losing identity, and this affects how food is perceived and to what extent it is enjoyed. The notion of any detachment from their original roots, to some extent, generates conflicting emotions, particularly, negative ones, and is associated with how food is perceived which they link to their quality of life, family values and mental health.

When contrasting Canada with their home countries, mothers identified differences in their food environments. First, in their countries they have ready access "*a la mano*" [at arm's reach] to fruits, vegetables and other kinds of products. Such access is not only contingent on available cash, but also on access to family gardens as land may be in some cases a family capital used to cultivate produce. For those who had lived first in the United States, changes in food and cultural environments was greater given that in the States, they lived in

communities with high Latino density and cultural influence, as well as easier access to traditional food. Figure 1. Provides a graphic summary of this category.

Figure 1. Main aspects from "...I don't forget my traditions..."

Family centered approach to food

Homesickness Isolation

Pride and enjoyment

Mental Health

Language barriers

Traditional Dishes

Identity

Acculturation

Use of familiar products

Flexibility & Creativity

Fear of losing cultural identity

Preservation

Recreating traditional meals

Preserving + Merging

Integrating changes to diet
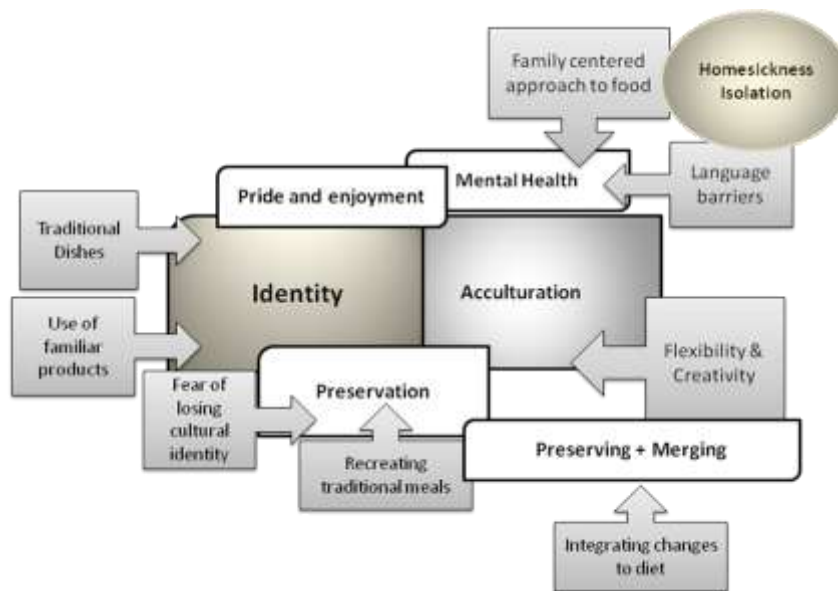
3.2 "…I am the one that cooks…"

This category explores identified gender dynamics around food oriented activities and changes in gender patterns that are likely influenced by the new environment.

3.2.1 Findings from category "…I am the one that cooks…"

For the most part, preparing food was the responsibility of the mother, which is

consistent with traditional gender expectations of Latin America. As illustrated by Isabel, "when I was in Mexico, my mother would do the cooking, here that I have started cooking because now I have my own family and I am home most of

the time." This also shows that gender patterns are nurtured and defined by their cultural background. Mothers assumed the role of "care givers" and accommodating dietary needs. Isabel refers to this when explaining the process of accommodating the dietary needs of her husband with diabetes and getting help from health services: "When we were in Mexico my husband didn't know that he was diabetic…They have helped us a lot, they have given us classes to *show us how I need to feed him – because I am the one that cooks.*" Accommodating food preferences for their children was another effort from these mothers, which adds more work and makes eating healthy challenging. Michelle referred to this when she presented the photo of a scale and shared her concerns with the weight gained: "I think it has happened because of what I am telling you [gaining weight], my children, I can't make a separate meal, it is hard to prepare two meals, so I end up eating the same thing they do, so I think I am the one lacking the care." Earlier in her interview she pointed out, "Well, my children do not eat vegetables and fruits they eat very little, so it gets very difficult for me because I always have to cook them rice, the fried chicken or beef and eggs..."

From the narratives, a combination of traditional gender roles (i.e. mother as a responsible caretaker of the household) and shared tasks with husbands emerged. For instance, although all of the mothers cooked for their families, not all mothers were "demanded" to be strictly dedicated to preparing the meals. As noted by one of mothers, "I only have to worry about my children; he [partner] eats whatever he finds…he is more practical." Additionally, the mothers were not the only ones with cooking skills in the household. Sara, who is originally from

El Salvador, but lived in Los Angeles before moving to Edmonton, gives the credit of learning how to cook to her husband: "My husband is the one who has taught me, he learned with the internet, and that has helped us to adapt to this culture. Because you bring your own traditions and sometimes you can't because you can't find the ingredients."

Some of the mixing of gender roles might be associated with changes in the environment. In their home countries for instance, wives would buy groceries on a daily basis from local mercados – close by stores – on their own initiative, therefore, the decision making about what to purchase relied solely on them. As noted by Isabel, "at the beginning I couldn't find where to buy. In Mexico, you have many *mercados*, around the corner...they compete for prices. They sell a lot of fruits, vegetables, meat. You can ask for a quarter of meat for the day's meal."

In Canada, due to weather and distance to get to the stores, in some cases, it is more practical for the Latino mothers to wait for their husbands to drive them to the store on the weekend or when their husbands were available. Nonetheless, most of the mothers seem proficient in using public transportation, if necessary.

Image 14. Taking the bus

"I took this picture to show you that sometimes if I really need to go the store that they don't sell at No Frills, I go to the Latin store that is four or five buses away, with the cold…" [Interviewer: What happens if you don't find the ingredient?] If I cannot go by bus I wait for my husband"

However, since now the grocery shopping activity is shared by husband and wife, there is more likelihood that the husband will be involved in the decision making of what is bought. The process of decision making involves certain negotiation. As Katy explained:

"At the beginning I was really upset because he wanted to pick everything, but I would tell him: but you are not the one that cooks [laughs]…now it has improved."

Additionally, some of the husbands would browse the stores any day of the week for sales, something that was usually done by the housewives. This is the case of Maria, who is a stay-at-home mother with three children. She noted that, "when we buy we look for healthy things but also good prices. My husband browses the store every day if he has some time after work, to see if there is anything on sale and he brings it."

3.2.2 Key findings from the category "…I'm the one that cooks…"

Mothers seemed to be the main person in the family responsible for food preparation and accommodation of dietary needs and food preferences. Nonetheless, it was identified that demands from the new context could foster changes in gender dynamics, particularly increasing the involvement of their male counterparts. These changes included the need to learn how to cook, increased decision-making around food purchase, and husbands browsing stores after work for sales and promotions.

In addition, it was evident that issues, such as the high cost of food and the absence of *mercados*, small stores close to the households in their homeland, were also associated with changes in gender roles.

Key elements from the category "…I'm the one that cooks…" are depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Main aspects from "...I am the one that cooks..."
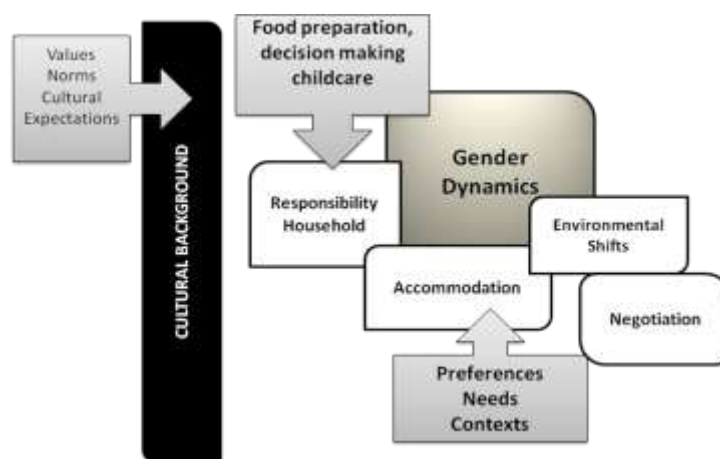
3.3 "... I need to learn to buscarme la vida [find my own way in life]..."

This category navigates the dimensions of English language, as a perceived barrier by the mothers.

The lack of English language proficiency represents one of the most important barriers impacting the mothers' adaptation to a new culture, and this subject was raised spontaneously during interviews and the final group meeting. Although the language barrier affected each family to different extents mainly due to their individual proficiency level, for the most part, all the mothers were affected by this issue. The majority of the group have very basic English skills

that helps them get by. Two of them have no English skills, and one of them has good English [she completed high school in Edmonton].

3.3.1 "…I can't lose my life studying…"

This subcategory depicts the implications and decision making associated with English as a second language.

Gaining proficiency in English becomes discretionary as it competes with other pressing demands such as working, which can provide steady income. Although learning English could signify increased employment opportunities, the immediacy of the newcomer immigrants' needs, particularly supporting their families, represent a significant barrier. As Michelle explains:

"In Colombia we used to always complain that the silver (money) was not enough and that the economy was bad, but you never starve there...everything is in **the reach of your hands**, fruits, plantains, you don't need to buy them, you can just go to your backyard....in Colombia you have more possibilities to do something. Let's say that at the moment I have no food to give to my children, I can go to the corner and start selling arepas or empanadas and with that I can get by...here I can't because of the language. Here I have lost that opportunity, I could say I will learn English, but no, I start thinking that I am 40 years old, and think I cannot lose my life studying, I need to be able to leave something for my children [as in maybe work to leave them with some capital]."

Michelle's quote illustrates how the immediate need to work and earn a living prevails over the need to study English, even when she is aware that

proficiency in this language would improve her potential for better employment. In Michelle's case, her age is also a concern that enhances her sense of urgency in providing a better future and capital for her children. In addition, her quote noted that despite the economic difficulties and limited social mobility experienced in their home countries, these mothers would find alternative ways to deal with unemployment and the need to provide for the basic needs for their children; a capacity that was now impaired by language barriers.

3.3.2 What if I get lost? What is the product for?

This subcategory explores how English language proficiency influences how these mothers fulfill basic needs and the implications of these challenges.

The implications of limited English skills not only affect new immigrant mothers' access to employment, but also their basic social functioning. For instance, with her picture, Michelle pointed out that lack of English language skills limited her decision making around available products:

Image 15. What is it for?

"In Canada there is great variety of products and ingredients, but because of the language you have no idea what they are for. I understand some French and that helps me, but it is hard…"

Another example is around the use of transportation which was explained by Isabel: "Since the beginning I was always very isolated, I would never leave

the house. I was scared to get on a bus, I would think: What if I get lost? How would I ask how to get back home?" This is likely a common source of isolation for Latin immigrants who struggle to establish essential routines, such as using bus service, which can allow them to incorporate into the society.

Additionally, using foreign language can be intimidating and can become a source of personal frustration, even for those that had some basic English skills. Isabel, who had studied basic English before coming to Canada, explained facing an environment revolving intensively around English:

> "I would go out with my husband and he was the one who would always talk…and I studied English in Mexico, but has it helped me? Nothing, because it's the fear, the uncertainty…I cried and I still cry because I feel frustrated, at the beginning when I tried to talk to someone and I could start seeing in his face like he wasn't understanding, right away, I would block myself..."

3.3.3 Do you always find someone to speak for you?

This subcategory elucidates the reasoning and motivation of these mothers to face their struggles with the language barriers, as well as, their coping strategies.

The intimidating process of speaking a foreign language felt for some participants as if they have lost their voices and their opportunities to make decisions and interact with people. This was particularly applicable to Isabel. She had a career in Mexico in the area of tourism; however, here in Canada, she

needs to rely on her husband to represent her and talk for her. Her situation once again showed how gender patterns are influenced by environmental factors.

Isabel's case was not the same for all the mothers, as some of the other husbands would "force" them to try to communicate. Katy shared her experience with the group:

Katy: [Asks Michelle] Do you always find somebody that would speak for you?

Michelle: I don't speak any English. I arrived in Quebec and when I arrived they assigned us a translator who would go with us to the doctor's and school appointments, it was only for a year, after that is "defend yourselves as you can.

Katy: But do you always have someone that would speak for you?

Michelle: Well yes, Juan [her partner] speaks English and French.

Katy: **Look when we got here it really hit me hard, because every time we would go to a store or a restaurant my husband, would say: now you talk. I felt very bad and would cry a lot. We would leave, if I didn't speak. I felt very bad, I thought: he doesn't help me, he doesn't support me.**

Maria: My husband was also like that, if we went to a restaurant he would make me order...

Katy: I would tell him: let's go the store, I need to buy a shirt. He would say: only if you talk. I would agree, and when we arrive to the store, **he would say: if you don't talk, there are no shoes, no shirt, not boots,**

nothing. I would cry a lot, but currently I go to the store [laughs] by myself…now I say things that I am not supposed to say [laughs]…**I used to think that he wasn't supportive**…a while ago we went to a hotel in Banff, and he stayed in the car with the baby and told me: you go and make the reservation…and I got out of the car and said I am doing it. Sometimes the people are not even thinking on that [if you speak English right or not] it is in your own mind the fear…Because sometimes they speak for you. When I told her: A room please, she told me: yes very good, is it only for you?...**that's why I am telling that that thing of having someone speak for you always, it is not right. I did not go to the school to learn English and my English is not good, but I can understand and can communicate.**

This attitude of the immigrant mothers' husbands was a key factor in allowing them to gain independence and learn how to get by. Most importantly, for these mothers, being able to learn English represents a long withstanding capital. As Katy noted, "He taught me that I need to learn to *buscarme la vida* [find my own way in life] because he will not always be there. He did not hurt me, he did good to me, to help me not be afraid even if I say things in a funny way".

The emphasis on finding her own way in life is seen as Katy's ability to build a skill and represents a capital for her as mother, wife, worker, etc.

Also, although Katy had lived in the United States, her area of residence was highly populated by Cubans and other Latinos, which impeded her from

learning English and having arrived in Canada, it was the first time she was faced with significant language barriers.

> Michelle: Yes, but you knew some English before you came because you came from the States.
>
> Katy: In Miami, you barely speak any English, where I used to work and live it was almost Latino, it is only few words you use…
>
> Michelle: Yes, but at least your ear was a bit more sensitive because you lived there.
>
> Katy: there you speak very little English, but when I arrived here, I couldn't understand a word they said…

For these mothers coping with English language barriers it is about being brave, creative, and self-determined. As the mothers explained in the final group meeting:

> Isabel: You learn that...[before] I would block myself,…but now is different, if they don't understand I try again.
>
> Maria: I would say a lot *barrabasadas* [gibberish] but I make myself be understood.
>
> Carolina: and with signs too…

For Sara, it is also important to have a positive mindset: "You cannot lock yourself down, with the "I can't". Instead of saying "I can't", you need to look for help…that is what has helped me."

All the mothers in their different initiatives and efforts to try to learn English are truly inspiring. For instance, Sara shared her own journey of learning English to motivate Michelle:

"I think you can do both if you really want to. I did them. **I was studying, working and I was pregnant. It was hard but it helped me a lot, it made me more independent.** I used to cry a lot and complain, because I suffered from pain in my feet…but when I got into that, I felt I had more strength…of course it's difficult when you are recent, but it helps a lot. **It teaches that there is a cost to it but it gives you strength".**

Her quote is a good illustration of the empowerment concept. She completed her high school degree in Edmonton, while working, studying, and being pregnant, and that is a great example of her resilience as well.

Katy also gave Michelle other recommendations on how to learn English based on her own experience:

Katy: Well, it depends on the experience that you have lived and other persons you have met. It is logic, you need school, but I have seen people that learn to communicate by working, in the school you learn grammar, and I don't have the grammar... **I have learned from ear, but at work I have learned to communicate which is the most important thing.**

Carolina agreed with this and added: "When my husband started working, he knew nothing. Maybe: *thank you, please,* and when he started they asked him if he knew English, he said yes, and they sent him to work with some Canadians. He knew nothing, they would ask him to pass them the

hammer, and he was like what? He would go where the tools were, and starting to hold them up one by one, screaming: This one? No! This one?... No! But that is how he learned.

Michelle: They were patient with him.

Carolina: Yes, Canadians are patient.

Sarah: One of the things you need to tell them so they see that you are not stupid, is: my first language is Spanish, and my second English. And sometimes when you say that, they say: I only know one language, and this person is trying in two languages.

These quotes reflect the importance the Latino mothers place on how they are perceived, particularly by Canadians, which can grant confidence in the process of learning the language and adapting to the Canadian environment. The perception they have also relates to their experiences and the environment where they have worked or lived. For instance, If they have felt welcomed or rejected can influence if they perceive their surroundings as safe or hostile. This also connected to any feelings of being discriminated against. These feelings became evident as the conversations continued:

Michelle: In Quebec, the opportunities are minimal.

Carolina: I've heard they are very racist, are they?

Michelle: Yes. One day, I never forget it. We went to McDonald's and I wanted that Mcflurry. So I get there and I say: s'il vous plait a Mcflurry, and she says: Eh? And raises her eyebrow, all horrible, she is like saying: what's up with her? [laughs] So my friend, tells her: You did not

understand? She said it clear…of course my friend was upset, because they are not open minded…**at least here people try.**

Katy: look I have people to whom I have said: Look my English is not good, but they tell me: No! I am surprised that your language is Spanish, and you have the ability to speak English the way you do.

Carolina: you say: no, I can't speak English very well, and they tell you, no no, you speak it very well.

Katy: I advise you get a job, where they give you the chance. Always say: my English is not good. Your own coworkers you will hear them how they respond to things at work, and I would say: ahh, that is how you say it, when I get asked about that, that will be my answer…Speaking and chatting among themselves, some of the Filipinas and another from Afghanistan, you talk with them, they help you pick up the English, you will at least learn to communicate, to solve…"

Their motivation to learn English was reflected in Katy's comment, as she eagerly wants to learn by observation based on her the responses of her coworkers. These women are true examples of resilience, determination and persistence.. However, there are structural barriers undermining their desire to English by joining the workforce or studying, as Maria described:

"There [Vancouver] I didn't have the opportunity to learn English because I had to take care of my children. We then came here, and I brought my little boy and my daughter, now it's worse, we have two kids…how do we pay daycare? My husband wasn't making enough to pay for the daycare.

But later [her mother-in-law came to help]. I had the opportunity to work with very *little little* English, things you learn with the TV. I worked for a year in a casino while my mother-in-law was here, there in the casino was that I grasped the most English, at the beginning it was very hard and I would cry because I couldn't understand what people say to me, but I overcame that…but later my mother-in-law left and I had to leave the job…"

Her next words were sincere in offering solidarity, friendship and support to Michelle who felt overwhelmed by the language challenges: "…here I have excellent friends, and I continue to meet more, and that has helped me quite a lot. So don't be discouraged, in me you will find more than a friend, a sister, whichever way you would like to take it, in anything you need me to, here take my phone number."

Maria is a very proactive mother and had mobilized support from Multicultural Health Brokers to start an English course for Latin mothers:

"I told the [Latin Coordinator], we are here [community parenting group] because of our children...but what is in it for us? I felt like we did nothing, we learned new things about our kids, but we were stuck as mothers because of the language barrier. So I proposed to have an English learning group, I asked the coordinator to help us get a place and a teacher. Multicultural has helped us with everything, some courses were opened in a church close to us, we started to go and it was very good. But unfortunately I have not been able to continue to go, because with whom

would I leave my children? Now most of them are in school (and the youngest is at home) so it is very hard..."

Despite Maria's determined spirit she once again faced limitations outside of her control that impeded her from accessing opportunities to increase her English proficiency.

3.3.4 Key findings from the category "…I need to *buscarme la vida*..." [I need to find my way in life]

English proficiency was one of the most prominent aspects impacting and mediating the mothers' adaptation to a new country, their vision of the future, mental wellness, interactions and opportunities in Canada.

Basic activities that they were fully capable of and were almost taken for granted in their countries as part of their daily lives are now a source of anxiety and fear. In addition, structural challenges such as access to childcare and employment limit the opportunity to study English.

Challenges around English skills are associated with frustration, reliance, invisibility and feelings of disconnection and belonging.

Mothers 'coping strategies accounted for the difficulties they faced with the language, yet at the same time also illustrated their self-determination, creativity and resilience (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Main aspects "...I need to buscarme la vida [find my way in life]..."
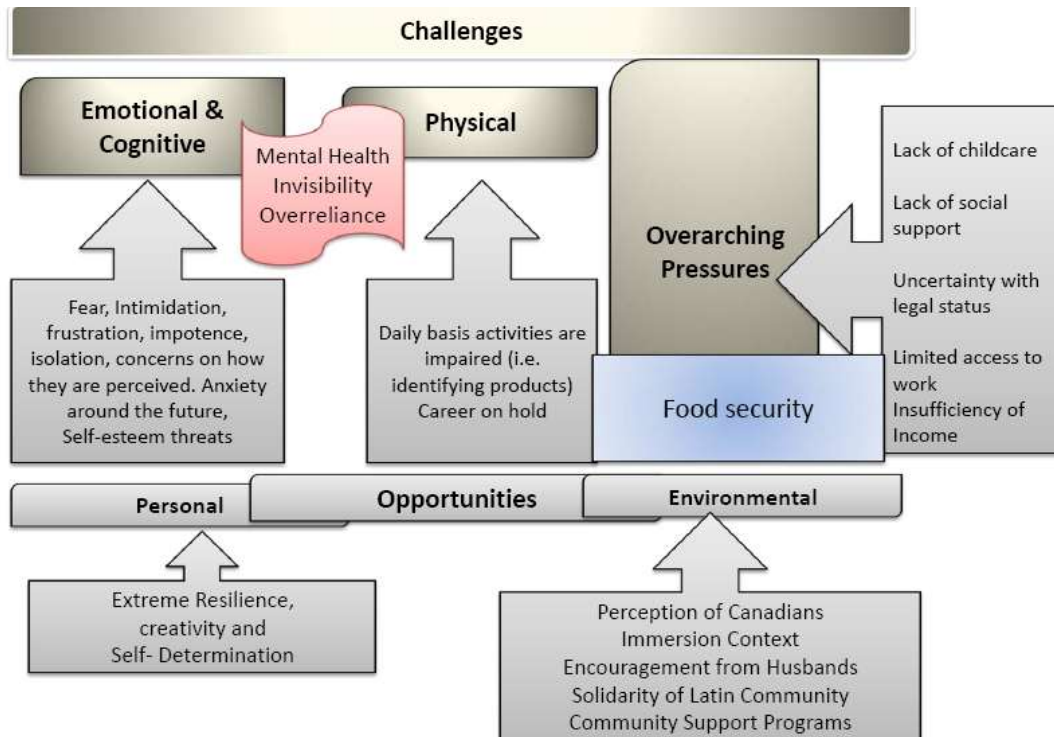
3.4 "...The silver [money] is not enough..."

This category highlights the main barriers to food security for these families and their coping strategies.

The immediate limitation for accessing diversity of fruits, vegetables and culturally relevant meals was the cost of food, as illustrated by Michelle:

"I don't think Canada's problem is variety in terms of food, other than fruits, it is more that the silver [money] is not enough, when I go to the store I want to buy the yogurt with all the great vitamins and things to my children, but the first thing I look for is which one is cheaper..."

Sara from El Salvador contrasted the reality in the States and Canada in relation to cost: "the food was cheaper [in the States], with 100 dollars we fill the

cart, here you can't, not with 200 dollars, we bring everything, but not everything we need."

These mothers are resourceful and seek to stretch the bills as much as possible using an array of coping skills. The first thing is to find the best prices for the products they want, as noted by Michelle: "We always look for what is on sale, if the cheese is on sale today then we will have cheese, but if not, we don't". In this attempt, finding products that are good for their families was also a priority: "When we buy we look for healthy things but also good prices. My husband browses the store every day if he has some time after work, to see if there is anything on sale and he brings it". Although in some cases the mothers had to sacrifice the consumption of variety of fruits, Sara referred to this: "What I always buy are bananas, because I like giving fruits to my daughter and they are also in good price all the time." This limited consumption of variety of fruits can impact the health of these mothers and their offspring. Despite the economic challenges affecting their food security, mothers were fully aware of how Canada provides more equitable opportunities that result in improved access to food. This perception is further discussed in the Category: "…I need to able to leave something for my children…"

Another aspect of the mothers' being practical and reducing cost was brand detachment, as Isabel pointed out: "Most of the time I pick a product based on price, I don't pay attention to the brand. In Mexico, I had my favorite brands, but here I don't, I only look for products that are similar to what I need." This priority of price over brands was shared as an important rule for cutting costs, but

also because in Canada buying a cheaper brand over another did not mean compromising quality. Carolina, from Guatemala, built on this:

> [How do you decide what product to buy when there are several options?]
>
> "The price…I don't like saying it, but it's the truth…now I can't work because I want to wait until she is one…also in my country what is cheap is ugly and bad, but that is not the case here…the cream you buy for 5 dollars taste the same as the one I buy that its 1.57 dollars."

Another core aspect of their informal approach to creatively managing the household's resources was finding the stores that provide the better deals of culturally relevant products. Initially, only Latin stores would provide products for Latin families, at high costs since these are small business also owned by Latin families and importing the product is expensive for smaller businesses. All participants noted having used the Latin stores, particularly when they arrived and knew little of where to get their products at better prices. However, later on, this shifted to buying at Superstore, Wal-Mart, No Frills and others. These stores provide the same products at substantially lower prices (i.e. corn flour to make tortillas, plantains, and spices) and are closer to their homes (more accessible) than Latin stores. As Carolina reported: "It used to only be Latin stores where we could get our products, but thank God now many stores have them such as Wal-Mart, Superstore…I really have no problem getting products, I get most of the things I want"

Image 16. No Frills   **Image 17. Superstore**

"I think Superstore is the most
accessible store for immigrants"

"I took this picture to show you where I can
get everything at good prices, No Frills…I
can get Mazeca, plantains, everything…it is
just like a Latino store, but the thing is that
the Latino stores are very expensive"

These strategies are coupled with identifying which stores have certain products at better prices and mixing their purchase to get the best deals, as Isabel explained: "We don't get the whole *mandado* [shopping list] in one store, sometimes we go to Save on Foods for the meat, and vegetables from Safeway, and then we go to the one close to here H&W they sell many fruits and vegetables really cheap".

3.4.1 Key findings of the category "…the silver is not enough…"

The immediate barrier for food security for the Latin families was the cost of products, which limited the access to diversity of fruits and other culturally relevant products. Those that were available were of poor quality. All of the

families experienced economic difficulty due to their limited access to income sources.

Mothers were interested in three main criteria when selecting products and stores: finding culturally relevant products, affordable prices and good quality. They were also very proactive in finding sales and promotions as well as identifying certain stores that would sell certain staple products at better prices and mix and match their purchase. Mothers were aware that buying brand products could significantly increase their costs; therefore, they considered it important to be flexible and found that buying brand products did not necessarily mean they would have better quality.

3.5 "... Making a soup, means opening a can..."

This category explores the perceptions around food and the criteria of the mothers for feeding their families.

3.5.1 "…I like to give her natural things…"

This subcategory highlights the prioritization of healthy meals for feeding their babies and the actions backing this determination.

In the midst of their adaptation, these mothers were highly motivated in providing the best food possible for their children, regardless of the limitations they faced. This was demonstrated by Maria, who is full of initiative and very committed to preparing healthy meals for her family, particularly for her three children:

"We have lunch around twelve or one in the afternoon, this is our main

meal, I try [to ensure] that my children eat healthy, meat, vegetables,

soup…I am always researching what things are good for them, their

growth and development."

Carolina also stressed her health-focused criteria for feeding her baby: "When I feed my daughter I like to give her natural things, the baby food from the stores seems artificial, I bought a few once and the expiry date was 2016, imagine what they put in those so they can last that long. I ate them and saved the jars and now for snacks I prepare her baby food with fresh fruits and cinnamon."

Furthermore, Carolina is not only careful with what she feeds her baby but also plans meals accordingly by preparing baby food from scratch using fresh fruit, as she illustrated with her picture:

Image 18. Feeding my baby

"This is one of my favourites pictures because I wanted to show you how I make my baby her snacks. I take the apple, or the pear or other fruits and peel them, cook them and then grind them and put them in little jars. Today I made 8, so I freeze 4 and keep the rest fresh"

Maria, also shared one of her favourite photographs depicting ingredients used fairly consistently which show the value of nutritionally rich products (Image 19).

Image 19. Preparing food

"This is the chicken that I prepare with vegetables… I use a lot of
yerba [green things], onion, parsley, and garlic…I am a garlic
lover" [Interviewer: What do you season it with?]…Just garlic, I
do not use spices, garlic needs to be in every meal. [Interviewer:
Do you prepare these kinds of meals often?] Yes. [Interviewer:
What about the olive oil?].I always use olive oil, never use the
other kind."

Gaining nutritional skills in preparing healthy meals for their babies was
also mentioned as a priority by Sara, who noted: "I would like to learn more on
how to feed my baby better because she is growing and developing."

3.5.2 Perceptions around healthy eating

This subcategory navigates mothers' views around healthy eating. The
perceptions of the mothers around eating healthy relate to many aspects, ranging
from cultural ones, personal criteria on nutritional values, and how they were
raised.

Carolina referred to eating habits of Guatemalans and how they related to
eating healthy:

"For me eating right is eating five times a day, three meals and two
snacks…the thing with us is that we eat many times, but we eat little each

time, that is why in Guatemala people are slim, because we don't eat large quantities".

Variety and diversity of food groups was also noted as important criteria for preparing healthy meals. According to Isabel:

"Eating healthy is about mixing…my husband only likes meat, and I tell him: you need to mix vegetables, fruits, rice, tortilla...not just eat one thing..."

Avoiding food with a high content of fats and sugar was identified by Maria:

"We are careful with fats and desserts…we try to eat the essential". For her it also means balancing the consumption of certain nutritionally poor meals."

Additionally, learning to eat healthy was identified as something that went back to the way the mothers were raised and the influence of their immediate relatives; it is connected to honouring their parents. As pointed out by Michelle: "I think [eating healthy] is wake up and eat fruit, juice, for lunch vegetables and a piece of meat or roasted chicken breast and a small plate of beans…my mom taught us to eat in small portions as something normal."

3.5.3 "…It's not good for you, but they are very accessible..."

This subcategory describes perceptions and dimensions around fast food according to the accounts and perceptions of the Latin mothers.

Mothers with older children experienced additional challenges in feeding their children: fast food. After living in Canada for over two years, Isabel

described her experience with her four year old: "My oldest child gives me trouble to eat and he is getting used to that when we go out all he wants is McDonald's or Burger King, even if he eats little. He doesn't like Mexican food." When Isabel noted the rejection of the food from her own culture over fast food, she said it with a sad intonation, which relates to the value of food as identity and desire to transfer those values. I asked about how often they go to the fast food outlets, and she said: "At least once a week, is a way of telling him: if you behave well, we will take you to McDonald's." As she explained, fast food is a powerful incentive for her son to improve his behaviour.

Michelle's six year old son is also fond of nutritionally poor food, as she described when presenting her picture of her son eating a pogo from Red Robin…and said:

Image 20. Pogo

"He is in love with that...I find no sense in it, it's just flour with a sausage. That concerns me; a pogo can be a meal for them. He is happy eating that and I see nothing interesting in it"

During the interview this was supported by her son's behavior. As Michelle explained, "the only one we love here is Red Robin and – her son starts saying "Red Robin! Red Robin!" and kisses his mom –its junk food too, but it doesn't seem as bad, it seems healthier than the rest." Her comment also conveys

a differential perception around certain fast food, as Red Robin is perceived as 'better' than other fast food places.

Additionally, her son's drive for fast food might be associated with exposure to advertisements: "I wish to buy them many things, Luis [her younger son] sometimes sees something on TV, and tells me, "Mom! I want that!" I always tell him, when I earn silver [money] I will buy it to you."

Fast food is an appealing option not only because of its "power" to influence children's behavior, but because they are readily accessible, geographically and economically. As noted by Katy, "I think we should eat more fruit, but they are more expensive, you eat them but you can't buy them all the time…but with everything so accessible [fast food] that you don't end up eating too good." Although she perceived herself as responsible, this perception of 'being guilty' is contrasted with the rest of her comments. According to Katy, accessibility to fast food led to their high consumption:

> "In Cuba they sell food in the street, but it's not fast food and most of people cannot afford to buy it...the thing here is that all is accessible, prices are very good and you can buy it, but at the same time it's not good for you, but they are very accessible."

Fast food outlets can also be perceived differently depending on the country in which the mothers lived and their sources of income. For instance, Sara explained how these stores were perceived in El Salvador, and how they are perceived in Canada: "In El Salvador, they have many fast food places but with what people make it is very hard for them to afford it, it is like going to a

restaurant here [in Canada]. Here is easier to eat hamburgers three times a week and there maybe if you have the time you would go twice a month."

Sara's statement indicates a shift in accessibility contingent on the country of residence. Most importantly, access to something that was highly priced in the mothers' culture is now readily available, which might as well influence the frequency of consuming this type of food.

When presenting her top five pictures, Sara showed a picture of a Salvadoran restaurant, and commented:

Image 21. Restaurant

"This is a new Salvadorian restaurant in our area, I went last
week. It is like a little piece of our country because they
have many typical things, very delicious. The prices are a bit
high though, so we can't go too often".

An irony for Sara is that the food that relates to her culture is largely unavailable, and what was seen as "fancy" and expensive in her country, has now become something that she can afford "three times a week".

A central concern for some of the mothers was the drastic change in the built environment and great accessibility to fast food when comparing eating habits in their countries:

"What I can't understand is that I have gained weight here regardless of the fact that I eat salad here, which I never ate in Colombia. My son says that is because of the food we eat at restaurants, McDonald's and Burger King. In Colombia if you are hungry you go to the fridge and there is always something good prepared, you never say: I am hungry let's go to McDonald's."

Another factor, working conditions, could also significantly impact eating habits of these families. For instance, Isabel noted the following in relation to her husband's working conditions and his diabetes: "What concerns me is that he works out the whole day, and he can't take a prepared lunch from home, because where do you heat it? Eat in the street, big soda, and fast food that rises his glucose, it concerns me that he eats in the street, but also that he will wait until he gets home to eat something."

3.5.4 "…Making a soup means opening a can…"

Finally, a salient topic of concern for Latin mothers was the use of cans. Many of them were introduced to the use of canned products after receiving food from their local food bank. Maria, while pregnant with her third baby, explained her experience from the food she received from the food bank: "…it is just that we are not used to eating canned food. I used a few and returned the rest; I believe that canned food is not good for me or my kids." Her perception on

canned food was negative, and this was a shared view across the group. Isabel, when asked if there was anything or several things that she would like to improve from her family's eating habit expressed the following: "What concerns me about here [Canada] is canned food, I hope I never get used to that...they make a soup and it just means opening a can."

She went on and shared a testimony during her first year in Canada, while pregnant with her second child:

> "When I was pregnant I had gestational diabetes, so the nurses told me to count calories every day. When I went back, they asked me, what did you eat today? I told them chicken soup, so they asked me: how many calories did it have? I told them I didn't know because I had cooked it from scratch...they were very surprised it was not from a can."

Her account is not only an illustration on how culturally inappropriate the canned food is for her but also shows a compelling irony for these mothers. While residing in their countries with limited economic resources, they still had wide access to fresh products and grew up cooking from scratch.

Now that they live in the developed world, these mothers have more access to canned goods with less quality and freshness. This was the reality for her and the other mothers using the food bank, as pointed by Carolina: "they give you cans in exaggeration."

Michelle also reported on this in her photograph below:

Image 22. Products

"…many cans, in Colombia we make our soups from
scratch, here you get home and you ask what are
cooking for dinner? And what you hear is: Let's open
a can, and I think oh no…"

Most of the mothers use, or have at some point, accessed the services of

food banks, to alleviate some of the food demands in their households. The

comments around food banks were mixed, not all being negative, as they provided

cans but also other products that were useful. As Sara noted:

"When I went there the first time they didn't give me anything healthy.

Just canned things…canned soup, macaroni and cheese, desserts. Things I

have never eaten, we even returned some of them so that somebody else

could eat it…I was surprised. What was good was the milk they gave me;

it is an expense less especially now that only my husband is working."

Food banks have also helped met some of the families' medical needs.

According to Isabel:

"I still use it, you go once a month...they give you food according to your family… for example, my husband is diabetic. They have helped us with food that he can eat, sometimes they give us milk, yogurt and diabetic complements."

3.5.5 Key findings from the category "…Making a soup means opening a can…"

Mothers emphasized the importance of fresh produce including fruits, vegetables and grains, as opposed to canned and processed foods, as well as the absence of preservatives in food. Freshness, natural products, good nutritional standards, balanced intake from food groups, as well as moderation in the consumption of desserts and processed foods were perceived as important requirements of healthy diet. Within their means, the mothers strived to feed their children based on their perception of healthy meals. Expiration dates were also used as an indicator to measure freshness and quality of food, particularly, food for their babies.

All families perceived fast food as negative and detrimental for one's health. Some families reported rarely consuming these products, whereas others admitted consuming fast food due to their affordability and/or convenience. In addition, mothers had different references around "fast food" in relation to their home countries. For instance, one of the mothers from El Salvador noted a drastic contextual shift. Fast food in her home country (i.e. Wendy's/McDonald's) was perceived as "restaurant food" as it was costly to access and was a treat for families, while their traditional food was very affordable. Yet, in Canada, fast

food quite affordable, and their traditional meals at a Salvadoran restaurant are hardly affordable.

The change in dietary habits from traditional ones was an issue of concern, as in their countries they would not eat fast food –or consumed these types of foods rarely-; rather the norm is to always have food prepared at home that could be eaten at once or stored for later. This concern was more pressing for mothers with older children, particularly the increased consumption of fast food and rejection to some extent of their traditional food. Main aspects of the category "…Making a soup means opening a can…" are depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Main aspects from "...Making a soup means opening a can..."
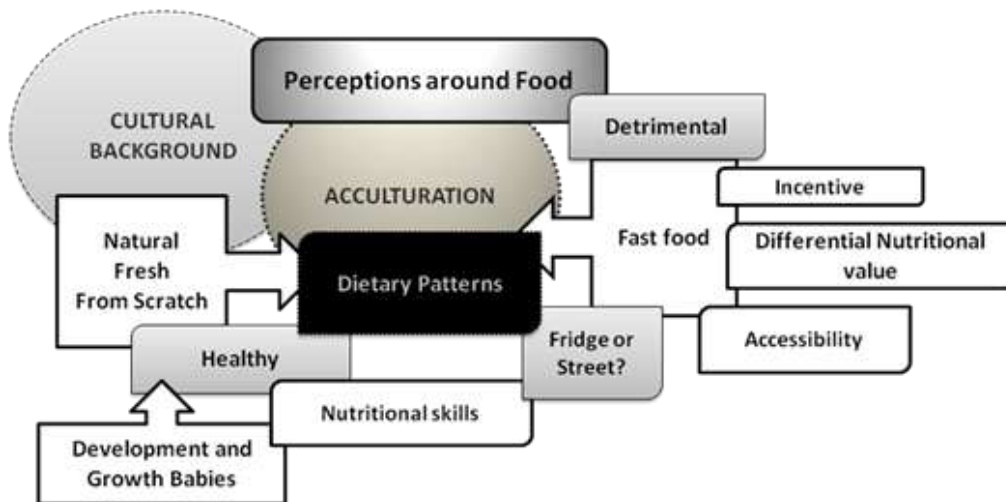
3.6 "…I need to be able to leave something for my children…"

This category describes participants' views around the motivations behind their migration journey and the perceived migration benefits.

The challenges these families deal with while they incorporate into the Canadian society

require a myriad of sacrifices and efforts that take great heroism and determination. In addition to the challenges in adaptation discussed so far, other challenges include resigning to a well-established family centered support network. For instance, Maria wanted her sister to come visit her when she was pregnant with her third child so she could get extra help and support. Her sister's visa application was denied even when they had provided all the information on the rationale of the visit to the immigration officers. Moreover, Maria has been unable to join the market labour due to the costs of childcare, something she would not have to pay had she lived in Colombia, where family members (i.e. mother-in-law, her mother) would help to fulfill these responsibilities. Furthermore, Maria has also sacrificed her career to be able to provide a better future for her children. As she explained, "I am a systems technician, unfortunately here I have not been able to use my profession, first because I have dedicated to take care of my children, and second because I have not had much chance to learn English." Nonetheless, due to her country's serious violence and criminality, the security and safety they are to experience in Canada is well worth it:

> "I truly miss my country and my family...unfortunately we had to come
> from Colombia because the situation of violence was terrible...and we
> already had a daughter and thought of having more children, *we wanted to
> give them something better, that is why we are here.* I thank Canada
> because they have made us feel at home, the culture is very different, but
> you can say you live in peace, you don't live with the stress of thinking

something might happen to you...That we might get kidnapped or something like that."

Interestingly, although you would imagine that these families would name economic security at the top of their list, feeling safe and living in peace were identified by the majority of the mothers as the top benefit of living in Canada. Carolina, who came as a refugee from Guatemala with her husband, referred to this:

"The first thing I would mention that Canada has is security, we came here because we were in danger in our country...that is the difference...here I can go out with my baby, take the bus without the fear of being persecuted or kidnapped...and I know here it exists as well [some danger] but it's not the same."

Mental wellness and freedom as part of citizen security are highly valued by these families, and it relates to their capacity to develop socially. Most centrally, their motivations were grounded in the conviction that migrating to Canada would provide better quality of life and opportunities for their children. For these mothers, their children are the priority over their own needs and desires. As noted by Michelle, "I will learn English, but no, I start thinking that I am 40 years old, and think I cannot lose my life studying, I need to be able to leave something for my children." Michelle's statement showed that her priority are her children, particularly building capital for them.

Sara, explained her own motivation:

"Where we lived in California, neighbors had parties every weekend with loud music during late hours at night...there were also many gangs, we knew that there were people killed close to where we lived...but here you have peace. **When people ask you why you are here, they never hear everything, it was not only because there was no work in California, but also feeling safe**."

For Sara it is important that people listen to the whole story of her migration journey; it was not only about economic security, but the opportunity to live in peace, which is the right balance for her. Nonetheless, economic development and opportunities also play an important role in motivating these families. This also relates to providing food security to their children. As Carolina explained:

"…you said we could talk about what concerns us…and I am concerned with my immigration status…we do not know if we have to come back, that uncertainty is very hard, and *I know that if I go back I will never be able to give my daughter the quality that she needs...I can say that foods in Guatemala are fresher, but I refer to the economic side of things, here I can buy what I want at the store but I can't do that there*…we are awaiting for the answer…"

For her, achieving long term legal status in Canada represents the fulfillment of that dream: providing her child with a better reality and place to grow.

Additionally, these mothers are deeply cognisant of the improved socioeconomic opportunities available in Canada, that when analyzed in relation to the issues of inequality and human rights in their home countries, give perspective to their challenges. Therefore, although in Canada they are labelled as 'low income', for them being in Canada already represents social mobility and fairer opportunities. Carolina commented on this:

> "In regards to food, I feel [that] here in Canada [food] is cheaper, more accessible. In my country you spend 500 quetzals per week on food and make 1,500 a month, you are spending a lot in one week...whereas here you spend 150.00 a week, but you are making 1,500.00 a month."

Katy also addressed this when sharing about the food prices: "I definitely look at prices when I buy food particularly because now is only my husband that is working...but I have to tell you something, when you compare the prices of food here in Canada with other countries, prices here are good...because you're earning in dollars."

3.6.1 Key findings from the category "…I need to be able to leave something for my children…"

Providing a better future for their children including a safer environment and improved socioeconomic conditions were the main motivation to migrate, and those same reasons are the driving force and vision of the mothers as they navigate the current migration challenges and opportunities of the Canadian context. To a great extent, these families felt blessed by the opportunities they now have access to in Canada, including economic opportunities and safety.

Living in a safe environment where the family can grow and develop, free of social violence and criminality, was identified as one of the top benefits of the migration process.

The Latino mothers are aware of the need to compromise some aspects of food security (fresh, diversity, accessible fruits and vegetables) for the certainty of improved economic opportunities that Canada offers, since these opportunities would not only improve their living conditions but would also help them have access to the products they desire.

3.7 "…We didn't come here to live off the government…"

This category highlights aspects that needs assessment from the perceptions of the mothers, in relation to food security and their adaptation process.

When asking the mothers about the things in their lives, communities or environment that they would ask someone with power (i.e. politician) to improve, they provided an array of perceptions and ideas related. Some participants found that in comparison to their countries, it was hard to point out flaws or things to improve, as they perceived the system as very strong in Canada compared to their own. As noted by Katy, the mother from Cuba: "uhm... I think the situation here is very good when I compare it to my country, every system has its weaknesses but when you look at other countries, it is a privilege to be in Canada."

Other participants, explicitly or implicitly, addressed the need for better access to fruits and vegetables. This access meant better prices or better income. As noted by Michelle, "I would ask them to think a bit more about the products to

be more accessible, yes I know, quality is important, but the poor people want to eat." When asked if there were things that she would like her daughter to have more access, Sara, who had expressed only being able to buy bananas on an ongoing basis, as these were an affordable option, remarked: "fruits, having access to variety of fruits, it would really help her, in my opinion these are the healthiest."

Sara took the photograph below to express her concern:

Image 23. Fruits

"I took this picture with the fruits to show you how sad it looks sometimes because of the scarcity of fruits or because they are too expensive"

She also noted her great interest in gaining nutritional knowledge: "I would like educational lessons on how to feed our family, courses so we can learn how to feed our children," and further expanded on the importance of environments and programs that facilitate healthier choices for children: "In the States they give food to the children in the schools, and it's caught my attention that they *talk a lot about eating healthy how important it is, but what they have in the schools is hamburgers, they never cooked anything healthy…I would like this to start from the home and schools so children can get things that are healthy."*

Sara's awareness of the relevance of the built environment in influencing children's

health and eating habits highlights a comprehensive understanding of health and factors influencing it. Her statement also shows the importance placed on healthy eating and the need for the programs to be consistent with their mandate.

Interestingly, one concern that is closely associated with food, social and economic security and the future of these families is their immigration status, as illustrated by Carolina's picture:

Image 24. Migration Permit

"What concerns me from our health and family is that if we had to return [to Guatemala], that is why I took the picture of the permit. If we have to, I know I won't be able to give my daughter what I have here, here I give her quality, it is true that produce is fresher there, but economically its better here…I can buy her the food she needs when I go to the store, and I know I won't be able to do that there."

At the time of this interview, Carolina and her family have been in Canada for over two years and still do not know if they would be allowed to remain in the country. Her migratory condition generates significant amounts of anxiety and uncertainty, which is reflected in her statement.

Immigration rules and guidelines could seriously limit the chance for these families to see their relatives and receive support from them at crucial life moments. This is explained by Maria, who wanted her sister in Colombia to come visit for the birth of her third baby: "You feel very alone, when my children were born it was a bit hard…when my baby girl was born my sister was going to come but they didn't give her the visa, I was alone [husband was working] and it was hard…"

Support from organizations, such as Multicultural Health Brokers, play a key role in providing these immigrant mothers with information on how to navigate the Canadian system and in building support networks. For instance, the prenatal support group and the summer initiative for the Latin Collective Kitchen were instrumental in providing mental and social support in the critical process of having their babies. As noted by Sara: "I think God put them in my way [the program], I have heard of many people that get depression...What is the name, ah, postnatal depression, and I [am] alone here because my husband is working, I don't know…I would have died."

In the case of Katy, she had been diagnosed with post-partum depression, and the group played an important role in her life: "I am very happy mostly because they [Multicultural Health Brokers] did not give me an economic help, or nothing, but yes they have helped me a lot with my health and emotionally, they introduced me to the girls...I integrated with them very well and we still meet. We cook different recipes from our countries and we share them."

Image 25. Chilaquiles

"This is one of the
recipes we cooked with
the group of moms"

These families were familiar with their communities' resources and are able to access key support networks through MCHB. This organization provides them with culturally sensitive services and facilitates the transition and acculturation process of these families.

As mentioned earlier, the most salient issue the mothers identified to, in relation to developing and successfully incorporating themselves into Canadian society, came down to the language barrier. Being able to communicate, or at least to get by, can play an important role in the livelihoods of these families, and Alberta seems to lack programs focused on mature students. As noted by Michelle:

> "I wish they [government] could provide some pedagogy for older immigrants, not all come as children who can learn a lot easier. If you learn the language you can defend yourself and get by."

Michelle stressed the importance for her as a Latin American to be productive and not a scrounger or "abuser" of the system: *We did not come here to live off the government, we were not taught to live like that. If they give us*

opportunities we will take them...If I get the opportunity to learn English in two months I know I will be working right away..."

This compelling argument voiced Michelle's need to have opportunities to learn English language, so she could gain the tools and resources to integrate into the society. It also dismantles any misperception that immigrants (in this case, Latin Americans) all want to live off the government. As Michelle's statement illustrated, they want to be a functional part contributing to the society. Most of the mothers had a university degree; therefore, they are educated individuals with a desire of productivity and socioeconomic participation.

3.7.1 Key findings from the category "…I didn't come here to live off the government…"

Diverse issues were identified that could improve the families' food security and overall quality of life. These issues included: greater flexibility of certain migration policies, access to culturally relevant products, better access to adequate employment and opportunities to learn English while still earning a living. For some mothers, however, there were not specific issues to name, as they considered Canada provided them with good opportunities when compared to their home countries.

In relation to migration policies, the lack of flexibility to allow close relatives to visit their families to provide support during sensitive times (i.e. pregnancy, early infancy of children) was noted. Another aspect that was mentioned was the level of uncertainty regarding the families' ability to stay in the country that could create anxiety around their long term goals and settlement.

Migration issues were closely connected to food security, as being able to stay in Canada from their perspective signifies better employment and income, which can directly assist the household's resources to access the food they want. Affordability was a prominent issue, as mothers noted the need for affordable access to diverse fruits and culturally relevant products. There was also awareness of the importance of an environment that fosters healthy options and helps sustain those options, particularly schools where children are greatly exposed and influenced by the options offered in that environment. It was identified that there is a steep gap between the 'healthy eating' discourse of the school and government authorities and the actual food items they allow these schools to sell to the children. Finally, mothers valued how they were perceived within the Canadian society. Particularly, for the non-working mothers, who had many barriers accessing employment due to limited language proficiency, it was important for their eagerness to participate socioeconomically to be acknowledged.

Table 3. Summary of Categories and Subcategories

Categories	Definitions	Subcategory	Summary of Codes
"…I don't forget my traditions…"	Presents the meanings of food as identity for these mothers and their adaption in relation the demands of the new environment	**Food as identity and adaptation dynamics**: focuses on the dimensions of food as cultural identity and its relationship with the way these mothers adapt.	Identity. Culture. Preserving. Tensions. Adapting. Heritage. Patria. Remembering. Nostalgia. Challenges in adapting. Gradual process. Takes time. Recreating. Reviving roots. Keeping traditions. Merging traditions. Flexibility. Desire to mirror or re-create home recipes. Family centered, sacred time, separated time of the day, communication, generational union, happiness, Motivation, Reunion of the family, familiarity of food. Creativity securing ingredients. Use of snow. Storage.
		Self-efficacy with media and cooking tools: this subcategory describes the use of TV and internet as sources for information around food and food preparation, and incorporating the use new cooking tools.	Internet, YouTube, TV, media, access to information. Proactive. Creativity in the kitchen, using ingredients efficiently. Openness to learning and adapting. Different responses to migration journey. BBQ, oven, use of new tools.
		Contrasting contexts: this subcategory describes the main differences of Latin America and Canada in relation to products and access as identified by the mothers.	Differences. Flavor, change, challenge, diversity, cans in exaggeration. Awkwardness. Culturally inappropriate. not healthy. *a la mano*. Readily access. Fresh fruits. Processed foods. Juices. Limitation. Cost. Sustainability. Flavour. Concern, preoccupation. Habit of using cans.

Categories	Definitions	Subcategory	Summary of Codes
"...I am the one that cooks…"	Describes identified gender dynamics around food oriented activities and changes in gender patterns likely influenced by the new environment	N/A	Newcomer Household. Mixed Household. Changing environment, changing dynamics. Mercados vs Stores. Tropical versus Cold Weather. Husbands' involvement in getting groceries & decision making. Negotiation, Dietary Needs & food preferences, accommodating. Diverse demands. More work. Caregiver. Household responsibilities.
"…I need to learn to buscarme la vida [find my own way in life]…"	Explores the dimensions of English language as a perceived barrier by the mothers.	**I can't lose my life studying:** depicts the motivations and decision making and dimensions of English as a Second Language.	Challenges. Waging options. Confusion. Fear. Competing demands. Competing priorities. Finding balance. Chance to connect versus the responsibility to feed children. Working for their children, priorities are the children.
		What if I get lost? What is the product for? Looks at how English proficiency influences how these mothers fulfill basic needs and the emotions associated with this.	Efforts, fighting, proactive, fear, frustration, cognitive schemes, stressful, dependence on partner or on others. No voice, invisible. gaining strength, empowerment, identity, Feelings, overwhelming, scary, fear, intimidated, anxiety, perception of others, quit, blocking your mind, effort, patience, relax, try it, takes time.

Categories	Definitions	Subcategory	Summary of Codes
		Do you always find someone to speak for you? Elucidates the reasoning and motivation of these mothers to face their struggles with English, and coping strategies recommended by them.	Dependence, gender, seeking help, proactive, jumping, being brave, trying it, facing your fears, stepping out, support, self-sufficiency, coping, self-determination, support, solidarity, Latin ties in Edmonton, French, Québec, racism, working, studying, both.
"...The silver is not enough…"	Highlights barriers to food security for these families and their coping strategies.	N/A	Access. Cost. Variety. Price. Budget. Planning. Quality. Sales. Promotions. Creativity. Children as priority. Criteria for buying. Brands. Flexibility. Coping strategies. Prioritizing. Stores. Loyalty. Latin stores. Mix and match.
"…Making a soup, means opening a can…"	Explores perceptions around food and the criteria of the mothers for feeding their families.	**I like to give her natural things:** explores practices and concerns around feeding their babies.	Healthy. Natural. Takes time to prepare baby food. Use of fresh fruit. Stores some. Expiry date. Feeding criteria. Careful with processed food. Rejection of certain meals. Priorities. Nutritional knowledge. Awareness of healthy meals. Development. Growth. Health.
		Perceptions around healthy eating	Portion size. Cultural views. Influence of family. Eating little quantities. Mixing food groups. Diversity. Eating smart. Reduced desserts and fats. Balance. Small portions. Vegetables. Steamed chicken.

Categories	Definitions	Subcategory	Summary of Codes
		"…It's not good for you, but they are very accessible…" explores dimensions of fast food according to the accounts and perceptions of the Latin mothers.	Older children, habits, access, reinforcement, reward, challenges, easier, fast food, red robin, MacDonald's, Burger King, pogo, contrasting realities, irony, culturally appropriate, restaurants? Marketing, nagging, pressure for parents.
		"…Making a soup, means opening a can…" describes mothers' experiences around the use of canned food.	Cans, shock, challenging, different, food banks, exaggeration, difficulties, financial limitations, habits, concerns, cooking from scratch. Risk of chronic disease. Gestational diabetes, rejection of cans. Culturally inappropriate. Diet. Cooking from scratch. Cans are not healthy food. Quantity of cans. Food bank. Mixed opinions on food bank. Variety of food. Some tailored to health needs.
"…I need to be able to leave something for my children…"	Participants' views around the motivations behind their migration journey and the aspects of the Canadian culture that are great incentives for this journey to happen.	N/A	Trade-offs, sacrifices, priorities, children first, capital, social support, giving things up, sacrificing, values, needs, safety, peace, feeling safe, less stress, less noise, more opportunities, social injustice, social unrest, insecurity, human rights, basic social participation, future, vision.

Categories	Definitions	Subcategory	Summary of Codes
"...We didn't come here to live off the government …"	Explores needs assessment from the perceptions of the mothers, in relation to food security and their adaption process.	N/A	social support, migration barriers, red tape, social net broken, limitations, loneliness, lack of support, challenging, perspective, optimism, gratefulness, recognition, accessibility, poverty, food security, family, access, fruits, diversity of fruits, need of programs, sustainability, consistent, integral and comprehensive.

CHAPTER 4. Discussion and synergy of main findings

In this section, I will situate main findings within the existing literature and will finalize explaining interrelations between the categories based on the accounts and issues identified by the mothers.

4.1.1 Discussion

The mothers' process of dietary acculturation reflects, to some extent, the integration dynamics of acculturation strategies defined by Berry (1997), according to which the immigrant group wishes to maintain its cultural roots, yet at the same time, interacts and participates with the dominant society to learn from their ways. Nevertheless, this research supports a more comprehensive understanding of acculturation (Perez-Escamilla & Putnik, 2007), particularly for groups that are in multiethnic societies, such as Canada. For instance, the Latino mothers noted interaction not only with the "dominant" (European-background Canadians per se) society but also with other ethnic groups with diverse food and cultural traditions.

The social and cultural values of food identified throughout the study are congruent with the Latino's value of *familiarismo*, which gives prominence to the family over the individual, and includes extended family and close friends *(comadre/compadre)* as core to the family nucleon (Scarinci, Bandura, Hidalgo & Cherrington, 2012). In addition to the value placed on their families, the mothers reported lacking quality interaction with community individuals such as local vendors. Interpersonal patterns reference a prominent value in the Latino culture, *personalismo*, which refers to "trust and rapport established with others by

developing warm, friendly, and personal relationships…Latinos prefer to relate in a congenial manner as opposed to an impersonal, business like mode" (Whaley, 2000, p. 259). This gap in personal interaction with community members is associated with language barriers and may also be linked to different ways of interaction present in the Canadian environment.

Earlier research has demonstrated that Latino immigrants experience anxiety around the weakening of cultural roots and identity expressed in their dietary habits (Cason et al., 2006).

The facilitated access these families would have in their country of origin to fresh products is supported by a qualitative study with Latino immigrants in the United States. This study found that Latinos reported increased access to fresh fruit in their home countries (Cason et al., 2006). My research also provides an additional understanding of the close relationship with land as a provider to family needs.

In relation to gender roles, these are defined, to an important extent, by cultural norms and values from the country of origin which fosters expectations on what tasks should be performed by the mother in the family niche (i.e. food preparation, accommodating preferences and needs, childcare). The Latino mothers were in charge of food preparation and accommodation of dietary needs and food preferences, and previous research shows similar findings as well (Travers, 1994). Gender relations in Latin America at a first glance seem straightforward: man dominates, decides, and is encouraged by the society to be promiscuous as a reflection of his manliness – behaviors referred to as *machismo*;

woman accepts, obeys, is sexually reserved for her husband, and never questions

his decisions – based on *marianismo* (women reproduce Mary's virtues)

(Whiteford, 1978). To avoid over generalization or simplification of these gender

identities linked to the Latin culture, it is important to emphasize that those

dichotomous manifestations can vary in intensity and degree contingent on the

area of residence, socio-economic status, ethnicity, etc. (Stevens, 1973). Yet,

machismo and *marianismo* are still important aspects of the Latino culture and

can help contextualize the study.

Changes in gender dynamics and negotiation associated with the current

food environment take place concurrently with acculturation. This process can

lead to changes to the newcomer immigrants' traditions and cultural norms on

behalf of adapting to the new context (Berry, 1997). Torres, Solberg and

Carlstrom (2002), referring particularly to Latino men, stressed that their

adaptation can include a range of behaviors from preserving gendered patterns

strictly, to showing flexibility "in accommodating different demands of the social

and structural contexts, including changing roles within and outside the Latino

cultures" (p. 164). In my study, this was clearly reflected, given that the high cost

of food (structural context) and the absence of *mercados* – small stores close to

the households in their homeland – are associated with changes in gender roles.

A key issue impacting and mediating the mothers' socioeconomic and

mental adaptation was their level of English proficiency. This finding is

consistent with research of Latino immigrants and acculturation in the United

States (Arcia et al., 2001; Worthy, 2006). Vahabi et al. (2011) in their research

with Latino groups in Toronto, found that limited English skills could not only affect the prospects of economic development and employment for immigrants, but also their capacity to "access food related information" (p. 938), an issue that was also identified by the Latino mothers of this study.

Similar to my findings around the negative feelings and emotions (i.e. invisibility, anxiety, isolation, etc.) of not being able to communicate effectively, Worthy (2006) found that when Latino parents faced situations where they needed to use English, they felt disappointment, fear and frustration which led to feelings of being outsiders.

Findings suggest that the new immigrant mothers' perceptions of their world, opportunities and their feelings are greatly influenced by language barriers. Furthermore, the initial issues are around communication challenges that can have relevant emotional and social implications impacting the individual. This is consistent with Olsen's (2000) statement around proficiency of language: "English is not just a vehicle for communication; it is the social and political marker of affiliation and belonging" (p. 197).

Alongside the multidimensional challenges Latino mothers face, there are opportunities and resources that these families build on, including personal and environmental opportunities. Most research has focused on effects of language barriers for immigrants as these implications can impact core aspects of the individual (i.e. accessing and using health care services, their children's schooling, socioeconomic opportunities, and equity issues) (Flores, Abreu, Olivar & Kastner, 1998; Fillmore, 2000; Leon & Dziegielewski, 2007; Worthy, 2006).

Nonetheless, little is explored in relation to the individuals dealing with those challenges and the nuances of their experiences. The ethnographic review by Villenas and Deyhle (1999) identified not only challenges around language barriers in immigrant Latin American families in the context of schooling and family education, but also showed important levels of resilience, collective action and proactive strategies to protect their cultural heritage and respond to adaptation challenges. My study also supports the prominence of language barriers and expands on the mothers' self-reported coping strategies as they account for the difficulties they face with the language, yet at the same time, also illustrate their levels of self-determination, creativity and resilience.

In relation to dietary behavior of the Latino families, my study shows mixed patterns, particularly, a substantial decrease in consumption of fruits, yet in some cases, incorporating more vegetables to their diets, findings that are partially supported by the study of Cason et al. (2006). Nonetheless, studies around dietary changes of post-migration Latino groups have shown that dietary changes would include a drastic reduction in the consumption of fruits and vegetables (Park et al., 2011), or that eating habits would include an increase in the consumption of fruits and vegetables (Edmonds, 2005). The mixed findings may be associated with many factors such as country of origin, area of residence in their countries (rural vs. urban), income levels, education, and other contextual factors that were not studied in depth in this study.

Concerns around the habits of eating processed foods and artificial juices were also reported by the participants, and this finding is supported by the existing

literature (Himmelgreen, Romero-Daza, Cooper & Martinez, 2007; Salas, 2007).

Freshness, naturalness, good nutritional standards, diverse intake from food

groups, as well as moderation in the consumption of desserts and processed foods

were perceived as important requirements of healthy diet. These findings are

congruent with existing research on healthy eating perceptions (Paquette, 2005)

and similar research with immigrant groups in Canada (Koc & Welsh, 2001). A

recent mixed study with Latino immigrants found similar perceptions around

healthy eating noted as purity and naturalness of food (Park et al., 2011). In

addition, the study by Park et al. (2011) referred to the key role the "food

environment" of the new immigrants' home countries plays in decision making

and beliefs around food in the new context. Despite their significant motivation

to resist some untraditional products or practices that are perceived as unhealthy,

the impact of structural challenges and the demands from the new environment

shape their acculturation process. Park et al. (2011) referred to these tensions,

stating that "the actualization of those food preferences [i.e. fresh fruits and

vegetables] and beliefs is constrained by the food environments in which they

now live" (p.19).

The newcomer immigrant mothers' experiences and accounts around fast

food are a further illustration of these issues. Although, all mothers agreed that

fast food was not good for one's health, some reported consuming these products

due to their affordability and/or convenience. Cason et al. (2006) found that

Latinos in the United States named the convenience of fast food as a key aspect

determining their choice to consume this type of food.

A recent systematic review on dietary patterns and acculturation of Latinos yielded findings on increased consumption of fast food after arriving in the United States (Edmonds, 2005; Ayala, Baquero & Klinger, 2008). This is partially supported by my study, given that the regular consumption of this type of food differed by family. Nonetheless, from this research, there was an association of working conditions with increased consumption of fast food, which was shown in the qualitative study by Edmonds (2005).

This is consistent with findings as it was evident that structural challenges around income, employment, language barriers and childcare access undermined the newcomer immigrant mothers' ability to adhere to their values of healthy eating consistently. Results from previous research with immigrants in Canada have linked food insecurity with structural forces outside the control of the individuals, such as childcare, language, migration, economic and environmental challenges (Rush et al., 2007; Vahabi et al., 2011). Nonetheless, the mothers were resourceful in finding ways to maximize their available cash to purchase their desired products. Power (2005), after reviewing available research on healthy eating among low income Canadians, noted a similar reality: "Indeed, it can be concluded that those who live in poverty are particularly adept and creative in juggling and managing their financial and food resources to ensure that their most important needs are met first" (p. S39).

Migration presents challenges as noted by the families, and can be quite stressful (Brugra, 2004). However, it has also been identified as "liberating process" (Whiteford, 1978) given that opportunities for social and economic

mobility substantially increase. This was reflected in the families' perception of their migration tradeoffs, as they face challenges yet can provide better socioeconomic conditions for their families. In addition, living in a safe environment where the family can grow and develop, free of social violence and criminality, was identified as one of the top benefits from the migration process. Himmelgreen and colleagues, in their study with Latin American immigrants, identified "physical security" as one of the main perceived values of migration (Himmelgreen et al., 2007).

The Latino mothers were aware of the need to compromise some aspects of food security as they know it (fresh, diversity, accessible fruits and vegetables) for the certainty of improved economic opportunities that Canada offers, since this will not only improve their living conditions but provide more reliable opportunities to access the products they desire. A study with Latino groups in the United States identified mixed findings around dietary acculturation, noting that some groups would decrease their consumption of fresh produce, yet others would increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables. The group, who noted increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, pointed out that living and working in the United States was providing the economic security to purchase products that they were unable to consume in their home countries (Cason, Nieto-Montenegro & Chavez-Martinez, 2006).

4.1.2 Synergy of the main findings

Major concepts identified throughout the data analysis are shown in Figure 5. Dotted outlines aim at representing how categories and issues permeate each

other and do not act in silos, but dynamically interact with structural, social and cultural elements. The diagram presents food security as embedded in the complex realities of the Latino mothers and is influenced by structural and social issues (hexagons) such as gender, migration policies, level of English proficiency, income and economic development, as well as the acculturation process itself and their cultural background.

Figure 5. Synergy of the main findings
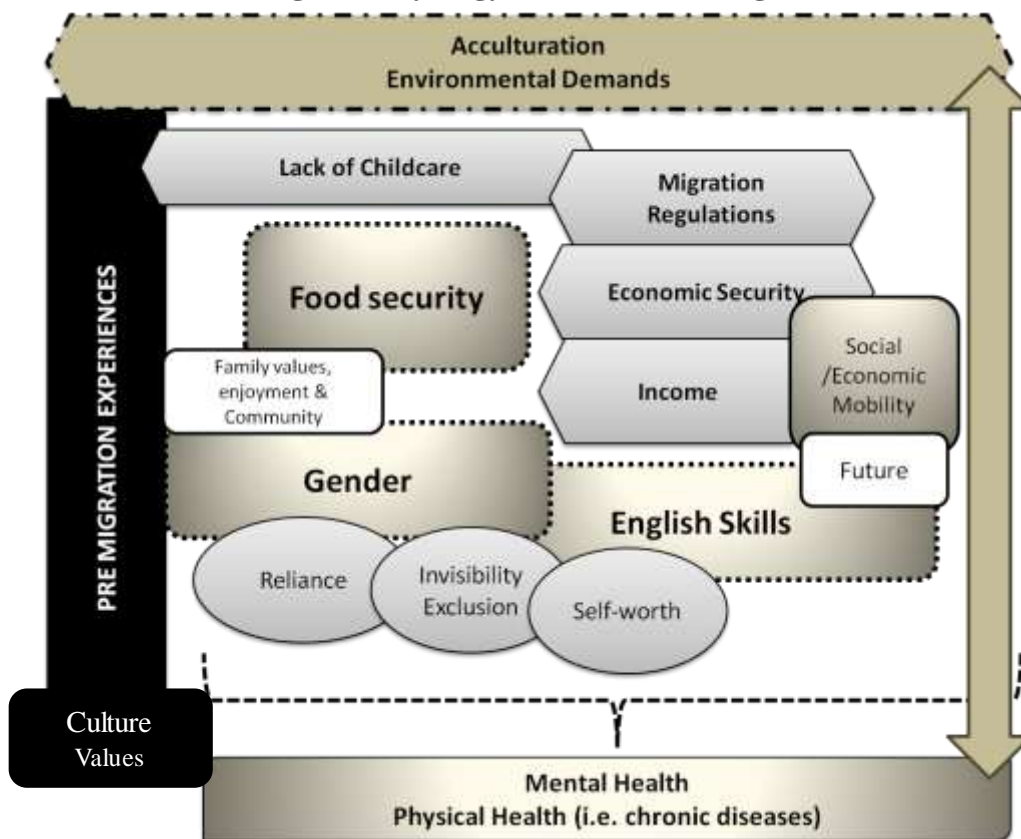
The mothers' pre-migration experience includes key cultural values and experiences that shape their acculturation journey, particularly how they adapt, perceive food security, and respond to the integration challenges and dietary acculturation. The desire to preserve cultural roots is reflected in food preparation

and habits around meals. How food security is perceived is also shaped by their cultural norms, particularly family values attached to sharing meals, their reliance on family gardens, and their traditional eating patterns. Dietary habits and perceptions around food are also linked to their traditions, as illustrated by the shock with the use of canned goods, as they are used to cooking their meals from scratch. In addition, food security is also linked to the mothers' lived experiences in their home countries. These experiences influence their expectations for socialization with local vendors, perception of fast food, and the role Canada plays as a provider of a more secure future in terms of life opportunities that are not only limited to accessing food. Although the Latino mothers acknowledge that they had better access to fresh and traditional products in their home countries, they accepted these tradeoffs, given that Canada is perceived to provide better employment and income that fosters economic security, therefore, improving their purchasing power. Therefore, being food secure is not only associated with freshness of food or accessibility of culturally relevant products, it is also strongly linked to socioeconomic security and migration policies. For those mothers, who have a temporary migration status, not being allowed to stay in Canada would mean returning to their countries, where socioeconomic opportunities are limited.

Furthermore, for these mothers, Canada not only means better access to economic opportunities, this country also provides safety and physical security which are highly valued as some families used to live in countries with high levels of civil unrest and criminality. The perception of safety and improved

opportunities in Canada play a key role in how they cope with current acculturation challenges, as challenges are perceived as a transition to a better future for their families, particularly their children.

English skills are associated with gender issues, as limitations on communication can foster reliance and dependence on husbands, making these mothers invisible and many times excluded from the dynamics of the world around them. This is reflected on the barriers for using public transportation or not being able to select products at the store. Furthermore, little or no proficiency of English is associated with deep feelings of isolation, disconnection and poor self-esteem affecting some of the participants' mental health and sense of belonging. On the contrary, mothers who noted being forced by their husbands to speak English during basic activities (i.e. buying clothing, ordering food), pointed out feeling unsupported and highly frustrated initially, yet with time, they had gained enough language skills to get by, and that had empowered them to feel more confident.

Indeed, language barriers can undermine the livelihoods of these families, given that access to employment and steady income is greatly contingent on language skills. Income has shown to be strongly associated with food security in different contexts and across different groups (i.e. Canadian mothers, aboriginal groups, immigrant groups) (Travers, 1997; Rush et al., 2007; Willows, Veugelers, Raine & Kuhle, 2008; Tarasuk & Vogt, 2009; Vahabi et al., 2011) since the possibility of accessing culturally relevant products depends on available cash

flow. Moreover, social and economic mobility are limited by English literacy, which in turn, may place them at greater risk of food security in the future.

Structural barriers and gender expectations linked to the mothers' cultures, affect to a great extent opportunities to develop linguistic capital. For instance, some of the mothers reported not being able to work and produce an income and have more opportunities to be immersed in English, due to lack of access to childcare (structural barrier), and due to migration barriers not allowing close relatives to come and help take care of the children. Since mothers are expected to fully dedicate themselves to their children (gender expectations), they are limited in deciding otherwise or looking for other options that may allow them to participate more actively in the new society. As mentioned earlier, most of these mothers are professionals, highly proactive and determined, with a great desire to learn English and develop, reflected in their coordination of an English group for adults out of their own initiatives. However, the structural challenges outside of their control limit them in their development.

Even for those mothers, who have more flexibility and can opt to work, their limited income levels, force them to focus solely on working, without being able to balance between working and learning English. In addition, their limited income influences the opportunities to access diversity of fruits and healthy products on a consistent basis. Although these mothers strive to feed their children with healthy meals, these efforts are undermined by various limitations, such as the accessibility to high fat nutritionally poor foods widely available in their environments and the high cost of healthy and culturally relevant products.

The findings from my research are supported by an ecological approach (McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler & Glanz, 1998) given that marked influences at the individual, environmental, social and structural levels shape the perceptions and behaviors of the mothers, as well as their access to social and economic opportunities permeating their health and development. For instance, the beliefs and values of the mothers and their behaviors (intrapersonal level and micro-level) are influenced by their cultural frames of reference and relate to the current society they live in (macro-level and community and organizational levels). Similarly, their values of social interaction and desire to form support networks in Canada through community initiatives show the relevance of the interpersonal level linked to the community and meso-level.

An important aspect of the ecological approach (McLeroy et al., 1988) is that it accounts for the individual's background and history. This is particularly relevant in this study, as the pre-migration experiences and cultural values influence many aspects of the newcomer immigrant mothers' acculturation process. For instance, social violence and/or the limited chances to develop economically in their home countries play an important role in shaping how the mothers perceive the challenges of the new environment and outweigh the tradeoffs they cope with. There is also a strong connection of the intrapersonal level holding the individual's values and attitudes, and the interpersonal level, as for the mothers food is viewed as a means for family interaction and quality time with close relatives.

The community for these mothers has played a pivotal role in reconciling some of those challenges and provided key opportunities for building support networks, including learning how to navigate the Canadian system. The mothers identified an array of benefits as a result of being involved with the Multicultural Health Brokers including emotional support during post-partum depression, access to a food bank, a venue of sharing Latino recipes, finding friends who were in similar positions and building support particularly for pregnant mothers.

The mothers are also aware of the importance of an environment that facilitates healthy options and consistently sustain those options. For instance, Sara from El Salvador noted that while she was in the United States she noticed a rhetoric aiming at promoting healthy eating in schools, yet the schools would only prepare high fat and nutritionally poor meals for children. Identifying this gap between the discourse and action facilitating the healthy options shows the importance placed on health and children, as well as the mothers' understanding of the role of environment in impacting health and wellness.

CHAPTER 5. Recommendations, limitations and conclusions

5.1 Policy and practice Recommendations

One of the key roles of public health is to decrease health disparities grounded in comprehensive social determinants of health approach, particularly for groups that are at increased vulnerability of illness and impaired quality of life (Thomson & Hoffman-Goezt, 2009). Undoubtedly, food insecurity is a public health concern (McIntyre, 2003) and specific policy efforts are needed to facilitate the acculturation process and successful integration of Latino families to the Canadian society.

The policy recommendations I outline in this section are based on the mothers' feedback and lessons learned from this research, as well as the issues identified by current research that are relevant to my study. I am drawing on the views of the participants, as they have experienced food insecurity to different extents, and have coped in different ways with the issue; therefore, they can provide valuable recommendations. This approach is supported by Riches (1997) in his policy recommendations around food security and identifying key stakeholders to speak on the issue: "Comprehensive policies need to be developed, not just by anti-poverty advocates, health and welfare experts and proponents of sustainable agriculture but also by those who have to date been on the receiving end of charity [recipients of food bank assistance and people experiencing food insecurity]" (p. 71). In addition, recommendations are based on an ecological framework given that "ecological approaches can help organize strategies that work both to help individuals adopt healthy lifestyles and to

influence policy in order to create opportunities for social and cultural change"

(Raine, 2005, p. s8).

Table 3 outlines specific recommendations based on the mothers' accounts

linked to the relevant ecological level(s) that can apply to policies and

interventions.

Table 3. Policy Recommendations based on mothers' feedback

Ecological Level	Purpose/Focus of Interventions	Quote
Public Policy	Evaluation of migratory systems to identify impact and potential ways to improve the quality of life of immigrants Flexibility of migration regulations for support of mothers who are pregnant and need the support of close relatives. Policies aimed at addressing childcare barriers for low income immigrant mothers.	"You feel very alone, when my children were born it was a bit hard…when my baby girl was born my sister was going to come but they didn't give her the visa, I was alone [husband was working] and it was hard…" Maria
Public Policy	Facilitating access to healthy options and culturally relevant products on a consistent basis.	"Fruits, having access to variety of fruits, it would really help her, in my opinion these are the healthiest." Sara "I would ask them to think a bit more in the products to be more accessible, yes I know, quality is important, but the poor people want to eat." Michelle
Public Policy, Community Level, Institutional Interpersonal Level	Providing language support coupled with employment opportunities.	"We did not come here to live off the government, we were not taught to live like that. If they give us opportunities we will take them... If I get the opportunity to learn English in two months I know I will be working right away…" Michelle

Ecological Level	Purpose/Focus of Interventions	Quote
Public Policy, Community Level	Providing English as Second Language (ESL) programs tailored to adults needs (i.e. age) and prioritizing vulnerable groups (i.e. low income older mothers). Reducing childcare barriers to facilitate mothers' socioeconomic integration to the Canadian society (i.e. consistently participating in ESL classes).	"I wish they [governments] could provide some pedagogy for older immigrants, not all come as children which have more capacity to learn. If you learn the language you can defend yourself and get by... If I get the opportunity to learn English in two months I know I will be working right away…" Michelle
Public Policy, Community Level, Interpersonal Level	Providing culturally competent services and building networks. Prenatal support in the form of collective kitchen coordinated by culturally competent personnel and focus on celebrating traditional values and culinary traditions.	"I am very happy mostly because they [Multicultural Health Brokers] did not give me an economic help, or nothing, but yes they have helped me a lot with my health and emotionally, they introduced me to the girls... I integrated with them very well and we still meet. We cook different recipes from our countries and we share them." Katy
Public Policy, Organizational Level	Providing working conditions that can facilitate healthy eating.	"What concerns me is that he works out the whole day, and he can't take a prepared lunch from home, because where do you heat it? Eat in the street, big soda, and fast food that rises his glucose, it concerns me that he eats in the street, but also that he will wait until he gets home to eat something." Isabel
Intrapersonal Level, Community Level	Increasing nutritional knowledge via community programs or other initiatives.	"I would like educational lessons on how to feed our family, courses so we can learn how to feed our children." Sara

Ecological Level	Purpose/Focus of Interventions	Quote
Public Policy, Community Level	Environments facilitating healthy food options and access to those options. For instance, Healthy Eating Programs at schools that facilitate access to healthy food options including products offered by cafeteria.	"In the States they give food to the children in the schools, and it's caught my attention that they talk a lot about eating healthy how important it is, but what they have in the schools is hamburgers, they never cooked anything healthy… I would like this to start from the home and schools so children can get things that are healthy." Sara

Although these initiatives are presented in separate rows, my research supports that all of these issues are interrelated and often times, one well planned intervention (policy and/or program) sensitive to the needs of its audience can affect several aspects of the families' lives. For instance, high quality English as a Second Language courses may not reach groups in greater need due to mothers' childcare and economic barriers. Therefore, it is important to find ways to integrate employment opportunities with learning the language, yet at the same time provide childcare support that can allow mothers to invest time in studying the language and pursuing work opportunities.

Rush et al. (2007) found that Colombian immigrants experienced high vulnerability to food insecurity, and in their recommendations they highlighted a comprehensive approach that not only focuses on providing support for sustaining healthy eating patterns but also offers key assistance to the process of integrating and adapting to the new context. Mothers were aware that the critical time to assist in their needs was while they were initially settling in the new context.

They emphasized that they did not want to live off the government but wished to receive transition opportunities to help them reach their full potential. Ideally, these issues can be tackled from a public policy standpoint, given that communities may be limited in their scope and resources to address structural issues.

Policy action should be directed to the structural issues fueling socioeconomic vulnerability, which is closely associated with increased risk of food insecurity. This approach is consistent with aiming at the heart of inequality, targeting its root causes, rather than investing all efforts in its effects (Coburn, 2000).

For instance, it is widely recognized that income can be a critical issue affecting the household's food security. As noted by McIntyre (2003): "Getting out of hunger depended upon one change only– mothers get a full-time job, and the family's income rises accordingly" (p. 50). Although McIntyre's study did not focus on immigrant mothers, and the findings of my study reflect that Latino mothers experience additional layers of challenges in settling and integrating into the Canadian socioeconomic system (i.e. language barriers, lack of family support networks, etc.), all of McIntyre's policy recommendations are relevant to the Latino mothers. This is mainly because they link to most of the determinants of food insecurity and recommend increasing access to fair income, job opportunities, healthy products (i.e. milk), daycare, affordable housing and work related support for new immigrant families (McIntyre, 2003).

Riches (1999) has offered recommendations coherent with a comprehensive and intersectoral policy approach to target food insecurity as a matter of rights and social equality:

"[It] is critically important for social policy analysis to engage a range of interconnected agricultural, cultural, ecological, economic, health, and social justice issues as they bear upon the dramatic growth of hunger and the corporatization of food in Canadian society. This is important if we understand progressive social policy as an integrative analysis focused on exploring and addressing structural inequalities, understanding hunger and food security as political questions and matters of distributional justice and promoting the democratic rights of citizenship and food sovereignty" (p. 204).

Evidently, food insecurity is a result of structural challenges, yet it can also become a source of health inequalities. For instance, food insecurity has been linked to chronic diseases that can affect people's health and productivity (Seligman et al., 2010), which in the long term can also cause food insecurity (due to reduced participation in the workforce) and health disparities.

A key issue that needs to be addressed to facilitate integration of the newcomer families into the Canadian society is increasing English proficiency, as this issue permeates and mediates relevant socioeconomic and health aspects. Alberta provides several options for English as a Second Language programs geared towards lower income groups. These programs are generally provided by nongovernmental organizations (Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers,

Catholic Social Services, CCI-LEX) or private organizations such as Norquest College, which offer programs funded by the federal government (i.e. LINC). Yet, my study demonstrates that there may be some access barriers that may impede these families to attend the programs in the first place (i.e. lack of childcare, imperative to work), and that some issues of adequacy (i.e. age) need to be addressed. For instance, lack of access to childcare is an important limitation, as illustrated by the mothers that were eager to learn and coordinated an English support group in close proximity to their homes; nonetheless, they were not able to attend because they had to take care of their children.

Additionally, the pressing need to work limits available time to dedicate to learning English. To reconcile the needs to produce an income and learn English, it can be helpful to establish a transition program for immigrants offering job opportunities and concurrent English lessons based on their daily interactions (similar to "Work and Study Programs" offered by different private companies). Mothers placed great value on learning English as they were aware that this could help alleviate most of the challenges they face, particularly, accessing a steady income and employment. They did not want to be perceived as 'scroungers' of the system, but as people greatly willing to participate socioeconomically in the Canadian society as a means to building a better future for their families. The majority of mothers had achieved university level in their home countries and they were eager to gain English literacy.

My study found that even mothers who had learned English in their home countries, found it intimidating and overwhelming to use this language in Canada.

Therefore, language support services or programs for newcomers as they transition into the new environment can provide the boost of confidence to them. These programs should have courses planned according to the newcomers' individual levels of proficiency and should be tailored to the needs of the families. This is particularly important for older adults, given that older mothers had to struggle the most with English and felt at a disadvantage in relation to others.

The relationship of gender, English proficiency, and mental health is supported by this study and attention should be given to these aspects, as these not only affect their present circumstances but may compromise their long term adaptation and health. Krupinski (1967) found that for immigrant women, who had not been able to learn the language of the host country after a few years, and whose husbands and children had learned through work and school, there existed a greater risk of mental health issues later in life, and this was associated with being excluded from the assimilation process. Additionally, the deep nostalgia around family-driven meal sharing is enhanced by the disconnection to their current environment due to limited English proficiency, which results in serious isolation given the lack of interaction. Feelings of isolation and not being able to achieve basic needs for the family can be detrimental to health for immigrant women (Vissandjee, Demeules,Cao, Adbool & Kasanjian, 2004).

Although, acculturation can have long-term psychological and social consequences, this cannot be generalized to every immigrant and it is highly dependent on contextual experiences and factors prior to the migration and during

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the continuum of the acculturation process (Berry, 1997). Policies facilitating social support and building support networks are necessary, as mothers reported concurrent feelings of isolation and need of family support, particularly, during their pregnancy and first years of their babies. For instance, the mothers mentioned how migration policies can help address the burdens associated with isolation and depression by providing more flexibility to allow close relatives (i.e. grandmother, sisters) to visit and provide support during pregnancy and early years of their babies. This also relates to the importance of regularly revisiting migratory regulation and policies in relation to how the impact the quality of life of immigrants families and evaluated so their implementation can better serve the interest of those families.

Both in the realm of policy and health promotion practice, key importance should be given to integrating and highlighting cultural values throughout the design and implementation of health promotion programs and policies. This can, for instance, translate into delivery of services in a culturally relevant manner by culturally competent staff who understand the diversity of needs of the low income newcomer immigrant families and are in a better position to offer guidance and comprehensive services relevant to them.

As noted by McLeroy et al. (1988), on health promotion community interventions, "the extent to which our interventions conflict with or support subcultural norms and values is the extent to which we can expect specific subgroups in the communities to resist or support our approaches" (p. 365). Power (2008) has made similar recommendations around understanding the issue

of food insecurity within the cultural and spiritual values of aboriginal groups. The Latino mothers perceive and interact with their environment through the lens of their inherent cultural values, such as *personalismo* and *familiarismo*, as described in my research. Therefore, cultural awareness of those values should assist the design, planning and implementation of policies and programs to ensure those strategies are relevant to the groups they serve. For instance, it is evident that food security for these families not only includes nutritional standards, but is also heavily entrenched in their cultural values that provide meaning to their lives and practices.

Establishing a collective kitchen the mothers referred to in their discussions can be seen as an intervention at the meso-level. This kitchen was created as a venue to assist the newcomer immigrant mothers in meeting other Latino families and as a space to share traditional recipes Beyond its initial goals, the collective kitchen also provides a setting for mothers to share information on child rearing and buffer the effects of isolation, and it is a space for celebrating their culture and identity. This service is planned by a Latin American coordinator, who is also a mother and has been in Canada for many years, which indicates the relevance of providing culturally relevant service by culturally competent staff. The mothers spoke highly of the program, reporting its mental health, social, and physical benefits. Notwithstanding the benefits, further research is needed in community initiatives such as the collective kitchen, its sustainability and influence on eating practices within Latin American groups.

In addition, the mothers were aware of the importance of healthy eating and overall were very eager within their means to adhere to healthy diets (i.e. high intake of fruits and vegetables); however, it was clear that Canada's food environment presented barriers of cost, diversity, and freshness that affected the newcomer immigrant families' access to food.

The recommendations provided should be understood from an ecological perspective that aims at addressing issues with multilevel interventions that can influence policies, regulations, and the built environment, which can result in providing families and individuals with an environment conducive to health and well-being.

5.2 Research recommendations

In this section, I will outline research recommendations to address relevant knowledge gaps as there is a lack of research around food security and minority groups such as Latin Americans in Canada. The vast majority of research about this immigrant group has been developed in the United States, a context that differs substantially from Canada. For instance, previous research (Worthy, 2006) and participants from this study who have lived in the United States prior to settling in Canada identify that their neighborhoods, where they lived in the United States, presented great availability of culturally familiar products and meals, as well as a high density of other Latin American groups, leading to fewer opportunities to be immersed in English, suggesting that the dynamics of language proficiency may play out differently in Canada.

My study only collected perspectives of the Latino mothers. Although the study was open to both males and females, only females responded to the recruitment. For future studies, it will be important to identify degrees of acculturation within family members and how gender dynamics play out in relation to food security.

My research also supports the importance of exploring food security and acculturation within a qualitative framework that is sensitive to the nuances of the experiences of the families as well as their contexts. The vast majority of literature about Latino immigrants and food security in Canada is of quantitative nature. In that respect, Thomson and Hoffman-Goetz (2009) have noted the inconsistency of acculturation measurements, given that the concept of acculturation explicitly includes values, attitudes and beliefs, yet it is not clear to what extent acculturation tools are sensitive and inclusive of these elements. Lopez-Class et al. (2011) have also identified the need to integrate a greater use of qualitative methods to assist in "recognizing personal and social influences (e.g. family networks) that occur across the acculturation continuum…as these systemic family processes will influence how acculturation affects each family member's health and psychological well-being" (p. 1,557).

Further research is needed in identifying health protective factors for low income newcomer Latino families. For instance, exploring community initiatives such as the collective kitchen, as well as government policies and services for these groups, it terms of impact, gaps and sustainability within Latin American groups. Finally, my research supports the relevance of identifying protective and

risk factors associated with acculturation of newcomers and its relationship with food security. As noted by Thomson and Hoffman-Goezt (2009), "it is important for public health researchers to understand how the process of acculturation may be influencing health outcomes of individuals and their communities" (p. 984).

5.3 Limitations

Findings from my study should be contextualized within several limitations. First, analyzing data with participants was not completed in its entirety. It was not possible to involve them in the process of creating categories and identifying patterns and themes. One of the challenges of this section of the analysis is the great amount of time needed to complete such activities. In the time of the study, most of the mothers were on maternity leave, which granted them more time and flexibility. Yet, I had to promptly coordinate our group meeting to share photographs they had taken as the following week two of the mothers were starting their jobs again. Other photovoice projects have acknowledged the substantial amount of time demanded of participants and researchers when compared to other data collection strategies (i.e. survey, a focus group). Photovoice includes high degree of involvement in participatory actions, training in ethical guidelines and use of camera, taking photos, being interviewed, reviewing results, and other activities, which can affect participant retention and full involvement (Schwartz et al., 2007; Castleden & Garvin 2008).

The second limitation is that it is possible that due to the prominent visual nature of photovoice, where photographs connect and tell the stories, tangible and non-tangible aspects of the mothers' lives, associated with food security, whether

directly or indirectly, may have been overlooked or unexplored. For most participants, the task of taking photos was enjoyed, but one of the participants reported having difficulty in finding ways to express her concerns through photos. Adapting photovoice to having individual interviews after photos were taken, instead of the traditional workshops and focus groups, aimed at tackling this concern, yet I am aware that such limitation was still probable.

The third limitation is linked to the generalizability of findings. The views and perspectives shared by the mothers represent the ideas of those who decided to participate in the study, in this particular time of their lives, and those ideas might not be representative of the views of other individuals in the same cohort. For instance, five out of six mothers were recruited from the same organization and were on maternity leave, which denotes particular characteristics that may not be experienced by other low income newcomer Latin American women in Edmonton. Also, the insights of the mothers on maternity leave may not reflect the ideas of those mothers who are working, or are on limited maternity leave.

In addition, it is difficult to identify to what extent policy action will be catalyzed as a result of this study, given the scarcity of research around this group in Canada, as well as the nature of policy change and its requirements. As noted by Wang & Pies (2004): "policy change is often slow and incremental, and data of all kinds are needed by policy makers to inform a viewpoint and frame a persuasive argument" (p. 101). In addition, Strack, Lovelace, Davis & Holmes (2010) have identified that "although photovoice may contribute to system-level change, changes in physical environment, social environments, and policies are

complex and may require extensive, long-term efforts…". Nonetheless, this study contributes to initiating efforts in understanding the challenges and opportunities experienced by low income newcomer Latino families while they acculturate to Canada, which should encourage further research and policy attention to address the structural barriers and challenges these families experience.

5.4 Conclusions

My study aimed to answer three research questions: (1) What are facilitators and barriers for accessing sufficient, nutritious, and culturally appropriate meals among low income newcomer Latin American families living in Edmonton, Alberta? (2) What are the perspectives, concerns, and experiences of low income newcomer Latin American families around the issue of food security? (3) How does access to food relate to their lives, communities, and integration process to Canadian society?

In relation to question 1, What are facilitators and barriers for accessing sufficient, nutritious, and culturally appropriate meals among low income newcomer Latin American families living in Edmonton, Alberta? It was identified that facilitators for food security are the access to specific traditional products at affordable prices (i.e. tortilla flour, beans and rice), use and access of media sources and traditional cooking tools, as well as the resourcefulness of mothers integrating new ingredients and finding stores that provide products that are affordable, nutritious and culturally familiar. The families reported the immediate barriers associated with food security, which include the cost of culturally relevant products, limitations in identifying the purpose and use of products

available in Canada due to limited English proficiency, migration and childcare barriers, the elevated use of cans and processed foods, the readiness and availability of fast food, and the working conditions of husbands that limited their ability to eat at home or take home-cooked meals to their jobs. The mothers acknowledged the importance of an environment that is conducive to health and facilitated healthy eating opportunities for children. English proficiency was identified by the mothers as a key barrier while adapting to the new context and is a key mediator of food security as it affects access to socioeconomic opportunities and social interaction. The mothers were proactive and eager to learn English; nonetheless, structural and social barriers have impeded them from achieving English proficiency. These mothers also gave importance on how they are perceived and how supportive other Canadians are in the midst of their learning process.

Understanding the barriers and facilitators of food security in the context of newcomer low income Latino immigrants helps bring into perspective the multifaceted nature of the issue which is influenced by a myriad of social and structural factors, as well as cultural values. This demands directing health promotion and public policy efforts to influence migration and socio economic policies and programs to facilitate the newcomer immigrant families' integration into Canadian society.

In regards to research question 2, What are the perspectives, concerns, and experiences of low income newcomer Latin American families around the issue of food security? My study supports that cultural values and norms shape the

acculturation process of low income newcomer Latin American families in Edmonton, Alberta. The desire to preserve cultural roots was manifested through the mothers' habits around food including food preparation, decor, and purchasing accessible products from "home" such as beans, tortilla flour, rice, and others. Flavour constitutes an important marker of quality for food, particularly if meals can taste like traditional dishes. Both research questions #2 and #3, are interconnected as the perspectives of the participants around food security is associated with their daily lives and vision of the future, interpersonal relations and behaviors.

Findings in relation to research question 3, How does access to food relate to their lives, communities, and integration process to Canadian society? The results showed that food represents more than a meal or a dish and is inherently associated with the experience of sharing with family members and relatives. The family connection now physically non-existent due to distance was associated with mental health, and was enhanced by feelings of isolation due to language barriers. In addition, the acculturation process includes behavioral and dietary changes to accommodate environmental demands that may threaten physical health (i.e. risk of chronic disease associated with intake of nutritionally poor food) and mental health (i.e. depression due to isolation and exclusion) for these low income newcomer immigrants, as they deal with isolation, language barriers, childcare and migration regulation barriers.

In addition, the Latino mothers showed great levels of resilience, flexibility and creativity throughout their dietary acculturation processes, which

included integrating new products and cooking practices, finding alternate ways to secure food and the use of internet and television as a source of self-efficacy. They were significantly concerned around canned, processed, and fast food, as they were more accessible but were perceived as culturally inappropriate and detrimental to one's health.

The main motivation of the families for moving to a new country and dealing with migration challenges is to provide a better future for their children, particularly the future with improved socioeconomic opportunities and physical security. It was evident that there are tradeoffs involved with the decision to migrate, for instance, sacrificing affordable access to fresh and culturally relevant products in order to provide a better future for their families. Therefore, food security might be perceived as secondary when contrasted with other aspects of their lives, such as access to better employment and income, which they believe that over time, would provide economic security for alleviating food insecurity issues.

Findings from this study highlight the importance of addressing food insecurity issues from a comprehensive ecological approach. This can account for the layered nature of the issues and dynamics embedded in this public health concern, as well as explain the multidimensional challenges of acculturation faced by the Latin American families. Given the importance of cultural ties and preserving identity through food and associated habits for the mothers, it is important to design policies and services that are culturally sensitive and conducive to wellness and health.

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Appendix 1. Photo credits by image numbers

- Yessica Díaz Images: 1, 5, 8, 21,23
- Yaumara Costas Images: 2, 10, 12, 13
- Karen González Images: 9, 11, 25
- Donatila Sánchez Images: 3, 19
- Olga Wallens Images: 7, 15, 16, 20, 22
- Lucía Cardoza Images: 4,6, 14, 17,18,24

Appendix 2. Interview Guide

Introduction: Thank participant for their time and explain the process of the interview. The researcher will ask you about different things related their culture, habits, food, and family. They can feel free to give as much or as little information they want. At the end of the interview, the participant will share with the researcher her photographs and explain why she selected each photo as favorite, why did she take this picture, and other related aspects.

- Where are you from? Tell me a bit about your country
- How long have you been in Canada? What do you think of living in Canada? How did you come to be here?
- How many children do you have? Do you pay particular attention to your children's needs/preferences when you are shopping for food?
- What are some of the meals from your country you miss the most? Do you get to make them here? How often? (or Why not?)
- How do you get traditional products here in Edmonton? Is there anything that you can't get and why?
- Where do you generally buy your groceries? Why?
- How do you choose where you buy your groceries? *(Location? Price? Quality of the food?)*
- When you go to the store, how do you decide which products to buy? For instance, if you have two of the same product, which one do you pick and why?
- Can you please take me through a day in your life...what do you cook for breakfast, lunch and dinner?
- When you go to the store, what things you always PUT in your cart? What is never missing in the cart?
- What does "eating healthy" means to you? What do people think "eating healthy is in your culture?
- What differences do you find between Canada and your country when it comes to food and cooking meals?
- Have you used the food bank? What do you think of it?
- What do you think of Wendy's, McDonald's and those kinds of food places? How often do you there?

Introduction to Photograph discussion: Now, we will talk about the photos you took during this week, and your favourite ones.
- First, how was your week taking pictures? *Tell me how you felt, what you liked the most and what you liked the least.*

Now, Please show me your favorite five pictures. With each of the pictures, the participant will be asked to describe:

- Why did you pick is as favourite? / Tell me about your photos/what is happening there/ Why did you decide to take a picture of this.
- If you had in front of you, someone of influence, someone with power to change things, let's say a Politian, and he/she would ask you: what things from your life or community do you need so you and your family have better access to food, what would you say?

Appendix 3. Information Letter

Exploring food security among low income Latin American families in Edmonton, Alberta

Principal Investigator:
Cristabel Sosa, Msc Student, School of Public Health, Centre for Health Promotion Studies, University of Alberta.
Contact information: sosahern@ualberta.ca Tel. 780 996 9828

Supervisors:
Dr. Kim Raine, School of Public Health. Email: **kim.raine@ualberta.ca** Tel. **780.492.9415**

Dr. Lory Laing, School of Public Health. Email: **Lory.laing@ualberta.ca** Tel. **780.492.6211**

Purpose: I would like to find out your opinion regarding food, particularly what things from your life, work, and community make it easier or harder for you to get healthy food and meals that are from your culture. I would also like to find out if you have any concerns about this and how they influence your family and social life. You will get to express your views by taking pictures of those things that are important and relate to you and your family.

The Process:
We will have an orientation meeting to talk about the project, how to use the camera and important guidelines when taking pictures. Childcare and refreshments will be provided for this meeting. The duration of the meeting will be less than an hour and a half. At the meeting, I will give you a disposable camera so you can take pictures for the following week.
You will have an opportunity to take pictures of anything you would like around your house, neighbourhood and city that you consider relates to food. This can include (but is not limited): what does food mean to you and your family? What things make it easier for you to get healthy food and meals from your culture? What things make it harder?

After one week, I will pick up the camera, print the pictures, and will return it you on the same day. You will pick your favorite five photographs, and will add comments on why you picked that picture as a favourite. You can make any other comments that you consider important.

After this, I will meet with you for an interview. The length of the interview will range from 45 minutes to one hour and a half. I will coordinate to meet with you, in the place and time that is more convenient to you. During the interview we will

talk about the pictures you took, what motivated you to take them, what do you think of what is happening in the picture, and any other comments you might have.

If all participants agree, we will have a second group meeting, where every person gets to present to the group their top five pictures, as well as why they took them, why they like them or not, etc. This meeting is optional. Child care and refreshments will be provided at this meeting.

Interviews: Interviews will take place where it is easier for the participant and the day that is convenient for both the participant and the researcher. Interviews are individual and child care will not be provided for these.

Possible Benefits: If you take part, you will have the chance to tell me about things that you consider are helping you to get healthy foods and meals from your culture, and also things that concern you as a barrier to getting proper food for you and your family.

This will help me learn how things in your community and life affect the access Latin American families have to healthy food options and meals of their culture.

Possible Risks: The risks of taking part in this study are small. The interviews might take time away from the other things you do. If the questions upset you, you do not need to share that information.

Compensation: After the interview, you will receive a grocery gift card in the amount of CAD $20.00, and another $20.00 grocery gift card for participating in the second group meeting, if it is agreed with the group that they would like to have this last meeting. There is no gift card for the orientation meeting. These gift certificates are to thank you for participating. You will also be given a copy of all the photographs you took.

Recording: Please note that we will record each of the meetings and your interview, because this will help us make sure that we have all the information you have provided in a clear manner. These recordings will be typed into a document (by me) to help me understand the results. Nobody except me, my supervisors or my thesis committee will read this document. It will not contain any of your personal information.

Confidentiality: The only people who will listen to the interviews are me and my supervisors. We will type up what we talked about. Your name will not be in the typed version of the interview. Only a code number will be used for the interviews and pseudonyms for your name in the interviews. This code does not have any information that identifies you. This is to protect your confidentially. Only my supervisors and I will read the typed interview. Although we will ask the group to keep confidentially of what is discussed in the group meetings, we cannot

guarantee that everyone will keep discussion confidential. If you want your name to be associated with the photos you take, you must understand that this will limit the researchers' possibility to protect your identity.

Results: I will share the things that I learn in this study with others including people from the university, community and general society. This will be through presentations and articles. Your name will not be given in any of these.

Photographing: You can take pictures of anything you like, but you must avoid taking pictures of individuals. If you do so, prior to the picture the person must sign the Photo Release Form (we will provide some copies) and the person will decide if he/she wants to be identified or prefers his/her face to be blurred.

Documents and Photographs: The tapes, documents, photographs and the written version of the interviews will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Alberta for five years. Any document from this research will be kept in a password protected folder in the University of Alberta.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can leave the study at any time. You can withdraw your data and material up until the data analysis phase, which usually starts two weeks after the interview. You do not have to take part in this study if you do not want to. If you do not wish to participate, you can leave the study at anytime. You do not have to answer a question(s) if you don't want to.

This study has been assessed for its adherence to ethical rules and approved by the Health Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta.

For questions or concerns about participant's rights and the approach taken with you or the research, please contact the Health Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-0459

Appendix 4. Informed Consent

Exploring food security among Latin American Families in Edmonton, Alberta

Principal Investigator: Email: sosahern@ualberta.ca Tel. 780
Cristabel Sosa, Msc Student   996 9828

                                                            Supervisors:
Dr. Kim Raine, School of Public Health, Email: kim.raine@ualberta.ca Tel.
780.492.9415

Dr. Lory Laing, School of Public Health, Email: Lory.laing@ualberta.ca Tel.
780.492.621

Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study?	Y N
Have you read and received a copy of the attached Information Sheet?	Y N
Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in taking part in this project?	Y N
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study?	Y N
Do you understand that you can withdraw from (leave) the study at any time?	Y N
Do you understand that you can withdraw data and material up until the data analysis starts?	Y N
Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you? Do you understand who will have access to the information you provide?	Y N
Do you understand that the information and the photographs you provide us will be kept in a locked cabinet (hard copies) and that the digital copies will be stored in the main researcher's password protected computer?	Y N
Do you understand that if you do not want to answer a question you do not need to and that you do not have to give any explanations on your motives to not respond?	Y N
I agree that my name and/or identity to be associated with my photos	Y N
I agree to participate in this research	Y N

Participant's signature:

Print Name:

Date:

Researcher's Signature and Name

Appendix 5. Consent for Release of Photographic Information (Minors)

I _____ (name) hereby grant permission to the University of Alberta for the use of, and the rights associated to the use of, photograph(s) taken of my child
by _____ (person who took the photo), as well as any future reproduction of the Photograph(s) of the photograph(s) for educational, research, and teaching purposes.

As a parent or guardian I understand that:
My child's participation is voluntary and will receive no financial compensation;
I am free to address any specific questions regarding this release with the researchers at any time. Once I have signed this form I am allowing the researchers to use the photograph(s) for educational, research, and teaching purposes.
the photograph(s) will become the property of the University of Alberta.
I also agree to:
release and hold harmless the University of Alberta and its employees from liability for any claims, by me or anyone else, in connection with the use of my photograph(s).

Please check one of the following:
I thereby:
☐ authorize the University of Alberta to use the photograph(s) in their original state such the child(ren) is/are identifiable in the photograph(s).
☐ authorize the University of Alberta to use the photograph(s) after all personal and identifying details are removed digitally using a software such that I am NOT identifiable in the photograph(s).
I hereby certify that I am the parent or guardian of
_____, named above,
and do hereby give my consent without reservation to the foregoing on behalf of this person.

_____   _____

(Parent/Guardian's Signature)   (Date)

Minor's Name _____ Minor's Signature _____

Appendix 6. Consent for Release of Photographic Information

I, _____, hereby grant permission to the
      Print Name
University of Alberta for the use of, and the rights associated to the use of, photograph(s) taken of me

by _____, as well as any future reproduction
    Print Name of Person who Took the Photograph(s) of the photograph(s) for educational, research, and teaching purposes.

I understand that:
my participation is voluntary and I will receive no financial compensation;
I am free to address any specific questions regarding this release with the researchers at any time. Once I have signed this form I am allowing the researchers to use the photograph(s) for educational, research, and teaching purposes.
the photograph(s) will become the property of the University of Alberta.

I also agree to:
release and hold harmless the University of Alberta and its employees from liability for any claims, by me or anyone else, in connection with the use of my photograph(s).

Please check one of the followings:
I thereby:
☐ authorize the University of Alberta to use the photograph(s) in their original state such that I am identifiable in the photograph(s).
☐ authorize the University of Alberta to use the photograph(s) after all personal and identifying details are removed digitally using a software such that I am NOT identifiable in the photograph(s).

I am 18 years of age or older and am competent to contract in my own name. I have read this consent and release before signing below and I fully understand the contents, meaning, and impact of this release.

_____   _____
     (Signature)   (Date)

Adapted with permission from Dr. Maria Mayan, Community University Partnership, University of Alberta