ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

ALONE IN PARADISE:

EXPLORING INTERSECTIONALITY WITH SINGLE, IMMIGRANT MOTHERS IN CANADA

BY

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A THESIS/DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF COUNSELLING: COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

FACULTY OF HEALTH DISCIPLINES

GRADUATE CENTRE FOR APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

ATHABASCA, ALBERTA

SEPTEMBER, 2019

Approval of Thesis

The undersigned certify that they have read the thesis entitled

ALONE IN PARADISE: EXPLORING INTERSECTIONALITY WITH SINGLE, IMMIGRANT MOTHERS IN CANADA

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Counselling

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and to all single, immigrant mothers.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express gratitude to God for blessing me with a life of hope, love, and armor. Because of Him, I was able to take on this research opportunity and influence change in the world.

I am extremely grateful to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Sandra Collins, for her guidance, patience, and support. Your wisdom and mentorship has not only shaped my counselling career, but also my ability to think critically from a social justice standpoint. I would also like to express gratitude to Dr. Gina Wong for her guidance and expertise on mothering.

Additionally, I would like to acknowledge my dear friends Rebeca Andrada and Roda Siad for connecting me to single, immigrant mothers from various organizations and communities. This study would not have been possible without the time and energy of all the women who shared their stories. It is an honour to have bared some witness to your struggles and perseverance.

Furthermore, I would like to thank the Graduate Student Research Fund Committee at Athabasca University for funding this project.

Finally, I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to my mother for her unconditional love, strength, and resiliency. As a single, immigrant mother, she endured the hardships of raising two children in an unfamiliar country. Her fight against discrimination, isolation, and depression inspired me to undertake this study. A heartfelt thank you is extended to my sister, who shared this journey with me. I would like to thank my husband for his unerring love and support toward me and my family.

Abstract

Researchers have traditionally examined and explored immigration and single motherhood in isolation from one another. In the research reported in this thesis, I adopted intersectionality theory as the framework to examine the lived experiences of single, immigrant mothers in Canada. This includes investigating single motherhood and immigration in relation to the intersections of gender, ethnicity, social class within the context of cross-cultural transitioning, diverse mothering ideologies, and shifting social locations. The aim of the study was to gain insight into the challenges that single, immigrant mothers face and thereby to inform the provision of counselling services for them. The findings indicate that the single, immigrant mother participants' lived experiences and acculturation processes were influenced by discourses related to gender, ethnicity, and mothering, from both their former world and their new world. Findings also revealed that single, immigrant mothers' relationships with their children were affected by the intersectionality of their cultural identities. Service providers play an important role in supporting these mothers through their cross-cultural transitions; this study provides insights into how they can better address the specific and complex needs of this population.

Keywords: Immigration, Single Motherhood, Mothering, Counselling, Acculturation, Cultural Discourses

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Rupi Kaur (2017) in her first book of poetry, *the Sun and her Flowers,* opined:

> So how dare you mock your mother when she opens her mouth and broken English spills out. Her accent is thick like honey, hold it with your life, it's the only thing she has left from home. Don't stomp on that richness, instead hang it up on the walls of museums next to Dali and Van Gogh. Her life is brilliant and tragic. Kiss the side of her tender cheek. She already knows what it sounds like to have an entire nation laugh when she speaks. She's more than our punctuation and language. We might be able to take pictures and write stories, but she made an entire world for herself. How's that for art. (p. 151)

This quotation from Rupi Kaur's (2015) poem "Broken English" is a beautiful portrayal of what my mother experienced in Canada. Twenty-six years ago at the age of 22, my mother arrived in this country with me in her arms. Like many immigrant mothers, she had to raise me in a new and unfamiliar environment with different rules and expectations, and my mother did it single and without family support. My mother's experiences illustrate a complex phenomenon of not only immigration, but also the intersectionality of being a single and immigrant mother. There is currently minimal research related to the issues that single immigrant mothers face. I wanted to bring these issues to light and explore them, with the hope of influencing change in the counselling and social services provided to this population. Through this research process, I have come to better understand my own mother's story.

Background

Although single, immigrant mothers make up a significant segment of the Canadian population, there is insufficient research about their sociocultural experiences (Browne, Kumar, Puente-Duran, Georgiades, Leckie, & Jenkins, 2017; Gherghel & Saint-Jacques, 2012). These

women may face a range of barriers that negatively affect their physical and emotional wellbeing. One of these barriers relates to the discourses of mothering from both culture of origin and new country (Jamal Al-deen & Windle, 2016; Zhu, 2016). Single, immigrant mothers often deviate from ideological constructs of the *good mother* (Caplan, 2000; O'Reilly, 2004; Schafer, 2006; Wong, 2018), and as such, they face social consequences and unique hardships that negatively affect their mental health (Jamal Al-deen & Windle, 2016; Zhu, 2016). In addition to challenges in living up to the good or ideal mother discourses, socially constructed stereotypes of single motherhood and family structure also pose barriers for single, immigrant mothers (Liegghio & Caragata, 2016; Wiegers & Chunn, 2015).

For many migrant families, immigration is often associated with acculturative stress and intergenerational conflict (Browne et al., 2017; Renzaho, Dhingra, Georgeou, & Brown, 2017). Single, immigrant mothers may be at a higher risk of acculturation stress, because the intersectionality of immigration and single motherhood adds another layer of complexity to their lived experiences (Curry Rodriguez, 2014; Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, & Abdulrahim, 2012). Acculturation can also occur at different rates for mothers and their children, leading to conflicts in values and worldviews (Renzaho et al., 2017; Rodriguez-Keyes & Piepenbring, 2017). Although there is a plethora of research on these and other acculturation challenges, most studies do not address the impact of the intersectionality of various dimensions of cultural identity, which can result potentially in stigmatization and marginalization, which adversely affect the mental health of this population. In order to better understand immigrant health patterns, Viruell-Fuentes and colleagues (2012) argued for a more in-depth analysis of the intersectionality of various dimensions of cultural identity. In the case of single, immigrant mothers, gender, ethnicity, immigration, single motherhood, and social class should be examined, including the

complex interplay of gender and ethnicity in their countries of origins and through the process of cross-cultural transitioning (Palmerin Velasco, 2013). Furthermore, it is important to understand how multiple marginalization, based on dominant and nondominant discourses about motherhood and single motherhood coupled with their immigration experiences, affect the mental health and acculturation processes of single, immigrant mothers (Guruge, Thomson, George, & Chaze, 2015; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012).

Statement of Problem

A gap exists the literature to help us understand the lived experiences of single, immigrant mothers. Single, immigrant mothers may require mental health support and services, and these then need to be responsive to the experiences and challenges they face, including their multiple, intersecting, and nondominant identities.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the influences of the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, immigration, single motherhood, and social class on the lived experiences of single, immigrant mothers residing in a western Canadian city. A careful and thorough examination of the literature, reported in Chapter 2, supported the assertion that the intersectionality of these various dimensions of cultural identity shape the sociocultural experiences of single, immigrant mothers. My hope is that the findings of this study will contribute to, and support further investigations of, the quality of counselling for single, immigrant mothers.

Research Question

How does the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, immigration, single motherhood, and social class influence mental health and acculturation of single, immigrant mothers?

Definition of Terms

Acculturation is broadly defined as the process of adjusting to another culture through interactions with people from different cultural groups (Collins, 2018c; Holumyong, Ford, Sajjanand, Chamratrithirong, 2018). This process typically involves psychological, social, and economic change processes as immigrants position themselves within a new society that is different from their own (Collins, 2018c; St. Arnault & Merali, 2019).

Acculturative stress is a response or reaction to acculturation challenges, such as isolation, marginalization, dislocation, and loss of cultural identity (Holumyong et al. 2018). Many immigrants have the coping resources and social supports to deal with acculturative stress; however, some experience a substantive threat to health and well-being (Rogers-Sirin, Ryce, & Sirin, 2014).

Good woman ideologies are constructed from cultural normative discourses of gender. These ideologies dictate what girls and woman should think, feel, and do; often, this includes what it means to be a mother (Schafer, 2006; Stoppard & McMullen, 2003; Wong & Bell, 2012; Wong & Russell-Mayhew, 2010). These narratives play out in practices of femininity and in the domain of gendered activities that are culturally rooted (Stoppard & McMullen, 2003). These expectations are so entrenched in women's ways of being that they often cease to be recognized or named.

Good mother ideologies, across various cultures, define good mothers in accordance with pervasive and oppressive ideals (Caplan, 2000; O'Reilly, 2004; Schafer, 2006; Wong, 2018). Examples of the good mother include mothers who are always giving, caring, nurturing, capable, fulfilled, sacrificing and happy (Wong, 2018). The good mother ideology involves unequal power relations within various cultural contexts and systems (Wong & Bell, 2012; Zhu, 2016).

Immigrants are defined as individuals who voluntarily choose to move to Canada, often in pursuit of educational, social, and economical opportunities (Sinacore et al., 2015). For the purposes of this study, I identified the most common source countries for immigrants to western Canada (e.g., Philippines, India, China, Nigeria, Eritrea, Pakistan, and Ethopia) (Calgary Economic Development, 2018; Immigrant Services Calgary, 2018); however, immigrants from other source countries were not actively excluded.

Intersectionality theory is grounded in the following assumptions: (a) individuals' multiple social identities (e.g., gender, social class, ethnicity, immigration) shape their lived experiences; (b) these influences cannot be fully understood in isolation from one another; and (c) multiple marginalizations shape health outcomes (Addison & Coolhart, 2015; Cheshire, 2013; Collins, 2018d; García, 2015; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012; Warner, Settles, Shields, 2016). Collins (2018) argues that assuming an intersectionality lens invokes cultural curiosity about each person's complex, idiosyncratic, and contextualized experiences of identity.

Multiple marginalization refers to the cumulative, negative social positioning that results from prejudice or discrimination based on more than one social identity (Allan & Smylie, 2015; Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2012; Talley, Hughes, Aranda, Birkett, & Marshal, 2014). Individuals experiencing multiple marginalization of have less access to services and resources for healthy living and experience barriers to full participation in society (Allan & Smylie, 2015; Nejaime & Siegel, 2015).

Manuscript-Based Thesis Structure

I have chosen a manuscript-based thesis to increase the dissemination of my research through multiple avenues and to diverse audiences. Chapter 2 constitutes the first manuscript, a literature review that I am ready to submit for publication to the *Journal of the Motherhood*

Initiative for Research and Community Involvement. This first manuscript does not include the results of my study. This manuscript provides the background for my study by expanding on the brief discussion presented in Chapter 1 that provided the foundation for the research question. In Chapter 3, I augment the discussion of the methodology presented in the journal manuscript of my study and included as Chapter 4. In lieu of including the two traditional chapters about my study results and discussion in this thesis, this information is presented together in Chapter 4, a second, stand-alone manuscript to be submitted for publication to the *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*. Chapter 5 provides a brief synthesis of the thesis as a whole and extends the implications from the manuscript in Chapter 4. I have been privileged to present sections of this thesis at the Society for Cross Cultural Research Annual Meeting and the Canadian Psychological Association's 80th Annual National Convention.

Summary

To date, little research has been reported about the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, single motherhood, immigration, and social class, making this is an area that requires attention and further research. An intersectional lens offers a way of understanding the multidimensional lived experiences and challenges (García, 2015) of single, immigrant mothers in Canada, including their potential to experience multiple marginalizations (Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012). In this chapter, I briefly introduced a number of challenges that can negatively influence the experiences of single, immigrant mothers, which will be expanded upon in the literature review in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2. Review of the Literature

The journal article in the rest of this chapter will be submitted to the *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement*. The title of the article is "Alone in Paradise: A Review of the Literature Related to Single, Immigrant Mothers in Canada." I have followed the format and guidelines for this journal in presenting my narrative review of the extant Canadian literature, supplemented with relevant international literature. Sandra Collins, my supervisor, helped shape the structure and organization of this manuscript and supplemented my ideas with additional knowledge and resources on cultural responsivity and social justice in counselling practice. She is accorded second authorship on the article. Gina Wong, a thesis committee member, added expertise in the area of mothering research and is recognized as third author.

Abstract

In most studies, the phenomena of immigration and single motherhood are examined and explored in isolation from one another. In this manuscript, we adopted intersectionality theory as the framework for examining the literature related to the lived experiences of single, immigrant mothers in Canada. We explored single motherhood and immigration in relation to multiple points of intersection of dimensions of cultural identity. We began by examining how intersections of gender and ethnicity affect single, immigrant mothers in terms of self-perception, sociocultural experiences, and acculturation processes. Single, immigrant mothers receive specific gendered messages from their families, cultures of origin, and Canadian culture. These messages, specific to the context of mothering, shape their cultural identity and role in society. We also examined the impact of Canadian and country of origin mothering ideologies on single, immigrant mothers, how discourses around these ideologies endorse potentially unrealistic images of the *ideal* or *good mother*, and how they affect the mother-child relationship. Single, immigrant mothers hold multiple nondominant intersecting identities and may not portray adherence to the dominant mothering ideologies, from either Canada or their country of origin. As a result, they are more vulnerable to marginalization, discrimination, and mental health problems. We considered how the intersections of gender, ethnicity, single motherhood, social class, and immigration affected single, immigrant mothers' labour market participation, social support, mental health, and acculturation. We offer insights into the challenges that single, immigrant mothers face and point to ways to improve social and mental health services for these women.

Key words: Immigration, Single Motherhood, Mothering, Counselling, Acculturation, Cultural Discourses

Alone in Paradise: A Review of the Literature Related to Single, immigrant Mothers in Canada

Being a single, immigrant mother can be a lonely and challenging experience. Many immigrants arrive in Canada with hopes of gaining economic and educational opportunities, particularly for their children (Vesely, Goodman, Ewaida, & Kearney, 2015). However, they face considerable acculturation challenges, such as acculturative stress, unemployment, culture shock, and loss of support systems (Browne et al., 2017; Vesely et al. 2015, Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, & Abdulrahim, 2012; Zhu, 2016). Although there is a growing body of research on immigration and cross-cultural transitioning, little is known about the sociocultural experiences of single, immigrant mothers in Canada (Browne et al., 2017; Zhu, 2016).

Single, immigrant mothers hold often multiple nondominant identities, related to their immigration status, gender, ethnicity, social class, status as a single mother. The intersections of, and interplay among, these dimensions of cultural identity affects not only their sociocultural experiences, but also their perceptions of the world and themselves (Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012). Intersectionality theory can be instrumental to understanding the multiple points of marginalization, which may influence counselling practices and mental health outcomes for this population (Collins, 2018b, Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012; Warner, Settles, & Shields, 2016). Intersectionality is described as “the complex ways in which social variables, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and other factors combine to shape a person's overall life experiences - particularly with respect to the prejudice and discrimination that one may face within society” (García, 2015, para. 20). In this article, we examine the interplay between single motherhood, immigration, gender, ethnicity, and social class. We critiqued these intersections, and considered each of the following: (a) cultural discourses and norms related to gender, (b) Canadian and culture of origin ideologies of motherhood, (c) the mother-child

relationship, (d) vulnerability to marginalization, (e) labour market participation, (f) potential for lack of social support, and (g) challenges to mental health and acculturation.

It is rare for single mothers and their children to immigrate to Canada on their own, because sole custody or permission from the father is required (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019). Immigrant women most often migrate with their spouses as economic immigrants in search of a better life for themselves and their children (Sinacore, Kassan, & Lerner, 2015; Statistics Canada, 2015; Vesely et al., 2015), and they subsequently end up as single parents. Single motherhood has many forms: unplanned motherhood outside of a committed relationship, single motherhood as a result of relationship breakdown or death of a spouse, and more recently, single motherhood by choice (Daryanani, Hamilton, Abramson, & Alloy, 2016; Kelly, 2012). It is important to note that much of the research on single mothering across cultures assumes heteronormativity and positions the institution of marriage as a social norm; we note these dominant discourses (Collins, 2018b), which go beyond the scope of this manuscript, and report these studies using the language of the authors. Following Collins (2018a), we purposefully do not capitalize *euro-western* to counter dominant, power-over discourses, and we use lowercase *white*, but we capitalize specific nondominant ethnicities such as *Asian*.

Intersections of Gender, Ethnicity, and Motherhood

Understanding the experiences of single, immigrant mothers starts with recognition of the complex interplay and influences of gender and ethnicity in their countries of origin and throughout the process of cross-cultural transitioning (Palmerin Velasco, 2013). It is important to note that the experiences of gender and gender role socialization vary significantly across ethnicities (Curry Rodriguez, 2014; Palmerin Velasco, 2013). For example, males and females

are assigned different gender roles in Mexican families. Housework and childcare responsibilities are exclusive to girls and women; males are given more freedom, permission, and choices (Palmerin Velasco, 2013). In South Asian households, girls are taught to nurture, to obey, and to stay inside the house; boys, on the other hand, are expected to become successful breadwinners for the family, and so are exposed to the outside world (Maticka-Tyndale, 2014). Because these gender roles involve positioning of power in many cultures, females are more likely to fall victim to intimate partner violence (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016; Du Mont, Hyman, O'Brien, White, Odette, & Tyyskae, 2012; Palmerin Velasco, 2013).

Culturally-embedded messages about gender and gender roles often influence choices about, and experiences of, mothering (Wong & Bell, 2012). Sociocultural messages and ideologies about how to be a *good woman* vary across cultures (Schafer, 2006; Stoppard & McMullen, 2003; Wong & Bell, 2012) and reflect deeply entrenched expectations that impact a woman's self-identity and her place and privilege in society (Wong & Russell-Mayhew, 2010). Cultural narratives that convey shared ideas about what it means to be female shape sociocultural pressures that girls and women bear (Wong & Russell-Mayhew, 2010). These messages dictate how women should think, feel, and act, in ways that follow gender norms in their society (Schafer, 2006; Wong & Bell, 2012). For example, if the mother from a culture that values women remaining in the home becomes an economic provider in the household, the family may face public scrutiny for their non-normative power distribution (Palmerin Velasco, 2013).

Although Chinese mothers differ culturally from Mexican mothers, they share similar *good mother* socialization (Caplan, 2000; O'Reilly, 2004; Schafer, 2006; Wong, 2018). The good mother ideologies, in both dominant and nondominant cultures, define good mothers in accordance with pervasive and potentially oppressive ideals: Chinese mothers are expected to be

consistently giving, caring, nurturing, capable, fulfilled, sacrificing, and happy (Wong, 2018). In Urban China, mothers are responsible for the physical, emotional, educational, and moral development of the child (Evans, 2008). Women adopt the role of the *wonder mother* who must take on all maternal tasks, including the role of the supportive and empathetic friend (Evans, 2008), and be "supereverything" (Choi, Baker, & Tree, 2005). Messages about gender roles exist across multiple media and may affect women's self-identity, experiences, and life decisions (Wong, 2018; Wong & Bell, 2012).

Women's experiences of cross-cultural transitioning also are affected by the interplay of gender discourses and norms between their countries of origin and their receiving countries (Browne et al. 2017; Maticka-Tyndale, 2014; Palmerin Velasco, 2013). Mexican women are not granted the same autonomy with regards to cross-cultural transitioning, because migration is viewed as a masculine domain (Palmerin Velasco, 2013). In other words, women are discouraged from immigrating alone, because they do not fit the image of the traditional breadwinner (Palmerin Velasco, 2013). Upon arrival in Canada, the United States, or other euro-western-influenced countries, immigrant mothers often hold a sense of responsibility to preserve their traditional norms, including their role as women in their cultural community (Browne et al. 2017; Maticka-Tyndale, 2014). However, they may face conflicting views between the dominant individualist ideology in the receiving country, in which autonomy and independence from others are prioritized over connection and mutuality (Collins, 2018b; Lenz, 2016), and the beliefs and practices of their country of origin. As a result, many begin to question their self-identity (Maticka-Tyndale, 2014). For example, according to South Asian family norms, the role of the mother is to maintain the traditions and customs of their culture (Maticka-Tyndale, 2014; Wong, 2018). The reputation of the family is heavily dependent on the mother's ability to conform to

gender-specific norms (Maticka-Tyndale, 2014; Wong, 2018). Immigrant women, and immigrant mothers specifically, face tensions as they begin to challenge their traditional beliefs and values related to different family systems (Jamal Al-deen & Windle, 2016; Maticka-Tyndale, 2014). The lived experiences of these women, regardless of their immigration status, is greatly impacted by their gender role (Curry Rodriguez, 2014), necessitating further exploration of gender in relation to the social, cultural, and institutional influences on mothering in immigrant populations (Curry Rodriguez, 2014).

Intersection of Mothering Ideologies and Immigrant Women

Motherhood has long been recognized as a socially-constructed concept for which there is no universal definition; as a result, it positions women to raise their children in accordance to potentially oppressive social norms (Hays, 1996; Jamal Al-deen & Windle, 2016). The image of the *ideal mother* exists within euro-western parenting beliefs and practices, often associated with idealized notions of the white, middle class, and nuclear family (Jamal Al-deen & Windle, 2016; Zhu, 2016). In Canada, there are dominant and pervasive myths surrounding the concept of *perfect mothering*, which can make it extremely difficult for mothers to feel confident in their parenting abilities (Sawers & Wong, 2018; Wong & Bell, 2012; Wong, 2018). “Failed” mothering is often connected with the parenting practices of nondominant groups, including single mothers and immigrant mothers, who do not, or cannot, conform to this dominant Canadian cultural norm (Wong & Bell, 2012; Zhu, 2016). Mothers from nondominant cultures often deviate from the ideological construct of the good mother in euro-western countries, and as such, these “bad” mothers face social consequences such as marginalization and disconnectedness from society (Jamal Al-deen & Windle, 2016; Wong & Bell, 2012). These

social consequences often negatively affect their mental health and cross-cultural transitioning experiences (Browne et al. 2017; Jamal Al-deen & Windle, 2016; Zhu, 2016).

Immigrant mothers encounter new western ideologies in which more social capital and power is available to the ideal mother than the failed mother (Wong & Bell, 2012; Zhu, 2016). Immigrant mothers who are unable to mirror dominant euro-western norms for infant care, breastfeeding, and work-life balance are portrayed as bad mothers (Zhu, 2016). For example, mothers immigrating from East Asia are confronted with stereotypes and potentially harmful assumptions such as the image of the *model minority* (Petersen, 1966). The model minority discourse is manifested in potentially harmful stereotypes, which are used to position Asian people as over-achieving, competitive, successful in math, and so on (Duncan & Wong, 2014; Petersen, 1966; Wong, 2018). Muslim immigrants are further marginalized, because they are compared unfavourably to this model minority discourse (Chang, 2018). East Asian mothers also encounter the *tiger mother* stereotype (Chua, 2011), in which the mother has strict rules and high academic expectations for her children (Duncan & Wong, 2014; Wong, 2018). Due to this strong and pervasive generalization about East Asian mothers, they mothers are measured against the differing western parenting norms, thus strengthening ideological constructions of motherhood and segregating these women from their new receiving society.

Due to societal pressure, immigrant mothers often find themselves trying to balance their parenting style in accordance with the new culture while maintaining values and norms from their culture of origin (Baum & Nisan, 2017). They may face additional social consequences for not fully meeting the good mother discourse from their original cultural group (Baum & Nisan, 2017; Kiang, Glatz & Buchanan, 2017). Baum and Nisan (2017) interviewed immigrant mothers about their experiences of mothering. Participants disclosed that their own mothers laughed and

ridiculed them for following "modern" Canadian parenting norms, such as talking to the baby (Baum & Nisan, 2017). Indeed, immigrant mothers face familial and societal pressure to instill traditional cultural values in their children (Baum & Nisan, 2017; Kiang et al., 2017). When these mothers fail to achieve the good mother ideology from their culture of origin, they not only experience judgement from their families, but they also judge themselves (Baum & Nisan, 2017; Kiang et al., 2017). For example, Kiang et al. (2017) conducted a study on parenting self-efficacy in immigrant families and found that Asian immigrant mothers were more likely to feel competent when they can efficaciously convey heritage and traditional values to their children. Although this information may be considered informative for counselling practice, the opposite also holds true: Asian immigrant mothers who are unable to transmit these cultural messages may feel less competent in their mothering skills. Within the notion of the *ideal immigrant mother,* women are expected to follow rules and ideals of mothering (Zhu, 2016), which is particularly challenging for immigrant women who face both euro-western and culture of origin social constructions of the ideal mother. These mothers often develop feelings of severe guilt and shame over time, because of these unrealistic, and sometimes conflicting, standards (Wong & Bell, 2012; Zhu, 2016).

Mothering Ideologies and Single, Immigrant Mothers

In addition to challenges in living up to the good or ideal mother discourses, socially constructed stereotypes of single motherhood and family structure also pose barriers for single, immigrant mothers (Liegghio & Caragata, 2016; Wiegers & Chunn, 2015). Within the scope of the research on single motherhood, social stigma has been documented as an increasing concern (Liegghio & Caragata, 2016; Wiegers & Chunn, 2015). The social depiction of single motherhood, often manifested in the form of divorce, has long been considered a "violation of

women's moral code" (Boney, 2002, p. 65). There are lingering biases against single mothers in North America in spite of the increased prevalence of divorce (Liegghio & Caragata, 2016; Wiegers & Chunn, 2015).

The divorce of two living parents may precipitate experiences and challenges that differ from families who suffer from the death of a parent (Rappaport, 2013). For divorced mothers, the mother-child relationship may be weakened. Due to high stress, changes to the family environment, and post-marital conflict, mothers may be less emotionally available to their children (Muhammad & Gagnon, 2010; Rappaport, 2013). Although divorce is gaining more acceptance in euro-western cultures, many nondominant cultural groups are strongly against the notion of divorce and separation (Wang, 2013). Within the Muslim community, Ayubi (2010) noted that women are encouraged to stay in relationships, regardless of any abuse or infidelity that they encounter. A woman who chooses to file for divorce is often characterized as "a woman of little patience and loose morals" (Ayubi, 2010, p. 79). For Chinese immigrant wives, their marital role becomes a significant aspect of their self-identity (Yu, 2011). In an interview conducted by Yu (2011), one of the Chinese immigrant wives revealed that she had chosen to stay in a marriage that made her feel devalued and inferior to her husband. She stated that "if she divorced . . . she [would] lose more than expected and she would struggle financially" (p. 664). Similarly, due to strong values in familism, Hispanic women feel obligated to maintain the family structure. When considering divorce, these women risk losing the social support networks of their family and community members (Afifi, Davis, Denes & Merrill, 2013).

According to Boney (2002), due to the pervasive patriarchal gender roles, American women faced pressure in meeting a set of responsibilities that included child-rearing, nurturing, and sustaining family relationships. A decade and a half later these dominant discourses still hold

true (Ferraro, Davis, Petren, & Pasley, 2016; Wiegers & Chunn, 2015). Wiegers and Chunn (2015) conducted interviews with 29 Canadian women, who identified as single mothers, to examine experiences of stigma in a heteronormative, two-parent dominated society. The participants described feelings of otherness, shame, and unworthiness due to prejudicial and discriminative attitudes from others. These single mothers were labelled as selfish for depriving their child of a two-parent family or incompetent to raise their child in a father-absent environment. These attitudes towards single mothers led to status loss, isolation, and social exclusion, causing detrimental effects to the mental health of these participants.

Single mothers, particularly immigrant mothers, are expected to stay in relationships and conform to socially-constructed norms (Ayubi, 2010; Yu, 2011). These external expectations can cause significant problems to their mental health and overall wellbeing (Daryanani et al., 2016). The pervasive and potentially harmful effect of mothering ideologies can lead to increased feelings of guilt and shame in this population due to the societal consequences of stereotyping and marginalization (Afifi et al., 2013; Ayubi, 2010; Wong & Bell, 2012). The experience of being a single, immigrant mother therefore cannot be understood fully through research that explores immigrant mothers or single mothers alone and independently. Instead, careful examination of the complex and intertwining identities of this population, from an intersectionality perspective, is needed.

Intersectionality of Immigration and Single Mother-Child Relationships

Immigrating to a new country can cause tremendous stress to, and imbalance within, the family (Guo, Xu, Liu, Mao, Chi, 2016; Renzaho et al., 2017). For many migrant families, immigration is associated with acculturative stress, intergenerational conflict, and problem behaviour in children (Belhadj Kouider, Koglin, Petermann, 2015; Browne et al., 2017; Renzaho

et al., 2017). First generation immigrants often face psychological, social, cultural, and economic barriers for which they lack coping skills and practical resources; the result is acculturative stress (Nassar-McMillan, 2014; Rogers-Sirin, Ryce, & Sirin, 2014).

In a study conducted by Chen and Tse (2010), first generation Chinese immigrant children were more likely to develop problem behaviours than their second generation counterparts. In Chinese households, it is both a norm and an expectation for children to take care of their aging parents. However, when immigrating to Canada, the younger generation often adopts individualist values (e.g., independent living, autonomy in decision-making) that conflict with their parents' worldview (Bemak & Chung, 2017; Guo et al., 2016; Rodriguez-Keyes & Piepenbring, 2017). As a result of this conflict, stress in the mother-child relationship is inevitable (Guo et al., 2016). Intergenerational conflict and parent-child alienation occurs when the immigrant parents and youth diverge in their acculturation processes, negotiate bicultural or multiple cultural belongings at different paces, or embrace different sets of beliefs, values, and worldviews (Renzaho et al., 2017; Rodriguez-Keyes & Piepenbring, 2017). In Arab families, for example, they may experience conflict in their choices surrounding education, culture, religion, dating, and marriage (Rasmi, 2016). This is especially the case for daughters, because females are more restricted that males in Arabic culture (Rasmi, 2016)

The intersectionality of immigration and single motherhood adds another layer of complexity to the lived experiences of single mothers and their children (Curry Rodriguez, 2014; Viruell-Fuentes et al. 2012). According to Belhadj et al. (2015), when the mother's language competence in English is low, the child and mother may feel stressed and frustrated with the communication barrier (Belhadj et al., 2015). In Canada, immigrant women are susceptible to poverty, discrimination, and barriers to financial aid (Dlamini, Anucha, & Wolfe, 2012;

Holumyong et al., 2018). In addition to this, single, immigrant mothers are more likely than partnered mothers to experience challenges related to physical and mental health, as well as social, economic, and parenting demands (Daryanani et al., 2016; Dziak, Janzen, & Muhajarine, 2010; Muhammad & Gagnon, 2010). Add to this the challenges of dealing with cross-cultural transitions and mother-child conflicts (Dziak et al., 2010; Holumyong et al., 2018). These cumulative challenges have an effect not only on the single, immigrant mother's experiences, but also on the development and mental health of their children (Holumyong et al., 2018). For instance, Nixon, Greene and Hogan (2012) suggested that youth who grow up in single-mother families are more likely to engage in disruptive and dysfunctional behaviours than youth who grow up in two-parent families. The authors posit that single mothers have difficulty instilling a balance of autonomy and control into their parenting practices (Nixon et al., 2012). Another possibility is that single mothers' parenting is sometimes compromised due to external demands and stress (Daryanani et al., 2016). Although current literature exists on the single mother-child relationship, as well as on the immigrant mother-child relationship (see Belhadj et al., 2015; Curry Rodriguez, 2014; Daryanani et al., 2016; Dziak et al., 2010; Viruell-Fuentes et al. 2012), there is a need for additional research about how the intersections of single motherhood and immigration affect these complex family systems.

The Added Influence of Discrimination and Social Marginalization

Like other nondominant populations, immigrants are more likely to be exposed to discriminatory interactions, practices, and policies (Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2015; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2016). Discrimination and stigmatization can have profound adverse effects on the psychological well-being of immigrant populations (Viruell-Fuentes et al. 2012; Wilkins-Laflamme, 2018). Following the 9/11 terrorist attack, anti-

immigrant sentiments escalated and stimulated anxiety and fear in the United States, which divided American-born citizens and Muslim immigrant populations (Viruell-Fuentes et al. 2012). Islamophobia also spiked in Canada (Wilkins-Laflamme, 2018) and continues to be experienced by many Muslim women (Saleem, 2018). Anti-immigrant messages, through mainstream media and broader cultural discourses, are now visible to Canadian audiences (Wilkins-Laflamme, 2018). Islamophobic attitudes include "seeing Muslims as separate from society, as Other with no values in common with Westerners and not influenced by Western culture in any way" and "seeing all of Islam and Muslims as inherently mistreating women and generally traditionalist" (Wilkins-Laflamme, 2018, p. 90). As a result of discrimination and stigmatization, immigrant mothers with Arabic-sounding names experienced an increase in poor birth outcomes and mental health problems (Viruell-Fuentes et al. 2012; Wilkins-Laflamme, 2018). Some individuals in Canada have discouraged Muslim women from covering their faces in public (Wilkins-Laflamme, 2018).

Immigrant mothers from a diverse range of countries of origin also experience discrimination in regards to their child-rearing beliefs and practices (Fleck & Fleck, 2013; Tajima & Harachi, 2010). For example, Chinese and Punjabi parenting is described as controlling or authoritative when individualist culture is positioned as normative (Ochocka & Janzen, 2008). Such stereotyping may result in immigrant mothers feeling unsupported, confused, and overwhelmed in their new and unfamiliar environment (Fleck & Fleck, 2013). In addition, stress is amplified for single, immigrant mothers, because immigrants' education and skills developed in their country of origin are often discounted, which poses a barrier to economic acculturation (Sinacore et al., 2015). Like other immigrants, single mothers may

choose not to disclose cultural heritage out of legitimate fear of marginalization (Ratts et al., 2016).

All mothers have unique life experiences that cannot be generalized under a single category. It is evident from the literature that single mothers have different experiences from partnered mothers, just as immigrant mothers face different barriers than do Canadian-born mothers. Although some research exists on these mothering experiences, there is a need for further investigation of the experiences of mothers who are subjected to multiple forms of societal oppression, particularly mothers who identify as immigrant and single.

Mental Health and Acculturation Challenges

As a result of their multiple marginalizations, based on discourses about motherhood and single motherhood as well as their immigration experiences, single, immigrant mothers are at risk for numerous mental health and acculturation challenges (Guruge et al., 2015). We explore some of the most common challenges in this section: isolation and depression; poverty, unemployment, and underemployment; loss of social support; and acculturative stress.

Isolation and Depression

Single, immigrant mothers are at risk for isolation and marginalization (Aydin, Korukcu, & Kabukcuoglu, 2017), and mothers who are isolated and raising children without support are at extreme risk for depression and anxiety (Guruge et al., 2015; Muhammad & Gagnon, 2010; Sawers & Wong, 2018). According to Dunford and Granger (2017), good mother ideals and the associated guilt and shame from internal and perceived external judgement elevate the risk of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders for mothers generally (Dunford & Granger, 2017). The risk for postpartum disorder is twice as high for immigrant mothers compared to their native-born peers (Thomson, 2015; Vigod, Bagadia, Hussain-Shamsy, Fung, Sultana & Dennis, 2017).

Furthermore, being a single, immigrant mother, compared to those who are partnered, was the best predictor for postpartum depression (Guruge et al., 2015). Sawers and Wong (2018) later highlighted the significance of intimate partner support in decreasing postpartum anxiety in new mothers during and after pregnancy.

These challenges are further magnified by cross-cultural transitioning, loss of social support, and lack of knowledge of resources (Guruge et al. 2015). Furthermore, single mothers face barriers to these resources, both economic and social, because they have less time available to create connections with community members (Colton, Janzen, & Laverty, 2015). Thus, isolation and marginalization can present many challenges for immigrant mothers in receiving support from social institutions such as schools, child-care programs, and health services (Aydin et al., 2017). With weak or no partner support, immigrant women are more likely to experience depressive symptoms (Guruge et al. 2015).

Poverty, Unemployment, and Underemployment

Single, immigrant mothers face financial and structural barriers that go beyond the work-life balance dilemma faced by other mothers (Knoef & Ours, 2016; Browne et al., 2017). There are increasingly more immigrants living in low socioeconomic conditions and shelters, and at risk for exposure to violence and poverty (Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012). Immigrant women have higher unemployment rates than women born within the country (Lu, Wang, & Han, 2017) and are more likely to live below the poverty line (Khanlou, Haque, Mustafa, Vazquez, Mantini, & Weiss, 2017). The high unemployment and poverty rate in immigrant populations in general is often due to factors such as language barriers, education, culture shock, and discrimination (Dlamini et al., 2012; Lu et al., 2017). Dlamini and colleagues (2012) found that immigrant women were likely to encounter the biased cultural assumption that their educational background

and work experience were of less value or of lower standards when compared to those of their Canadian counterparts (Dlamini et al., 2012).

These acculturative and systemic challenges are debilitating for single, immigrant mothers who have no choice but to participate in the labour market (Wiegers & Chunn, 2015). They often work at low-paying jobs with limited or no employee benefits (Wiegers & Chunn, 2015). According to Wiegers and Chunn (2015), the social standing of single motherhood, even for non-immigrants, has been associated with employment instability. Saha (2015) suggested that discrimination against mothers in the labour market is linked to the social construction of mothering priorities. Specifically, mothers are expected to accept the competing priorities of child(ren) and work demands; this social expectation has been linked to women's lower success in attaining meaningful and long-term employment (Saha, 2015). Women who feel societal pressure to raise children are less likely to return to the labour market (Saha, 2015).

The high costs of childcare compared to mothers' often limited financial resources is another contributing factor to their challenging experiences in the labour market (Forry, 2009). In Canada, safe, reliable, and high quality child care is expensive (Forry, 2009). The cost of full-time child care per month for infants across Canada can range from $175–190 in some parts of Quebec to $1,685 in Toronto; the highest rate for toddlers is in Vancouver at $1,407 (Macdonald & Friendly, 2019). In Alberta, the provincial norm was about $1000/month (Macdonald & Friendly, 2019). Single mothers do not have the social and financial support of a partner and are typically the sole providers for their children (Wiegers & Chunn, 2015). These mothers with one household income may feel stressed and overwhelmed, and childcare presents a barrier to job stability (Knoef & Ours, 2016).

Loss of Social Support

A common trend for immigrant populations in general is the loss of family and friends after relocating to a new country (Guruge et al. 2015). In particular, single, immigrant mothers are at risk of losing pre-immigration social support systems **(**Guruge et al., 2015; Msengi, Arthur-Ojor, & Killion, 2015). For those coming from cultures that expect women to hold the family together at all costs, becoming a single mother in the new country means risking the loss of social support from relatives and extended family members (Guruge et al., 2015).

Sources of social support include families, friends, ethnic communities, and networks provided by health care professionals and social workers (Guruge et al., 2015). Social supports can assist in decreasing stressors that immigrant mothers tend to experience related to family responsibilities, role confusion, and maintaining family traditions (Msengi et al., 2015). Without these social supports, single, immigrant mothers become susceptible to emotional distress and mental illness (Guruge et al., 2015). As noted above, a lack of social support is associated with increased postpartum depression and other mental health concerns among immigrant women (Guruge et al. 2015; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012).

Acculturative Stress

The sociocultural experiences of immigration and single motherhood can result in high levels of stress and anxiety, as well as other health challenges (Guruge et al., 2015; Muhammed & Gagnon, 2010; Thomson, 2015). Researchers exploring the *healthy immigrant effect*, suggested that migration can have a negative impact on immigrant health (Thomson, 2015). In examining parenthood and self-perceived stress among Canadian families, both immigrant and non-immigrant, Muhammad and Gagnon (2010) indicated that single mothers experienced the highest level of stress in comparison to married or cohabiting couples and single men. The

reason for this high degree of stress is due to the intersection of factors such as education, income, and sense of belonging that single mothers' experiences (Muhammad & Gagnon, 2010). Immigrant women also experience significant stress when their circumstances involve partner violence or conflict (Guruge et al., 2015). In immigrant households with high conflict and cultural obligations to keep the family intact, relatives may minimize the issue of violence, blame the victim, and discourage mothers from leaving (Guruge et al., 2015).

Counsellors and Other Healthcare Providers: Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution

Immigrant mothers, and immigrants in general, are more likely to experience underdiagnoses of health and mental health problems, be underserviced within their communities, and be mistreated by health and mental health practitioners (Thomson, 2015; Vigod et al., 2017). Healthcare providers may exhibit similar forms of discrimination and stigmatization towards immigrants as those experienced in the community more broadly, and institutional policies and practices may reduce accessibility and responsiveness of services (Imel, Baldwin, Atkins, Owen, Baardseth, & Wampold, 2011).

In Canada, immigrant populations face significant challenges that limit their access to mental health services. These challenges include lack of awareness of mental health services, cultural barriers to seeking mental health support, and settlement difficulties complicating the process of utilizing services (Saleem & Martin, 2018; Thomson, 2015). In a scoping review of over twenty years of relevant Canadian literature, Thomson (2015) stated that immigrant new mothers are not aware of services or mental health issues, such as those related to postpartum depression. "Limited awareness of culturally appropriate community health services incapacitate refugee, asylum seeking and new immigrant mothers to cope with post-partum depression"

(Thomson, 2015, p. 1897). Thomson (2015) and Vigod and colleagues (2017) identified factors that can influence how immigrant mothers engage in accessing treatment such as gender roles and cultural incompatibility in relationships; their awareness, reluctance to seek help, and the stigma of mental health; their preferences, acceptance of mental health issues, and belief in other cultural practices; and settlement barriers including transportation and limited mobility.

Complicating limitations to service access, single, immigrant mothers face financial, emotional, social, and cultural barriers that increase their risk for developing mental health problems (Dlamini et al., 2012; Holumyong et al., 2018; Daryanani et al., 2016; Dziak et al., 2010; Muhammad & Gagnon, 2010). In order to help alleviate stress in immigrant populations in general, researchers have suggested a need for a more services that are culturally appropriate and available in multiple languages (Muhammad & Gagnon, 2010; Thomson, 2015; Vigod et al., 2017). Muhammad and Gagnon (2010) argued for support related to education, employment, and community engagement. Some authors pointed to the role of cultural or spiritual leaders and healers in supporting immigrant health (Saleem & Martin, 2018). However, the cultural discourses related to single mothering that we have noted throughout this manuscript may pose barriers for some women.

Conclusion

Although there are community programs and services to address the needs of vulnerable mothers, counselling, psychology, and other helping professions have an ethical responsibility to consider the multiple intersecting nondominant identities of single, immigrant mothers and the ways in which these identities can influence their mental health and overall wellbeing (Curry Rodriguez, 2014). According to Nerses and Paré (2018) “an intersectional view of identity reveals the complexity and variability of experience, illustrating how it takes place within

contexts that can be alternately liberating or oppressive" (p. 180). Our purpose in this article was to highlight some of these intersections with a view to drawing the attention of service providers to the unique experiences of single, immigrant mothers and the need for culturally responsive and socially just counselling, social, and other services. Additionally, this review points to the need for further research related to the intersections of gender, ethnicity, single motherhood, social class, and immigration. Readers may be interested in our qualitative examination of these intersections through the eyes of single immigrant mothers, which we report elsewhere (Lam, Collins, & Wong, 2019).

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Chapter 3. Methodology

The key points in the methodology of my thesis study are described in the second manuscript written for publication and included in this thesis as Chapter 4. Additional information specific to my methodology, but not included in the Chapter 4 manuscript, is presented in this chapter.

Conceptual Framework

I introduced intersectionality theory in Chapter 1 and applied it as a lens through which to examine the literature reviewed for the first manuscript included in Chapter 2. The applicability of this theoretical lens to address my specific research question is also summarized in the research study manuscript included in Chapter 4. In this section, I will provide an expanded discussion of this theory.

The notion of intersectionality was introduced in 1989, when Crenshaw highlighted the interaction between ethnicity and gender within a population of black women (Addison & Coolhart, 2015; Crenshaw, 1995; Warner, Settles, Shields, 2016). Because individuals belong to multiple social categories, each influences and shapes their experiences within the various systems of their worlds (Cheshire, 2013; Collins, 2018a, 2018b; Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, Abdulrahim, 2012). Applying intersectionality theory to understanding the sociocultural experiences of single, immigrant mothers' experiences can help capture the influence of power, privilege, and marginalization (Addison & Coolhart, 2015; Warner, et al. 2016). Both the intersectionality lens and the nature of this topic call for a critical and transformative paradigm that considers the socially constructed norms and sociocultural positioning that single, immigrant women face in their everyday lives (Viruell-Fuentes, et al. 2012); this includes attention to the power discrepancies that exists in society and find expression in racism, sexism, and other *isms

(Glesne, 2016). This critical and transformative paradigm helped create a respectful and participant-focused research environment, because this paradigm aims to empower and spread awareness about individuals who are continuously oppressed (Glesne, 2016).

Study Design

To study the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, immigration, single motherhood, and social class, I chose qualitative research, an inductive approach that allows nonlinear exploration and flexibility (Barczak, 2015). Qualitative researchers aim to include all values, beliefs, and contexts that may impact lived experiences (Mertens, 2015). More specifically, I used qualitative description to capture accurate representations of participants' views and experiences of single motherhood, ethnicity, gender, immigration, and social class (Bradshaw, Atkinson, Doody, 2017; Neergaard, et al. 2009). Applying this approach, I focused on exploratory and descriptive accounts of lived experience, rather than on imposing pre-existing assumptions or theories (Bradshaw, et al. 2017; Neergaard, et al. 2009). Sandelowski (2000) argued that this type of descriptive research is valuable as an end in itself, rather than solely as a starting point for other qualitative research.

Qualitative Description. Qualitative description emerged in the literature under several different labels: interpretative description, generic qualitative research, fundamental qualitative description, and exploratory research (Thorne, Kirkham, & MacDonald-Emes, 1997; Merriam, 1998; Sandelowski, 2000; Brink & Wood as cited in Bradshaw, Atkinson, & Doody, 2017). Qualitative description is used to examine experience, meaning, and phenomena through the voices of individuals directly experiencing the phenomena (Bradshaw et al., 2017). Researchers position this approach as particularly relevant for exploring various phenomena within the health disciplines (Bradshaw et al., 2017; Colorafi, Jiggins, Bronwynne & Debajyoti, 2016). The

benefits of using qualitative description include: (a) data collection is participant-driven and opens up new avenues of understanding (Neergaard, et al. 2009); (b) participants are free to speak and have their voices heard such that the data closely represents their views (Neergaard, et al. 2009); and (c) due to the flexible nature of qualitative description (Bradshaw, et al. 2017; Neergaard, et al. 2009), critical/transformative and intersectionality theories could be integrated into my study design. Drawing on these social constructivist perspectives, for instance, I was able to develop the interview questions to highlight intersectionality, power and marginalization, and dominant or nondominant discourses that existed in participants' everyday experiences (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). See Appendix A for the interview protocol. This method allowed me to explore what was said and what was not said about the discourses and social norms that influenced these women's lives.

Qualitative description is consistent with other approaches that focus on identifying themes that connect information that emerges within a story (Neergaard, et al. 2009). This interconnection of themes is important, because of the gap that currently exists in the research about single, immigrant mothers, particularly related to the intersectionality of their multiple identities (Viruell-Fuentes et al. 2012). Qualitative description can also be used to capture the meaning beneath the surface of what we currently know (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009; Neergaard, et al. 2009). An individual's meaning of an event can be understood through analysis and interpretation of their literal description of the event or phenomena (Bradshaw, 2017). Although the focus is on descriptive analysis with less researcher inference than occurs with some other approaches, Sandelowski (2000) argued that "all inquiry entails description, and all description entails inquiry" (p. 335).

Qualitative description offered me an opportunity to situate myself in the study as an integral part of the research design and methodology. Neergaard, et al. (2009) noted that some qualitative description studies speak in terms of purposefully mitigating researcher bias by gathering descriptions of the participants' experiences from their own voice, language, and understanding (Neergaard, et al. 2009). However, qualitative description is also flexible enough to be positioned within a constructivist epistemology (Larson, McHugh, Young, & Rodgers, 2019), which recognizes the inherent subjectivity of the research process, the influence of the researcher on the experience explored, and the richness that can be gained from positioning the researcher actively within the study. From a social constructivist perspective, I remained part of the research process in the sense that I brought the lens of my own experiences to the research, as others have noted (Bradshaw, et al. 2017; Larson, et al., 2019; Magilvy & Thomas, 2009; Sandelowski, 2000). As Magilvy and Thomas, (2009) noted, I also shaped the nature of data collected by creating an interview protocol that targeted specific aspects of the lived experience of the participants. These questions and prompts encouraged participants to critically examine the intersections of their multiple nondominant identities based on gender, ethnicity, immigration, single motherhood, and social class.

Researcher Positioning. My educational and professional experiences proved beneficial to the study. I have worked with immigrant populations for eight years at multiple nonprofit agencies. Through my work, I have had the opportunity to learn about the challenges that newcomers face, as well as the resources that newcomers can access. My background and experiences have provided me with insight, which enhanced the data collection and analysis process. Through my education at the University of Calgary and Athabasca University, I have trained in mental health and counselling, which proved helpful in creating a safe and

nonjudgmental space for participants. My own experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and values were a strength in developing rapport, collecting the data, and analyzing the information provided by participants, as Bradshaw et al. (2017) and Neergaard et al. (2009) noted. I reflected on my personal and professional positioning prior to conducting the study. Some of my reflections on growing up with a single, immigrant mother are included in the literature review manuscript in Chapter 3. I continued to memo my thoughts, ideas, and experiences using NVIVO 11 software throughout the data analysis process.

Participants

The eligibility criteria and demographic information for the six participants are described in the manuscript in Chapter 4. Because immigrants and refugees encounter different challenges and experiences (e.g., forced versus voluntary migration, experiences of trauma), individuals who were currently experiencing trauma or posttraumatic stress related to war or persecution were invited to self-exclude from this study to minimize risk for harm of retraumatization. Self-exclusion avoids researcher intrusion into private health information. It was also important to reduce language and cultural barriers between the researcher and the research participants. Although I have some training in cultural competency and awareness, I would have struggled to communicate with participants who have low English literacy. As such, I excluded non-English speakers in the study. As a student, I was unable to afford translation services. See Appendix B for the recruitment materials.

Sampling

Purposeful sampling in qualitative research provides opportunities to select individuals with experiences that are relevant to the study (Neergaard, et al. 2009). In order to study the specific experiences of single, immigrant mothers, it was important to identify and select

individuals who met the eligibility criteria (Palinkas et al. 2015). Single, immigrant women were recruited through various counselling and service agency in the city where the study was conducted. As a previous employee at one of these agencies, I had professional and community connections to different programs and services. I sent an email to other agencies and met with service providers about this research project to aid in recruitment and asked if I could add them to my list of resources for recruiting single, immigrant mothers. This list of resources has been omitted from the thesis to further protect the anonymity of the participants. I collaborated with agencies and gained knowledge about their clientele to discern the best way to reach participants (e.g., word of mouth, flyers, referrals from agency staff). The recruitment flyer included the participant criteria. Please see Appendix B.

A potential limitation in sampling is selection bias, in which all participants belong to one cultural community or one organization (Mertens, 2015). To mitigate this limitation, I selected participants from three different organizations and, in the end, all participants were members of different cultural groups. I was very clear on research advertisements that not all who volunteered would be able to participate, because I was looking for participants who reflected a diversity of ethnic backgrounds. Mertens (2015) suggested that researchers be explicit in their sampling strategy and list the characteristics of their preferred sample. Valid reasoning was provided to exclude individuals from the study (TCPS 2: CORE, 2018).

My sample size of six participants was driven by the availability and willingness of single, immigrant mothers to participate. Qualitative description studies can be based on interviews with anywhere from 3 to 20 participants (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). I met my goal of having a sample size of 5 to 10 individuals who fit the participant criteria of the study, which permitted me to gather in-depth understanding of the phenomena. I did one additional interview;

however, the participant had lived in Canada for 12 years, so I decided to exclude this interview in consultation with my supervisor, leaving six participants included in the study. Our rationale was that her experiences may not have been typical of more recent immigrants who were the focus of the study.

Data Collection

In my research with single, immigrant mothers, I was guided by qualitative description, in which I could use existing knowledge about the single, immigrant mothers to develop an in-depth, slightly more structured interview (Neergaard, et al. 2009). A qualitative interview is generally a meaningful conversation between the researcher and the participant, and this method of data collection is often used in social science research (Squire, 2014). This method gave me the opportunity to observe how the participants used language, constructed meaning, and made sense of their experiences (Creswell, 2013). This meaning-making lens was particularly important, because many new immigrants hold on to their cultural traditions and language (Tajima & Harachi, 2010). I gave participants the opportunity to embrace their cultural identities by creating the space to share their culturally-embedded lived experiences. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher draws on structured, yet flexible questions to guide the interview process. Semi-structured interviews were appropriate in my study, because this purposeful yet fluid process ensured shared understanding and helped me create a culturally-appropriate space for participants to be open about their experiences (Banner, 2010) by mirroring participant language and responding sensitively to their culturally-embedded experiences, perspectives, and values. The interview protocol is provided in Appendix A.

Through my partnership with one of the agencies, I was able to use their office space to facilitate interviews with clients. Having secure office space for interviews ensured safety and

comfort for me as well as the participants. During the interviews, participants were invited to provide the basic demographic information listed at the beginning of the interview guide in Appendix A. The interviews were audio recorded. The audio files, as well as the Word documents created using the Temi transcription tool, were kept in a password protected file on my secure laptop.

Data Analysis

Demographic information was collected to help describe and contextualize the interview data. The information generated from the demographic data are summarized in Table 1 of the manuscript in Chapter 4 (Mertens, 2015).

Data analysis in qualitative description takes the form of content analysis, which is common to many forms of qualitative research (Neergaard, et al. 2009). The process of content analysis in qualitative descriptive studies involves searching for themes and patterns. This process includes coding and categorizing data for further analysis and interpretation of the participants' lived experiences (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). One of the objectives of data analysis is to describe the experiences from the participants' perspectives (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). I analyzed participant thoughts and ideas, documented during the interview, to help in the development of themes. Through content analysis, I developed an understanding of the intersections between single motherhood, immigration, gender, ethnicity, and social class, as well as a rich description of single, immigrant women's lived experiences (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). The steps in content analysis are described below (Bradshaw et al., 2017; Magilvy & Thomas, 2009; Neergaard et al., 2009). I integrated some elements of thematic analysis, which follows similar data analysis steps, to make the process of extracting of themes and holding the lenses of intersectionality and critical and transformative theory from my conceptual framework

more transparent (Clark & Braun, 2018; Glesne, 2016). Only Step 6 was unique to thematic analysis (italics used). Reference is made to Clark and Braun (2018) or Glesne (2016) to indicate where thematic analysis supports the content analysis process (i.e., Steps 4, 5, 8–11).

1. Read the data, including interview transcripts and researcher notes, to develop a general understanding of the experience (Neergaard et al., 2009).
2. Create an initial coding structure. Codes are considered the building blocks for developing themes, meaningful patterns, and main ideas (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009).
3. Code the data according to the initial coding structure. Stay as close to the data as possible by treating this as a descriptive process (Bradshaw et al., 2017). In qualitative content analysis, this is an iterative process of moving back and forth between the data and the modifiable coding structure (Neergaard et al., 2009).
4. Make notes on additional insights, questions, or reflections on the data (Neergaard et al., 2009). Look for interesting or common features between the participants that fit with the research question and conceptual framework for the study. These features will help identify patterns (Glesne, 2016; Magilvy & Thomas, 2009).
5. Categorize codes or ideas into themes by identifying similar themes, patterns, and processes (Clark & Braun, 2018; Glesne, 2016; Neergaard et al., 2009).
6. *Develop a mind map of the themes for visual purposes* (Clark & Braun, 2018). *Reflect on the emergent themes in relation to the conceptual framework of critical and transformative theory as well as intersectionality* (Cheshire, 2013; Glesne, 2016; Viruell-Fuentes, et al. 2012).
7. Compare and contrast the data within and between themes to identify subthemes and refine the codes (Bradshaw et al., 2017; Neergaard et al., 2009)

8. Review how data fits into the thematic categorizations (Clark & Braun, 2018; Magilvy & Thomas, 2009).
9. Refine and reduce the thematic categories to reflect generalizations that can be drawn about the data (Neergaard et al., 2009). These themes will emerge to eventually become a shared core idea (Clarke & Braun, 2017).
10. Revisit these generalizations in light of the conceptual framework for the study (Cheshire, 2013; Glesne, 2016; Viruell-Fuentes, et al. 2012) and other existing knowledge about single, immigrant mothers (Neergaard et al., 2009).
11. Produce a final report of the data in the form of a summary of the themes with supporting data using the participants own words and language wherever possible (Clark & Braun, 2018; Neergaard et al., 2009).

The full data summary from the interviews is provided in Appendix F. More succinct summaries are provided in the results section of the manuscript in Chapter 4 (see Tables 2 to 8).

Rigour

I used Mertens' (2015) criteria for judging quality in qualitative research to assess the rigour of my research: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity. I added the criteria of integrity from Neergaard et al. (2009) and Magilvy and Thomas (2009).

Credibility. Mertens (2015) defined credibility as value and believability. To enhance credibility, it is important to capture a true insider perspective (Neergaard et al., 2009). Qualitative description foregrounds exploratory and descriptive accounts of the lived experiences of the participants (Bradshaw, et al. 2017; Neergaard, et al. 2009). Peer debriefing uses an external source to support the credibility of the data (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). The purpose of the peer debriefing is to come to agreement on data

labels and logical directions (Houghton et al., 2013). In this study, peer debriefing took place on a weekly basis with my thesis supervisor throughout the process of gathering and analyzing the data. Peer debriefing needs to be used with caution, because interpretation is a unique process between the researcher and the data. As such, interpretation of data can vary across researchers (Houghton et al., 2013). Having these open dialogues with my supervisor helped enhance the critical/transformative and intersectionality lenses applied to the data analysis, while still allowing me to maintain the integrity of the data by foregrounding my voice and my experience as the primary researcher (Houghton et al., 2013; Mertens, 2015).

Transferability. Transferability refers to the degree to which the knowledge generated through the study can be transferred to other situations or contexts (Mertens, 2015). I provided detailed descriptions of the findings as well as direct quotes in the manuscript in Chapter 4 to enhance transferability (Houghton, et al. 2013). These two approaches support the audience to make informed decisions and to transfer information to their unique situations (Houghton, et al. 2013).

Confirmability and dependability. These two factors reflect the reliability, stability, and trustworthiness of the study (Mertens, 2015). The confirmability and dependability of the study requires a thorough examination of the decision-making process (i.e., audit trail rigour) (Houghton et al. 2013). The internal consistency or congruence of the study was ensured throughout the research design. Progressive subjectivity helped me monitor the research process, including any changes or developments throughout the study (Mertens, 2015). NVivo 11 was a valuable tool in providing an audit trail of my decision-making and rationalizing process, particularly with data collection and analysis (Houghton, et al. 2013). Through NVivo, I was able to track my categorization and analysis of the data from my interviews (Houghton, et al. 2013).

This information is secure and easily accessible (Houghton, et al. 2013). I made use of the coding queries, matrix coding, and reflexive journaling components of NVivo to increase confirmability and dependability (Houghton, et al. 2013). I received training on NVivo in my GCAP 693 Advanced Qualitative Methods course. To demonstrate confirmability in qualitative description research, I included direct quotes from the participants (Bradshaw et al. 2017), which also helped to ensure that I stayed true to the voices of the immigrant mothers (Bradshaw et al. 2017).

Authenticity. This criterion refers to the genuineness or fairness of the study in representing the ideas that emerge through the data analysis (Mertens, 2015). I enhanced authenticity by providing a space for participants to speak and be heard (Neergaard et al., 2009). I also followed the lead of Neergaard et al. (2009) with other techniques to improve authenticity in the study. For example, I used purposeful sampling to ensure that participants were chosen based on whether or not their experiences were relevant to the aim of the study (Neergard et al., 2009). In addition, participant-driven data collection was ensured by creating opportunities for participants to take a lead in sharing their experiences and worldviews (Neergaard et al., 2009).

Integrity. Integrity is an important strategy of qualitative description to enhance rigour (Neergaard et al., 2009). Reflecting on the researcher's assumptions, lenses, and potential biases is an important technique for increasing integrity, which can be viewed as a strength in this study (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). In each interview, through the informed consent process, I reminded myself that I needed to take off my counsellor and personal hats to foreground the voices of the participants and their interpretations of their lived experiences and intersectionalities. Between interviews, I engaged in reflection about the potential meanings, both direct and indirect, that emerged from the data; I also consulted with my thesis supervisor,. Member checking is a

technique that can be used to improve integrity (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). Formal member checking involves revisiting with participants content, thoughts, feelings, experiences, and values after the data is synthesized. Member checking can minimize researcher and cultural biases, as well as enhance trustworthiness of the findings (Mertens, 2015). After I completed each interview, I provided a verbal summary of the participant's experience to check the accuracy of my information and to seek validation and clarification from each of them (Mertens, 2015). All participants agreed with the summary; they expressed hope that this study would create change for other single, immigrant mothers in Canada.

Ethical Considerations

It is important to respect the general and moral rights of research participants (CPA, 2017). The design of the research should contribute to the fair distribution of benefits to vulnerable individuals (CPA, 2017). This study supported single, immigrant mothers in their acculturation processes and mental health, recognizing the impact of intersectionality and the potential for multiple marginalization. I screened research participants with the intent of selecting those least likely to be harmed (CPA, 2017), by conducting a five-minute initial phone interview. The outlines and questions for the intake survey are provided in Appendix C. As noted above, participants were asked to self-exclude if they were experiencing symptoms of posttraumatic stress that might cause distress while participating in the study. None of the participants were screened out or choose to self-exclude on these grounds. For the one woman who turned out to have been in Canada for a period of time outside of the inclusion window for the study, I informed her that her data would be excluded from the study, thanked her for participating in the interview, and provided her with the same honorarium for sharing her story as received by other participants. Given the economic and time burdens already faced by

immigrant mothers, I minimized additional risks by providing participants with transit and childcare subsidies, as well as grocery gift cards for volunteering their time.

Informed consent is "a process that involves taking time to establish an appropriate trusting relationship and to reach an agreement to work collaboratively, and may need to be obtained more than once" (CPA, 2017, p. 14). A consent form was provided in person to participants before the interview. See Appendix D. I went over the consent form with each participant and collected the consent form once the participant had read and signed the document. The consent form gave information about the study including risks, benefits, privacy, confidentiality, as well as the option to withdraw at any time (CPA, 2014). I worked with an editor to ensure that the consent form was at a Grade 8 reading and language level. It is important to consider language and cultural barriers that may hinder participants from understanding the consent form. Participants were able withdraw from the study up until the point at which data analysis had started, without prejudice or consequence. None of the participants exercised this option. The consent form indicated that all information provided is private, confidential, and anonymous. The CPA (2017) noted the importance of providing limitations to confidentiality and anonymity, which includes responsibility to report risks to a child under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. I clearly indicated this duty to report on the Consent Form in Appendix D. Although this issue did not arise in any of the interviews, I was prepared to provide the participants with information about Canadian parenting norms and legislation as well as appropriate referrals. I had a plan in place to consult immediately with my supervisory committee before taking any further action. Participants were informed that all information was stored in encrypted files on a laptop. Furthermore, the laptop was stored in a

locked cabinet in my office. To ensure confidentiality of the data, I assigned interview codes to the participants instead of using personal information.

The ethics approval from the Faculty of Health Disciplines Departmental Ethics Review Committee is provided in Appendix E. As part of this approval process, I specified that participants would be asked about their experiences of discrimination, isolation, and mental health. These questions could have resulted in feelings of distress. This was a risk of participating in this study. To mitigate this risk, I prepared a list of resources including counselling and support groups.

The findings were shared with participants in a developmentally, culturally appropriate, and meaningful way (CPA, 2017). I debriefed with each participant at the end of the interview and discussed how their story would contribute to the development of knowledge for other single, immigrant mothers (CPA, 2017). Through this process, I asked participants about any questions or concerns that may have developed. This allowed me to discern any harm that may have taken place. Once the thesis oral is complete, I plan to provide a short presentation of the findings to organizations that supported and advertised the study with hopes of helping them improve services. Through all forms of dissemination, the data have been presented in a way that maintains participants' privacy and confidentiality.

Chapter 4. Results and Discussion

The journal article in the rest of this chapter will be submitted to the *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*. The title of the article is "Alone in Paradise: Exploring the Intersections of Gender, Ethnicity, Single Motherhood, Social Class, and Immigration." I have followed the guidelines for this journal in developing this article, in which I report and discuss the results of the study. My supervisor was actively involved in guiding me through the data analysis and supplemented my writing in the article with additional knowledge and insights. She is accorded second authorship on the article. Gina Wong, a thesis committee member, added expertise in the area of mothering research and counselling practice implications. She is recognized as third author.

Abstract

There is a paucity of research focused on cross-cultural transitioning for single mothers who immigrate to Canada. Focusing on the intersections of gender, ethnicity, social class, single motherhood, and immigration increases the understanding of challenges affecting single, immigrant mothers. Through this qualitative description study I examined single, immigrant mothers' complex experiences. Content analysis of six semi-structured interviews elucidated their experiences of gender and mothering discourses within various social contexts; the impact of intersectionality on single, immigrant mothers' acculturation processes in Canada; and the relationships of single, immigrant mothers with their children and themselves. Implications for counselling and social services are provided.

Key words: Immigration, Single Motherhood, Mothering, Counselling, Acculturation, Cultural Discourses, Cross-Cultural Transitioning

Alone in Paradise:

Exploring the Intersections of Gender, Ethnicity, Single Motherhood, Social Class, and Immigration

Single, immigrant mothers have multiple intersecting identities that shape their experiences of acculturation and motherhood (Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, & Abdulrahim, 2012). Intersectionality theory is an integral part of enhancing cultural awareness, knowledge, and responsiveness to single, immigrant mothers (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012), whose various dimensions of cultural identity include immigration, gender, ethnicity, single motherhood, and social class. Counselling and mental health service providers would benefit from understanding how intersectionality theory is foundational to working with single, immigrant mothers and other vulnerable populations (Collins, 2018d; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012). Through an intersectional lens, counsellors are more likely to increase their awareness and knowledge of single, immigrant mothers and to respond more effectively to this population (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012).

Statistics Canada (2015b) did not break down the 698,000 lone parent families by citizenship or immigration status; however, they did identify 81% as single mother families. The 2011 National Household Survey identified single, immigrant mothers as making up 9.8% of immigrant women (Statistics Canada, 2015a). Statistic Canada (2015a) projected that the number of immigrant women and girls will grow to approximately 5.8 million by 2031, which would see a concomitant increase in the number of single, immigrant mothers. Research is needed, therefore, to reveal and better understand the unique challenges that single, immigrant mothers face, including how multiple layers of intersectionality can influence their experiences and self-perceptions. Because single, immigrant mothers are so highly underrepresented in the literature

(see our review of this literature in Lam, Collins, & Wong, 2018), more understanding, attention, and awareness are needed to give voice to their experiences of acculturation and mothering. (Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012). To counter dominant, power-over discourses in this manuscript, we follow Collins (2018a) in not capitalizing *euro-western* or *white*, while capitalizing specific nondominant ethnicities such as *Syrian*.

Intersectionality and Cultural Discourses

Gender, ethnicity, and immigration intersect for these mothers, because of the discourses about, and lived experiences of, gender and gender role socialization in both countries of origin and Canada (Curry Rodriguez, 2014; Palmerin Velasco, 2013). These discourses influence all aspects of women's lives, including their choices and expectations about mothering (Wong & Bell, 2012). Whether they immigrate before or after becoming single mothers, the process of cross-cultural transitioning evokes contrasts, and sometimes tensions, among these varying gender discourses and norms (Browne, Kumar, Puente-Duran, Georgiades, Leckie, & Jenkins, 2017; Maticka-Tyndale, 2014; Palmerin Velasco, 2013). The *good mother* ideology (Caplan, 2000; O'Reilly, 2004; Schafer, 2006; Wong, 2018), for example, is founded on socially constructed stereotypes and myths that confine mothers to rigid and set standards (Jamal Al-deen & Windle, 2016; Zhu, 2016). In Canada, these standards are based on norms of the dominant white, middle-class family, and consequently, single, immigrant mothers fall short and are subject to judgement from society (Jamal Al-deen & Windle, 2016; Zhu, 2016). In many nondominant cultures, single mothers are considered immoral and financially disadvantaged (Afifi, Davis, Denes, & Merrill, 2013; Ayubi, 2010; Yu, 2011); in Canada, single mothers have been described as selfish and incompetent (Wiegers & Chunn, 2015). Often, they internalize

these messages of not being good enough (Jamal Al-deen & Windle, 2016; Wiegers & Chunn, 2015).

Impacts on Psychosocial and Economic Acculturation

Stereotypes surrounding single motherhood also form barriers to social and economic opportunities (Liegghio & Caragata, 2016; Wiegers & Chunn, 2015). These barriers are particularly salient to single, immigrant mothers who are faced with balancing dominant discourses and perspectives from both their former world and their new world (Zhu, 2016).

Immigrant families may experience acculturative stress and intergenerational conflict due to sociocultural and economic barriers (Browne et al., 2017; Nassar-McMillan, 2014; Renzaho, Dhingra, Georgeou, & Brown, 2017). When newcomers transition to a new society with unfamiliar cultural discourses, they may experience distress and disorientation from sudden changes in beliefs, values, and worldviews (Collins, 2018e). This type of culture shock is often experienced by immigrant mothers (Renzaho et al., 2017). In many cases, different rates of acculturation can lead to intergenerational challenges (Bemak & Chung, 2017; Guo, Xu, Liu, Mao, & Chi, 2016; Rodriguez-Keyes & Piepenbring, 2017). The relationships between single, immigrant mothers and their children are further influenced by the intersections of their multiple nondominant identities (Curry Rodriguez, 2014; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012). As a result of these intersections, single, immigrant mothers face unique challenges that affect their children's development, mental health, and lived experiences (Holumyong, Ford, Sajjanand, & Chamratrithirong, 2018). The impact of acculturative stress and intergenerational conflict on family relationships has been explored in the literature (Belhadj, Koglin, & Petermann, 2015; Curry Rodriguez, 2014; Daryanani, Hamilton, Abramson, & Alloy, 2016). However, little is known about many aspects of single, immigrant mothers' relationships with their children.

In understanding the intersections of single motherhood and immigration, it is important to examine single, immigrant mother's mental health in the face of isolation, marginalization, unemployment, and loss. Single, immigrant mothers are at high risk for depression, anxiety, and postpartum disorder, because of their multiple marginalizations (Aydin, Korukcu, & Kabukcuoglu, 2017; Guruge, Thomson, George, & Chaze, 2015; Muhammad & Gagnon, 2010; Sawers & Wong, 2018; Thomson, Chaze, George, & Guruge, 2015; Vigod et al., 2017). In order to improve cultural competency and service provision, counsellors and other healthcare providers must develop a better understanding of this vulnerable population and their intersectionalities (Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012). To respond to this gap in the literature, a qualitative study was undertaken to examine the lived experiences of single, immigrant mothers in a western Canadian city. We asked the question: How does the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, immigration, single motherhood, and social class influence single, immigrant mothers' mental health and acculturation?

Method

Intersectionality Theory within a Critical/Transformative Paradigm

In this study, we embraced intersectionality theory (Addison & Coolhart, 2015; Warner, Settles, Shields, 2016), which assumes that (a) participants' multiple social identities (e.g., gender, social class, ethnicity, immigration) shape their lived experiences; (b) these influences cannot be fully understood in isolation from one another; and (c) multiple marginalizations shape health outcomes (Cheshire, 2013; Collins, 2018d; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012; Warner et al., 2016). We positioned intersectionality theory within the complementary critical/transformative paradigm to investigate the impact of socially constructed norms and sociocultural marginalization in single, immigrant mother's lives (Glesne, 2016). Through a critical standpoint

epistemology, we were able to examine the role of power in single, immigrant mother's social locations and experiences.

Qualitative Description

Qualitative description guided this research study on the intersectionality of multiple nondominant cultural identities. This approach provided a rich and meaningful description of single, immigrant mother's lived experiences (Bradshaw, Atkinson, Doody, 2017; Neergaard, Olesen, Anderson, & Sondergaard, 2009). Given the gap that currently exists in research, we used qualitative description as an opportunity for single, immigrant mothers to share their stories and for us to identify emerging themes. This approach was used to enhance understanding of this population's social positioning in the context of dominant discourses related to gender, social class, and mothering (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009; Neergaard et al., 2009). Qualitative research fits within the social constructivist epistemology (Neergaard et al., 2009), and as such, recognizes the importance of situating the researcher in the study. As the daughter of a single, immigrant mother and counsellor, Gia Lam, first author and primary researcher, used her education and lived experiences as a way of enhancing the researcher-participant relationship, gathering information, and analyzing the data from a social constructivist perspective.

Recruitment and Data Collection

Following institutional ethical approval from the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board, participants were selected using the following criteria: (a) 18 years of age or older, (b) self-identifying as a single mother, (c) raising one or more children, (d) speaking and understanding the English language, (e) immigrant from any country; and (f) living in Canada for less than 5 years. Participants were asked to self-exclude from the study if they experienced war-related trauma or persecution. Through purposeful sampling, six participants were invited

into the study. Different organizations and community services assisted in recruiting potential participants from different cultural backgrounds, which served to reduce the potential limitation of selection bias (Mertens, 2015) that may have resulted from snowball sampling within particular ethnic groups. The consent form included information about risks and benefits, privacy, confidentiality, anonymity, and withdrawal from the study without prejudice or consequence.

A qualitative description approach (Sandelowski, 2000) was used as a guide to develop meaningful and relevant interview questions to examine the beliefs, values, worldviews, and lived experiences of single, immigrant mothers. To ensure a safe space for participants to share their stories, interviews took place at an immigrant services agency that offered private office space and resources to participants. At the end of the interview, participants were given a list of resources from various service providers, to minimize harm. To ensure confidentiality, the data from each participant was number coded. Participant demographics are provided in the table below.

Table 1

Demographic Information

Demographic	
Country of origin	Israel, Syria, Venezuela, Pakistan, India, Malaysia
Years in Canada (range)	1–4
Number of children (range)	1–3
Age of children (range)	1–18
Employed	3
Unemployed	3
Annual household income (range)	$9,852–$55,000
Relationship status	4 divorced; 1 single mother by choice; 1 separated

Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to code and categorize data for the purpose of identifying themes and patterns that emerged from the interviews (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). This method recognizes the importance of using participants' perspectives to formulate a description, and thus makes space for an intersectional and critical lens (Clark & Braun, 2018; Glesne, 2016; Magilvy & Thomas, 2009). The concise steps in content analysis adopted for this study were as follows: (a) read the data, (b) design an initial coding structure, (c) use initial coding structure to code data, (d) make notes, (e) categorize codes into themes, (f) create a mind map, (g) find similarities and differences within the data, (h) review the data, (i) enhance thematic categories to reflect generalizations, (j) revisit generalizations, and (k) produce the final report (Bradshaw et al., 2017; Clark & Braun, 2018; Glesne, 2016; Magilvy & Thomas, 2009; Neergaard et al., 2009).

The following criteria from Mertens (2015) were used ensure research rigour: (a) Credibility—peer debriefing within the research team ensured the value and believability of the data (Mertens, 2015); (b) transferability—a thorough description of the findings and direct quotations enhanced transferability to different situations (Mertens, 2015); (c) dependability and confirmability—the process of progressive subjectivity, creating an audit trail through research journalling, and using direct quotations (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Mertens, 2015); and authenticity—fairness was ensured through member checking, purposeful sampling, and participant-driven data collection (Mertens, 2015; Neergaard et al. 2009). Additionally, the criterion of integrity involved revisiting researcher bias and providing participants with a summary of their stories to ensure validity and clarity (Magilvy & Thomas, 2009; Neergaard et al., 2009).

Results

One overarching theme, Former World verses New World, highlighted the differences between participants' experiences from their country of origin to Canada. The participants' perceptions of their new world was greatly influenced by their experiences in their former world (Table 2). The title of this manuscript, *Alone in Paradise*, introduces the paradox of perceived good fortune in immigrating to a country where the single, immigrant mothers in this study experienced safety, freedom to leave abusive relationships, and opportunities to redefine themselves as women and mothers, while simultaneously experiencing loss of family and cultural supports and unfamiliar expectations of self-reliance and independence.

Table 2

Overarching Theme: Former World Versus New World

Subtheme	Subtheme definition	Verbatim Quote
Economic and political turmoil versus safety and opportunities	The majority of participants perceived Canada as an asylum from adversity and a land of opportunities. They described their former world as patriarchal, economically and politically unstable, and sometimes unsafe.	*Because here in Canada they give you a better life. So I feel here I am happier than in Syria. Even he was work, but I don't like the feeling that he is the powerful in the family. I can do whatever I want here. Nobody will tell me what I have to do . . . Situation is not like Canada because Canada they offer help, but in Syria there is no government, there is nobody to help them. So all people said you are lucky because you are here in Canada*. *Really, always, always. I thank God. I'm very, very, very thankful to be here. To be in Canada. I feel safe. I feel like granted. I feel very comfortable. I never have any fear. I mean, nobody harms me. Nobody can hurt me.*
Increased self-reliance and independence	Without family and their partners in Canada, single, immigrant mothers are placed in a position that necessitates self-reliance and independence.	*You have more independence here. You have more support as if what you want to do. What makes you happy? You can do those things. It's not that there's a particular expectation that you're a woman, you have to do this. No. You choose what makes you happy, what's good for your family. So you have an advantage here*. *One time my son gets sick during the night and I feel how I can go. It's very dark. How can I go by myself? It was hard. But finally I say to myself, the better way I call the emergency, because if they came it would be safer for us. I can go. Sometimes you feel that you, that is something, you can do it by yourself.*

Sub-subthemes	Sub-subtheme definition	Verbatim Quote
Dependency on men verses self-reliance	In their country of origin, participants were more likely to be emotionally and financially dependent on their male partner (most often husband). Although there is a strong and positive desire to be independent, some participants viewed this as a barrier, particularly when it involves raising children alone.	*For single mom, I think it's she had to do the both work, like, you know, it's hard for them because when you are with husband, it's easy because you both are working together and you like emotionally and you know, financially you can help each other, and can share your problem with each other.* *They believe that women, people think are weak or you know, dependent with their husband.*
Dependency on family verses self-reliance	In their countries of origin, participants depended on their family for decision-making and childcare, as well as financial, economic, emotional, and psychological support. The loss of family in a new country necessitated increased self-reliance.	*Because if she want to go work for example, who will take care of her children? So hard. She should have the family, her mother, her sister. But then if I were in Syria for example, or my family with me, I can leave my children with my mother for example and go to work. But here in Canada, no family. So you will have to pay to the daycare.*) *Mom, my sister, my brother is the oldest looking after my children's cause they are small, there's our grandparents. So your uncle, your auntie tends to look after the children's. They help a lot around you. But here I don't see that. You are on your own.*

Within the overarching theme, six themes emerged from the data that revealed how the intersections of multiple cultural identities influenced mental health and acculturation for single, immigrant mothers: (a) Gender Discourses, (b) Mothering Discourses, (c) Mother-Child Relationship, (d) Economic Acculturation, (e) Psychosocial Acculturation, and (f) Importance of the Service Provider. A logical ordering of the themes and subthemes emerged based on the shift from culture of origin to Canadian culture, broader to more narrow issues (e.g., gender discourses, and within those, mothering discourses), and lived experiences of cross-cultural transitioning to their economic and psychosocial consequences, to the implications for services. The themes and subthemes are illustrated in the tables below. We have indicated the source of each quote by simply numbering participants; it did not seem culturally appropriate to apply pseudonyms and could reduce the confidentiality of study participants.

The first theme, Gender Discourses, captured participants' perceptions of what constitutes the *good woman*, or girlhood/womanhood in general, which varied between countries of origin and Canada. These discourses affected gender roles, positioning within society, and sense of equality to men. Two subthemes are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Theme 1: Gender Discourses

Subtheme	Subtheme definition	Verbatim Quote
Gender roles and positioning within society	The idea of womanhood was heavily associated with the traditional roles of mother and wife. Across cultures, participants indicated that there is a familial and societal expectation to get married and have children.	*Well my mom always said to me, you know, once you have your child, that's your responsibility to look after them and after your husband. You have to feed them. This is sort of exactly what she said to me. You have to do everything for your child.*)
		After you marry, you have to have children. You have to give birth. That is your purpose.
Patriarchy verses equality	Participants pointed to patriarchal family structures within their cultures of origin. They experienced a recognizable power shift in Canada, in which women are treated more equal to men.	*This view from Canadian to the women and girls because they considered them as a man. No one is better. No one is the powerful, Uh, equal, yeah, I like that.*
		I seen that the girls or woman here. Yeah. More freedom. No, I have another word. . . We have equal. . . You can see and back home I think is you still have this a little bit because I'm coming from Muslim country, but here is like our woman is a man is look like it's the same.

The second theme, Mothering Discourses, described ideologies of mothering that varied between countries of origin and Canada. These discourses defined women's choices, behaviours, and experiences surrounding motherhood. Often, mothers felt guilt, shame, and incompetence for not meeting the unrealistic demands of the *good mother* ideologies.

Table 4.

Theme 2: Mothering Discourses

Subtheme	Subtheme definition	Verbatim Quote
Culture of origin discourses	Single motherhood is often discouraged due to stigma and dominant	*Being a single mother in India, I'm talking about India, I don't know about other countries, for now it's a social, usually we call it social taboo. That is something that is not accepted. If there are concerns between you and*

about single mothering	mothering ideologies. Participants consistently received the message that mothers are better off economically and socially with their husband.	*your partner, you still have to make an adjustment because that is something that is expected from you for the sake of your child that you have to be in a relationship so that the child doesn't suffer even if it makes you unhappy.* *Even if your husband is violent and or something, they said all you have to be patient. You have to be, if he has another woman outside, you have to be patient. You'll have to carry him. You are a woman. Even he beats you. You don't have to scream. You have to be quiet. You don't have to tell anybody because otherwise, you are not good woman.*
Shift in power from mother to child	The mothering discourses participants were exposed to in Canada led them to perceive a power shift from the mother to the child. This perceived ideology holds conditions that conflict with their former worlds' parenting beliefs and values	*It was a culture shock for me. I come from a country where we have our particular way of raising on kids. Right? How my parents raised me, they had their way, like I said, we all be there, we follow, they decide everything. They are the decision makers, but then when I came to Canada, it was totally different here. The children, they have their say, they get to decide if whether they weren't things or not. If they like it or not. Even if it's good for them, like I know this might be best for them, but then the kids can decide that if they wanted or not so they can go against that decision. So that was another big culture shock.* *So how to handle them because in our country we scream and here you are not supposed to do that. But here it's totally different. You have to be like friend of your kid and talk with them as a friend. But in our country you have to give order. No, no means no right?*
Shift in power from mother to social institutions	Society creates a set of rules for mothers to follow; as a result, power in terms of how mothers should raise their children is given to social institutions and taken away from mothers. This occurs for those who do not meet the ideal mother ideology in both Canada and their country of origin.	*They were like, the preference should be given to what are the laws here and what neighbours or society think about it. If a child is crying, don't let your child cry because you police or Child and Family services can come knock on your door. Well, if my baby's crying. Kids, the newborn baby cries all the time. So I was scared all the time. I was more scared of how not to break the law than how to take care of my child because I was worried, oh my God, my child is crying. It's very natural for a child to cry. But then I was more worried about what people would say, so I would be focused on that rather than taking care of my child. So that was something really difficult that I learned here. That's what motherhood is. Worrying more about the laws and the neighborhood.* *They will threaten you, want to take my kids away, because it said that I'm not a fit mother because of my daughter mental state because she was stressed. Now it's okay. I dealt, I fought with them and if you read the report notes and I'm not a fit mother. I'm not a fit mother uh, not good mothers. Why would they put into their book? Because I'm not fit mother. She said that because my daughter was stress. My kids both of them were witness of trauma in their life. How the days my ex abused me and instead of chasing him, they come after me and then she brought me to the court again because system is only always one side. The judge not going to listen to me. They will listen to them because they agency, whatever they say, they will listen to them. Even again, the report that she has is completely wrong.*

Navigating good mother discourses (costs versus benefits)	These women are in a position where they must navigate social norms and discourses of both their former and new worlds. Although there are benefits (e.g., clarification of values, enhanced resiliency), there are also costs (e.g., self-sacrifice, acculturative stress).	*All the woman, gonna have to put things together, have to responsible for everything. If doesn't work. Mother, did the blame. If success. Okay. Mother also will get praised, but everything is, it look like the mother job. Anything around them. The parents and siblings of your husband, society, your friends, your neighbors. If anything happened, they look like they're pointing at the mother.* *I did all those workshops and it help me understand what was expected and what I'm supposed to do in this environment. But then of course I have my own way of thinking, my own way of doing things. Sometimes I am struggling to think, should I follow what my brain says or what my heart says because my heart is an immigrant and they have their own values, but my brain is like, no, Canada expects this. Sometime you struggle there.*

The third theme, Mother-Child Relationships, revealed how the mother-child relationships may be affected by various factors, including immigration, single motherhood, parenting style, dominant ideologies, and gender role socialization.

Table 5

Theme 3: Mother-Child Relationships

Subtheme	Subtheme definition	Verbatim Quote
Gratitude for children	Children play an active role in single, immigrant mothers' experiences. Participants expressed immense gratitude for their children's ability to demonstrate autonomy and provide practical support.	*They are very good children also. They are supporting me with not too much things but like dishing wash or making laundry or like grocery, some things they, they helped me and they are very responsible also for their homework, for their study, for their school.* *Well, I'm very grateful for them. They never giving me hard time. They woke up they own; they go to bed around their bedroom. They do, they clean and they would the bedroom.*
Friendship with children	In most cases, participants described the mother-child relationship as a friendship, in which they can confide and share stories with one another.	*We are, like you say a mother and child, of course that's the first relationship. We are on good terms. We are each other's best friend, since I'm the only person who is in his life and he's the only one in my life. So we do everything together. We share everything.* *With my children. We are like not only mother and children, like friends really. They are my best friends, my best friends. And they are. They have good minds. I never hide anything from them.*
Fatherless family in a two-parent society	To compensate for the missing father, single, immigrant mothers face sociocultural pressure to take on the role of mother and father. Feelings of guilt and incompetency arise when they believe	*There is also still challenge, especially like Father's Day…I never have place to hide to, to skip that day is, you understand? But not for me. But for children, especially for my son really. I tried to do so many things to not to feel bad.* *But if immigrant you have to like for a single mom, you know, you are a mom, you're a dad, you are, you have more responsibilities, you have more to do. I sometime get lost and we don't know where to start.*

	they do not live up to these demands.	
Prioritization of the child	In the mother-child relationship, the child will always come first.	*Children are the priority. You take care of them. They are, it doesn't matter who needs your help. Children comes first. Husband in laws, parents know they go in the back seat* *"Being a mother, well, there's a huge responsibility. You're not going to look after yourself anymore because you have to look somebody else. Your child will be number ones in your life.*

The next two themes were Economic Acculturation (Table 6) and Psychosocial Acculturation (Table 7). Economic acculturation processes were complicated by the necessity of work to survival; systematic barriers to employment; and tensions between work, school, and parenting responsibilities. Psychosocial Acculturation for single, immigrant mothers included adjusting to the loss of social support, language barriers, discrimination towards single and immigrant mothers, barriers to resources, culture shock, and mental health concerns.

Table 6

Theme 4: Economic Acculturation

Subtheme	Subtheme definition	Verbatim Quote
The complex road to employment	The need for meaningful employment increases for single, immigrant mothers. Many single, immigrant mothers see employment as survival or security; however, most cannot afford childcare.	*She said that's really affected her I guess employment aspect because she can't, she went from working to not only studying if she, even if she wanted to work, she doesn't have anyone to look after her kids.* [translator] *But then getting a job, it's not easy because you don't have Canadian experience. Right. So yes. Being a single mom does affect your unemployment. And I was in so much debt, I have my credit cards were going up. I had to ask friends for help, like, I had to study so that I am not unemployed that led to student loan. That's another debt. So that it affects, and same way, if you're working, it also affects because you have to figure out the job that works with your schedule. You have to make sure that they don't have odd hours. It at least pays enough money so that you are, have you pay your bills and take care of child's need, schooling, daycare and everything. So yes, it affects both ways, whether if you're employed or not employed.*
Systemic barriers to employment	There are systemic barriers and economic disadvantages to immigrant women with	*Yeah, like uh, schooling because um, I did a bachelor's from my back home, but when I came here, like I transfer, transfer my transcript, but they push me like tourists bag. But now I, I had a high school degree if I transfer from Canada, so now I have to go*

	academic credentials from countries outside of North America. Their education, work experience, and credentials are assumed to be inadequate against Canadian standards.	*for more education and for a good job and for that I have to go over loan or stuff like that.* *So the biggest challenge is of course getting a job because that's totally biased. You don't have Canadian experience. People think that you studied in a different countries, so your education is different. It's not up to the same level as what is Canadian education.*
Balancing economic acculturation with mothering	Participants struggle to schedule and manage career, school, and life demands with caring for, and being available to, their children.	*Last year I was working full time and I was studying full time the same time, so 16 hour every day I was outside. That means how can I be with my children?* *Honestly, because of my daughter, I'm all the time thinking, I need to work and school. I want to do something in school because the timing, I can't just go evening shifts because no one is there to take care of my daughter. I can't, like you know, if I go for studies, I don't, I can go for weekends. I had to some limited hours, limited options. So I'm just, I'm just tired... After school she can stay but after six and I want to come home, spend time with her too. I have more responsibilities. I have to give her time too; I don't want to be busy all the time because I am the only one here and if I keep myself busy with this stuff she would be lost and I don't want that.*

Table 7

Theme 5: Psychosocial Acculturation

Subtheme	Subtheme definition	Verbatim Quote
Loss of family and social ties	Loss of social support was more amplified by single motherhood, particularly for mothers with strong familial values.	*So immigration of course. It is a big change because back home in my country, I had a settled life, I had home, I had job, I had family, everything. Right? You have everything back home. When you come here, you have nothing. You start from the scratch. No family. Job. Yes. It takes time, but then of course, no job experience, everything. So it's a big change. It's like basically being born again and starting everything from scratch.* *I don't have anybody… I don't have a job. I don't have family. I don't have friends. I only have you guys.*
Language barriers	Language barriers posed problems for single, immigrant mothers, because being unable to communicate with others resulted in further isolation.	*Maybe you ashamed by yourself, maybe your phone is ringing in the train. You can't answer because you are not sure about your language. So you're afraid.* *I think the language. Communication because in Pakistan, history, like it was hard subject, but it's totally different. So when I came here, people were talking, I was just looking, I couldn't understand, I didn't get what she's talking about. But the language was, yeah, even I can't communicate with them*
Prejudice and discrimination	Participants reported that they have experienced prejudice and discrimination on the basis of	*. . . bigger discrimination was just because my name is immigrant name. That doesn't mean that I have no education or I have no English. People don't understand that. And sometimes they have asked me directly. How long have you been in Canada? So I say like couple of years and they'll like, then how come your English is good? How did you learn your English? Why do you have good English? Well, English is knowing*

	gender, single motherhood, and immigration.	*universal language. People don't realize that. So yes those discrimination. I have had lots of.* *Being a single mom accommodation sometime it becomes difficult because if I'm trying to rent out a place, they are like single mom, how can I pay your bills? Uh, why do you need to live in a house? You can live in a basement but then they don't, like they start judging you on your being a single mom or why do you need things for your child? They are like, you can manage in small, why do you need to go for big? But then I know what's best for me and my child.*
Information and resources	Many newcomers are not aware of the resources that exist for single mothers and immigrants. It was hard for them to find information.	*I think the hard part was not having the information. So when I, when my problems started or when I was looking for support, I had no information. Like what are the options for me? So I, that was the reason that I had to stay in a very poisonous situation for a long time because I just had no information. I was scared, I thought I had no support. So that is the biggest struggle I think.* *Not Easy. You have to work hard. There's nothing easy in, this is not no shortcut. You know, you know it better than me. There is no shortcuts. I never expect anything to come. Just like a chance. You have to locate all. You have to work hard.*
Culture shock and cultural barriers	When participants arrived in Canada, they felt unsettled with the unfamiliar culture, parenting style, and way of living.	*So for first year I had enough time to learn. Like I said, there was a culture shock and I was confused what to do."* *When I left my country or leave everything behind, I left my job. All what I have. Like my family to come here and at the beginning I was, there it goes. It's like I have like a kind of culture shock also when I arrive here.*
Mental health	Participants experienced anger, depression, stress, fear, guilt, and a sense of incompetence as a result of their intersectionalities.	*I would just share because I never had a depression pills, but now I'm taking because of a lot of stress and I have really mentally, honestly I feel very angry, I never feel angry because even my family knows like as all the time cool. But now if my daughter do something small, like I feel angry because of anxiety or I don't know depression and I went to doctor, I talk to them. So then I'm on medication now every night I'm taking because of lot of things, you know, like it's too much. So it's physically I think I'm not like, I can't think like a normal person before I was because I don't know. I'm thinking too much about future and how, what would it be? You know, it's hard and even I'm taking thyroid medicines too this is also because of depression and I had um, like delay of my period and stuff like that. I just doctor also say because of depressions.* *Oh, that was I think very stressful for me. You just don't know what to do. You try your best. Even if you don't want to do anything, you try to adjust things. Great. You want to try new things. Just to make sure that this relationship works. So of course that was very stressful. That was sleepless nights. I will say. Yeah, I do. Pretty depressing. Yeah.*

The last theme was the Importance of the Service Provider. Counsellors and other service providers are essential to the overall wellbeing of single, immigrant women as revealed through this study. Initially service providers appeared to be their main or only support systems.

Table 8

Theme 6: Importance of Service Provider

Subtheme	Subtheme definition	Verbatim Quote
Nature of services required	Participants indicated that support and allyship is needed in relation to language, transportation, employment, and social support.	*I think from the first day I came here, there is a counsellor. I like her too much. She gives me a lot of support and she and I speak Arabic and she told me a lot of things. How I can buy Arabic food, where I can go if I need anything. And I am contacted until now because she always told me, if you, whatever you need, call me and I can help you. Look who else is there. The friends too. I have friends but at the beginning I have a friend, same me. So all of them depend on the counsellor*
		The agencies were my support, because they were the one who helped me, who helped me transition from my home to shelter or help me understand what else I can do. So like taking those parenting classes, taking support groups to talk to people about my problems. About my concerns. So that was my social group.
Childcare	Participants expressed a need for affordable childcare as a key factor to reducing barriers to employment and work-life balance.	*I have to pay daycare for, to have children and the daycare is very expensive here in Canada. So I said I should have a high wage so I can cover. So that why I am stunned, you know, you want improve myself because when I get a salary it should be high to cover the take it.*
		And back home, another thing is that the childcare or things like that, of course you pay for them and then they are not so costly as compared to what we are paying here. So costly. And if I have to find somebody for, let's say I'm working Saturdays, the babysitter, all those things are very, very like That's another money. But back home you have support, you can ask a friend, you can ask your mom or somebody to help you out. So there you have support, but here you don't, that's, yes, that's a challenge.
Delivery of the supports	Single, immigrant mothers expressed a need to learn more about Canadian customs and how to develop skills for employment, parenting, and relationships. Some suggestions include providing information and care through workshops and support groups.	*One if there is something like, like workshop or something you know to, to like here in immigrant there's so many workshop but like to call them to the children to be near there, uh, to share experience, to talk together, you know, like to know there is another people also like them. You know, sometimes you feel like only you but there is also so many people like you even maybe worst. I told them sometimes if, but if we have that, it will be easy, good.*
		I connected with the agencies, they made me realize that even if you don't have your own social group, there are community groups that can help you and settled down. 6)
What did not work	Some participants expressed dissatisfaction about how institutions (i.e. government agencies) and service providers (i.e., counsellors) serve single, immigrant mothers in Canada.	*I was in shelter; I was on Alberta Aid and Alberta Works and things like that. But that's not enough. They think they are enough. No, it's not. You're just living on the edge. You cannot do anything. Uh, for me it was even a struggle for them because, uh, Alberta Works helps you, but then they are like, they see your education, they see your everything. But then is that education getting me a job? They don't consider that for me. They would always say, you are very*

employable. You're very employable by go get a job. So I, I, that was another stressful phase for me.

Oh my God, I was so stressed, so stressed to lose my kids. Those system have to be changed in Alberta Work. They need to change. Not Alberta Work. The children services. They need to change the system because not every situation is fit with their, what they are doing is not fit for me and my kids. Maybe if it was somebody, but you have to investigate and check what's going on with this family. You have to support them, not separate the family. That's what I tried to do. They try to separate my kids from me. Why don't you support me? Right. Support me and then you don't separate us. We need a stability and for the kids and the mom, this what we have issue here too. Uh, lots of them here with the mother when the children's services and then a mom have struggling to keep the kids safe and then here's these people come bugging them. Hey, you're not a fit mother. You unfit mother. We need to take your kids away. That's their job, take the kids away and give to somebody else? Somebody else get the money. This is all money about business. It was, I was always so struggling.

Discussion

Single, immigrant mothers in Canada face specific challenges that affect their emotional and mental well-being. These challenges include adapting to a western ideology of motherhood, pressures to maintain healthy relationships with their children, finding meaningful employment, and connecting with a new society (Jamal Al-deen & Windle, 2016; Knoef & Ours, 2016; Renzaho et al., 2017; Wang, 2013; Zhu, 2016). Examining these challenges requires an intersectionality perspective, because the combined effects of multiple group identities can create distinctive experiences (Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012). Intersectionality also foregrounds single, immigrant mothers' experiences of oppression as a result of their multiple, and often marginalized, dimensions of identity (Aydin et al., 2017; Fleck & Fleck, 2013). Applying an intersectional lens to this study extends beyond the contributions of the literature in which immigration and single motherhood are examined more typically as two separate experiences. Although researchers have studied the impact of immigrating to a new host country or transitioning to single motherhood, this study advanced understanding of the intersectionalities

of gender, ethnicity, cross-cultural transitioning, single motherhood, and social class (Browne et al., 2017; Gherghel & Saint-Jacques, 2012). Below we explore the themes and subthemes from this study, drawing connections within and across them. We also draw on the professional literature to highlight potential roles of counsellors and other healthcare professionals who interact with single, immigrant mothers.

Alone in Paradise: Former World Versus New World

The article title *Alone in Paradise* introduces the juxtaposition of former worlds and new worlds that ran through the stories of the single, immigrant mothers interviewed. These women arrived in Canada with the anticipation of enhanced security and economic opportunities (Vesely et al., 2015). Many spoke of Canada as a paradise compared to their former worlds:

> *It looks to me like a dream, like a dream. Always am very thankful. I feel safe. I feel like granted, if now, if I die always with my children or if I die with something, I never be afraid. Nobody hurt my children;*
>
> *When I started, working here and then I figured out, oh my God, this place is, you know, they have support everywhere if you reach out*.

Although their expectations were met to an extent, they also faced unexpected challenges (e.g. acculturation challenges, loss of family and friends) and disappointments in themselves (e.g., relationships breakdown, guilt over children not having a father), in others (e.g., Canadian communities, service providers), and in the broader sociocultural contexts and systems they encountered (e.g., gender and mothering discourses, barriers to economic security). The overarching theme of Former World versus New World became a lens through which the women made meaning of their lived experiences and through which we interpreted other themes and subthemes. The challenges these single, immigrant women encountered, including potential discrimination, were interpreted through their experience of Canada as relative paradise.

Freedom and Responsibility: Gender Discourses in Cultural Contexts

Many societies continue to confine girls and women to traditional female roles (Maticka-Tyndale, 2014; Palmerin Velasco, 2013; Wong & Bell, 2012). Women in this study were expected to follow patriarchal rules (e.g. get married, have children, care for the home) and were positioned as "lesser than," relative to men in their lives. The results indicated that when women internalize these gendered messages (Lawson, Crouter, & McHale, 2015) from their country of origin, they were more likely to depend on male figures (e.g., male partners, fathers) for decision-making and security. However, these gendered messages are fluid, variable, and dependent on the changing world. When the women in this study transitioned to single motherhood, most often shortly after relocating to Canada, they had to take on new roles requiring independence and self-reliance. In some cases, the multilayered processes of cross-cultural transitioning (Belford, 2017; Sobre-Denten, 2017) was positive and empowering, as reported by D'souza, Singaraju, Halimi, and Sillivan Mort (2016). On the other hand, some participants had a difficult time adapting to an independent identity. Individuality and independence precipitated culture shock for some, because these gendered messages were so ingrained in their former world experiences. The degree of cultural distance–similarity between home and host countries may have affected their experiences of culture shock, as suggested by Belford (2017).

Because many immigrant women value collectivism (Baum & Nisan, 2017), they may have a difficult time adapting to an individualist identity (Collins, 2018c; Lenz, 2016). Single, immigrant mothers in this study struggled with the idea of navigating many aspects of their lives in the absence of the interconnectedness of extended family and cultural communities as they were accustomed. Many counsellors, however, hold beliefs and values derived from individualist

worldviews (e.g., personal responsibility, autonomy) (Lenz, 2016; Paré & Sutherland, 2016); counsellor worldview can limit their effectiveness in supporting single immigrant mothers who may lack experience navigating various tasks on their own. As with all clients, newcomers' acculturation processes can be deeply affected by counsellors' worldview or values imposition (Collins, 2018e; Collins & Arthur, 2018; Socholotuik, Domene, & Trenholm, 2016). One participant reached out to a counsellor, because she needed to take her sick child to a doctor's appointment. Her counsellor printed out a map with directions and instructed the client to take the bus. Although the client was apprehensive, the counsellor insisted she could do it on her own. The woman and her sick child got lost outside on a cold, snowy day for three hours. She called her counsellor, knocked on doors, and received no response. Eventually, this newcomer made it home; however, she reported:

> *For three months, I locked myself at home - even I wasn't going for groceries, stuff like that. So then I talk with the provider and I realize, hey, I don't want to live anymore because you know. She, then she changed my counsellor.*

The new counsellor rode the bus with her to teach her the routes and fostered her independence using more incremental steps.

This story and others are reminders to counsellors to be diligent and discerning when navigating cultural differences between a client's new world and former world and when making suggestions based on the counsellor's cultural understanding. Collins (2018b) pointed to the importance of cultural responsivity, which requires active and ongoing attention to clients' cultural identities, worldviews, and social locations. The difference is stark when counsellors provide appropriate support. For example, one Arabic-speaking participant said she felt "*a lot of support*" from her counsellor, because the counsellor spoke Arabic, showed her where to buy Arabic food, and continued to maintain contact as needed.

> *I think counsellors who can guide them in a nice way. Not like me. Like go and do it. Nice. Like because some immigrants are smarter like they can do by themselves, but some needs really help because they don't know they have to start from the zero. Right. So it should be like someone guide them properly.*

In this study participants' acculturation processes and perceptions of Canada were influenced by the nature of support given to them. When this support met their specific and cultural needs, they felt more confident and comfortable in Canadian society. Their stories reinforce emergent calls for counsellors to expand the roles they assume, which might include stepping outside of their comfort zones, and their office environments (Ratts & Pedersen, 2014), to be maximally responsive to client needs, goals, and cultural understandings.

The Struggle to Fit within Sociocultural Norms and Expectations Related to Mothering

Another theme that emerged within the broader context of cross-cultural transitioning from former to new worlds was about tensions related to mothering discourses. Single, immigrant mothers are expected to follow gendered norms in relation to motherhood, regardless of the society in which they live (Curry Rodriguez, 2014; Palmerin Velasco, 2013; Wong & Bell, 2012). This study supported the literature on the *good mother* ideology, in which women's self-perceptions and experiences are influenced by how well they conform to social standards of motherhood (Caplan, 2000; O'Reilly, 2004; Schafer, 2006; Wong, 2018). Participants struggled to conform to parenting models that challenged their cultural norms

> *We have our own way of showing our love or taking care of her children. So I still follow what my values are, what my cultures are; but then of course, I do try to make sure that I have learned what Canadian parentinghood or motherhood expects. And then I tried to follow both*.

Models of *proper parenting* were promoted through workshops, schools, and counselling sessions. Lavell (2018) argued that these ideas about proper parenting often align with individualist and middle-class values and worldviews. However, in reality, many parents, specifically working-class parents, do not have the privilege of time or energy to negotiate rules,

talk about feelings, and supervise afterschool activities. The women in this study reported similar messaging:

> *In Canada that's different because here it's more of democratic . . . if your child doesn't like it, you give them option. If you don't want to do it, you don't have to do it. But sometime the parents are more mature, right? Parents have more experience. Parents have seen the life. So they should be able to emphasize on the child that, okay, this is good. How it's got to be better for your future. So they should be able to help them out. Canada sometime doesn't allow that. You cannot, and they use the words force your child what not to do anything or to do anything. I think that is something should be improved a bit, because then it gives you child a better skill, a better education, better career for future*.

Lavell's (2018) writing on working-class parents parallels the parenting values and day-to-day realities of the single, immigrant women in this study, who often found themselves positioned at a socioeconomic disadvantage and focused their time and energy on survival and meeting the basic needs of their families.

> *[It] is not easy. Being a mother is, is a lot of things to do. You sacrifice your time, your hours, your beauty, your needs. You sacrifice your friendship with other people, because you need to look after your childrens.*

Thus, these mothers were caught in a double bind of both the societal imposition of parent values that did not align with their worldviews and the practical barriers to living up to these new standards.

As evidenced in this study, mothers who do not meet these dominant Canadian parenting ideologies may experience prejudice from middle-class society (Saha, 2015).

> *Would be traveling in train, and then I would be with my child and people look at me and they would be like, she does she know how to take care of child. Just because I'm immigrant doesn't mean that my parenting style, I don't know how to raise children, because that's what I think they assume.*
>
> *How you can't discipline children in a certain way here or if she was in public to not raise your voice at them in public.*

Lavell (2018) stated that working-class parents worry that their authoritative parenting style may be judged as abusive. Similarly, single, immigrant mothers from our study worried about institutions (i.e., government, child and family services, police services) taking away their children due to their parenting practices. Some participants took parenting workshops to learn how to raise their children in Canada; however, these psychoeducational groups reinforced

values and standards that were not a good fit with their cultural norms and worldviews. Lavell (2018) stated that working class parents are often judged against similar dominant parenting discourses and, unfortunately, those mothers do need to worry about how they discipline their children or risk being labelled as unfit mothers. This study suggested that single, immigrant mothers were not invited to express their cultural values and parenting norms nor to negotiate a goodness-of-fit with middle-class parenting values. As a result, they found themselves trying to live up to unrealistic expectations and living in fear.

> *I come from a community where . . . you are told and you followed that. So again, I come from a society. Society decides what you have to do.*
>
> *I had to change. I have to make sure that I am following what Canadian parenting is expected or what the law says or are those different school habits that are required.*

It is vital for counsellors to consider the impact of dominant discourses, which pervade the helping professions as well as society as a whole (Combs & Freedman, 2018; Doyle & Gosnell, 2018), on single, immigrant mother's lived experiences and to deconstruct the ways in which social class can intersect with immigration and single motherhood. Ignoring or disregarding the role of intersectionality can significantly hinder counsellors' ability to understand clients' needs and experiences, which can have deleterious impact on these mothers' experiences and coping.

In many cultures, mothers are expected to raise their children in two-parent families (Wang, 2013; Wiegers & Chunn, 2015); single motherhood is both a taboo and a disadvantage for mother and child (Afifi et al., 2013; Ayubi, 2010; Wang, 2013; Yu, 2011). All but one participant in the study could not have imagined becoming a single mother one day. Due to unforeseen divorce or loss, these single, immigrant mothers were, by default, placed in a position that challenged dominant mothering discourses and social norms. Although divorce is much more common, these single mothers also faced unfair biases in Canadian society (Liegghio &

Caragata, 2016; Wiegers & Chunn, 2015). The double bind of persistent and oppressive mothering discourses in both their former and new worlds negatively affected their perceptions of themselves. Most participants felt guilty, stressed, or incompetent, because they were unable to provide their child with a "*father figure*." The belief that children are supposed to be brought up in two-parent societies amplifies discrimination and stigmatization toward single, immigrant mothers (Afifi et al., 2013; Ayubi, 2010; Wiegers & Chunn, 2015). Despite these challenges, participants viewed the relationships they had with their children positively.

> *We are each other's best friend, since I'm the only person who is in his life and he's the only one in my life. So we do everything together. We share everything.*"

The relationship between the mother and child is unique and valuable to single, immigrant mothers, and therefore, it is important for service providers to support these relationships in their work with vulnerable populations.

Social Class and Economic Acculturation: Navigating the Double Bind of Caregiving and Providing

Most of the participants in this student experienced shifts in social class, through immigration or marriage breakdown, which positioned them to struggle to meet the demands of economic acculturation. Participants in this study encountered another double bind in their attempts to balance employment and caregiving (Zhu, 2016).

> *But yeah of course, there is so many challenges, especially if you are single mom, to afford the life. You have to work hard. If you work hard, you don't have much time to be with childre*n.

For them, a mother's greatest priority is the well-being of her children; yet to provide for children, she must secure employment or financial support.

> *I think child comes first. We make sure that our child is well taken care of, very loved, no doubt in that. I think . . . you have to make sure that your child is happy. Like we emphasize more on the feelings that they are taken care of. You provide for them; you make sure that their education or their food or whatever it is up to the mark.*

In spite of their commitment to provide for their children, single, immigrant mothers in the study faced great barriers to meaningful employment and financial security. One participant pointed to some of the challenges:

> *I think working is good but we shouldn't be work over like you know, it should be like limitation. We have to take like morning shift, like as eight until to six is good. But if you work over like so yeah we lose our kids. So we should, I think I should be working like I'm looking for work. Like I can just work during the day, and after when my daughter is off from school and whatever, I have to pick her and spend time together, eat supper together, anything like that. And weekend I want to spend with her doing activities*.

The occupational choices of single, immigrant mothers, residing in Canada without family and friends, were dependent on childcare; however, obtaining childcare was beyond their means. In the province where this study was conducted, childcare costs were about $1000/month (Macdonald & Friendly, 2019). One study participant pointed out that if she were to make $15/hour and pay childcare at $15/ hour, then she might as well stay home with her children. A crucial role exists for counsellors, service providers, and governments to address these types of systemic barriers that privilege some social groups and marginalize others (Hargons et al., 2017). Practitioners can support successful economic acculturation (Sinacore, Kassan, & Lerner, 2015) by advocating for affordable childcare in community and professional agencies across Canada.

The idea of a nine-to-five job may sound desirable; however, the likelihood of single and immigrant mothers obtaining this type of employment, or any employment, is substantively lower than for members of dominant populations (Khanlou, Haque, Mustafa, Vazquez, Mantini, & Weiss, 2017; Lu, Wang, & Han, 2017; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2016; Saha, 2015; Sinacore et al., 2015; Wilkins-Laflamme, 2018). In this study, participants shared many experiences that appeared to be a result of discrimination and that directly impacted their employment opportunities. For instance, like many other immigrants (Sinacore et al., 2015), these single, immigrant mothers were told that their education, experience, and credentials from their country of origin were not accepted or applicable in Canada.

> *I go for a job, like apply for jobs and they see it like it's really frustrating for me, because I put my resume because I had teaching experience in Pakistan. I never work here . . . but when I go for a job and they're calling me for interviews and they say you don't have any experience. So they are not giving the job as if I don't have experience*.

These women were asked to apply again once they had "*Canadian experience*" or knowledge of the Canadian work culture, which was yet another double bind given this experience can only be gained by working.

Although discrimination was a theme that emerged in the study, many single, immigrant mothers did not identify these systemic barriers as discrimination. Perhaps, from a critical perspective, the social construction of what counts as valid experience and credentialing has become so normalized in Canadian culture that the process of acquiring Canadian qualifications is perceived as simply a necessary step in integrating to a new country. This observation highlights the importance of allyship in supporting single, immigrant mothers. Paré & Sutherland (2016) described allyship as the process of standing together with clients who have been marginalized and culturally oppressed. In this process, the counsellor can take on multiple supportive roles and advocate for client well-being and social justice needs (Paré & Sutherland, 2016).

Psychosocial Acculturation: Navigating Multiple Nondominant Identities

As a result of applying an intersectionality lens, discrimination towards single, immigrant mothers can be seen to exist in many forms. Multiple marginalization can increase a person's vulnerability to social determinants of health (Addison & Coolhart, 2015; Warner et al., 2016). Individuals with multiple nondominant identities are more likely to experience increased oppression as they navigate hierarchical systems of cultural positioning and power (Warner et al., 2016). As a result, single, immigrant mothers face greater risk of mental health concerns than do married white women born in Canada (Muhammad & Gagnon, 2010; Warner et al., 2016).

This study pointed to a number of key themes in single, immigrant mothers' experiences of mental health. First, study participants felt stressed, worried, and afraid about being in an unfamiliar country with different rules and expectations.

> *Oh, it was a cultural shock . . . I come from a country where we have our particular way of raising on kids . . . how my parents raised me, they had their way, like I said, we all be there, we follow, they decide everything. They are the decision makers, but then when I came to Canada, it was totally different here*.

One participant stated that, since moving to Canada, she had to take anti-depressants as a result of her anxiety, anger, and frequent worries about the future. In her case, her distress was clearly tied to the combination of cross-cultural transitioning and unexpected single motherhood. On top of the stress of cross-cultural transitioning, these women had to deal with economic and psychosocial challenges while taking care of their children, who were also suffering:

> *Especially for the children. Always my heart pain me about them because I think always they will not feel like the other children. I don't think so. So that's the thing that hurts me a lot. I don't want this to affect their personality*

Another study participant revealed that her depression was due to anxiety and fear over not meeting expectations from those around her.

Single, immigrant mothers' experiences of mental health are also influenced by their social support systems. Participants experienced stress as they balanced responsibilities of single motherhood and the acculturative demands of immigrating without family and friends in Canada (Guruge et al., 2015, Msengi, Arthur-Okor, Killion, & Schoer, 2015). These women were accustomed to having family support in most areas of their lives (e.g., childcare, financial care, emotional stability).

> *In Venezuela it was fine for me, because I had work. My parents helped me with my child. All my family is in Venezuela*.

Without this social support, they were lonely and isolated. One woman from the study reminisced that, in her home country when she was sick, she had a community on which to rely.

Now in Canada, she felt lonely and stressed, because there was no one to rely on for support. She disclosed:

> *I would say when I am on my own, whenever alone, when I need some support, I think that I wish my family was there. That's when I really stress out*.

These results aligned with Msengi et al.'s (2015) observations that social support is necessary for managing stress related to identity conflict, mothering, and acculturation. Speaking of newcomers generally, Saleem and Martin (2018) underscored the importance of access to group counselling or psychoeducation, which not only addresses particular psychosocial and mental health issues, but also encourages relationship building for social support. Some of the women in this study described the importance of connections they made through these types of resources to other single, immigrant mothers.

Recommendations for Counselling Practice: Importance of the Service Provider

We have integrated glimpses into what these single, immigrant mothers had to say about service provision throughout the discussion. We now revisit this final theme to expand on the implications for counselling practice, over and above those already presented within each theme, and to make some recommendations for service providers. Most importantly, findings from this study reaffirmed the urgent need for both additional research and counselling services that apply an intersectional lens to understanding vulnerable populations with multiple nondominant identities (Collins, 2018d; Nerses & Paré, 2018; Ratts et al., 2016). This lens is particularly needed when working with single, immigrant mothers (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012), whose intersectionalities are so understudied and underrepresented in the literature. It is clear from this study that it is impossible to fully understand the challenges faced, as well as the strengths and resiliency exhibited, by these women without attending to the ways in which gender, single motherhood, immigration, and social class interplay in their lived

experiences and their ways of making meaning of those experiences. For example, although there is a call for psychoeducational and group counselling for members of nondominant populations, including new immigrants (Bemak & Chung; 2017; Robertson, Hollerman, & Samuels, 2015; Saleem & Martin, 2018), it is important to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. Women in this study could not live up to the parenting norms with which they were presented, because of the intersections of their multiple nondominant identities. Working with them in a culturally responsive way (Collins, 2018b) requires counsellors to attend simultaneously and purposefully to gender discourses, mothering discourses from both former and new worlds, unavoidable demands related to economic survival, and so on. Failing to do so, may result, as evidenced in this study, in an increase in stress levels and acculturation challenges.

There is considerable attention in the counselling literature to gender role socialization, sociocultural discourses related to gender, gender oppression, and the need for counsellors to actively deconstruct gender discourses with clients (Chew, 2018; Collins, 2018; Russell-Mayhew, 2019; Wong, 2018). However, less attention has been paid to mothering discourses, particularly as they pertain to women from nondominant cultural groups such as immigrants, who face the additional layer of culture-specific mothering norms and expectations (Wong, 2018; Zhu, 2016). Based on this study, we recommend that counsellors "[take] into account the client's individual circumstances and then "[help] her understand herself within the context of the larger society" (Davis-Gage, Kettmann, & Moel, 2010, p. 117). Counsellors can encourage mothers to free themselves from prescriptive social expectations of motherhood and coupledom, while maintaining respect for clients' cultural values and understanding the power imbalances that can keep mothers imprisoned to social norms (Wong & Bell, 2012). It is also imperative that counsellors recognize the challenges for immigrant single mothers face in accessing and

initiating counselling services (Saleem & Martin, 2018). Counsellors should reflect on ways to make their services more accessible for single, immigrant mothers (e.g., offering sliding scale or pro bono services; considering office location, accessibility, and hours; welcoming infants during sessions; ensuring continuity of care). Finally, counsellors should enhance their knowledge about perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADs) through training or supervision, because immigrant mothers have a higher risk of developing PMADs (Falah-Hassani, Shiri, Vigod, & Dennis, 2015).

One of the foundational principles of all models of multicultural counselling is counsellor self-awareness (Collins, 2018d; Collins & Arthur, 2018; Ratts et al., 2016). Deconstructing gender and mothering discourses requires counsellors to be aware of their own cultural socialization and the influences of their cultural identities and social locations on how they position themselves relative to these cultural norms and expectations. Counsellor self-awareness related to gender and mothering discourses necessitates reflective practice, which is integral to ethical and competent work (Collins, Arthur, & Wong-Wylie, 2010), particularly when working with single, immigrant mothers. We invite counsellors to reflect *in and on action* (Schön, 1991) related to in-the-moment practices as well as salient personal experiences that influence and shape the counsellor (e.g. culture, worldview, ethnicity, religion, life experiences) (Wong-Wylie, 2007). Reflective practice enables counsellors to respond more sensitively, appropriately, and in ways that are culturally responsive and socially just (Wong, 2018). In relation to gender and mothering discourses, peer debriefing, reflective writing, and active attention to motherhood scholarship and gender discourses enhance the practice of counsellors. We encourage counsellors to recognize and acknowledge their subjectivity (i.e., the ways in which they bring their social location and the cultural selves into their work) and to be aware of how their stories may

"converge, diverge, intersect, and transect" (Wong, 2018, p. 117) with clients' stories. Cultural self-awareness and reflective practices instill humility and foster a not-knowing stance (Wong, 2018) that allows counsellors to empower and respect clients' expertise in their own lives.

This study also reinforced the important of cultural curiosity (Bava, Gutiérrez, & Molina, 2018; Mikhaylov, 2016) and cultural responsivity (Collins, 2018c; Paré & Sutherland, 2016) in aligning services with clients' cultural contexts and beliefs, to create an environment that encourages single, immigrant mothers and others to express their cultural identity and strengths. Within a culturally responsive environment, single, immigrant mothers may develop the power to actively challenge and resist dominant discourses and norms. It may also be important for counsellors to actively engage in challenging and dismantling these oppressive discourses and ethnocentric lenses within society as well as within counselling theories and practices (Hook & Watkins, 2015; Paré & Sutherland, 2016; Scheel, Stabb, Cohn, Duan, & Sauer, 2018).

Further, Collins (2018a) pointed to the importance of applying a contextualized, systemic lens to understanding client needs and lived experiences, which then opens the door to the possibility of engaging in culturally responsive and socially just change processes at micro (i.e., single, immigrant women and their children), meso (i.e., schools, organizations, or communities), and macrolevels (i.e., broader social, economic, and political systems). The findings suggested that single, immigrant mothers faced sociocultural expectations, norms, and ideologies, including gender and mothering discourses, which were unattainable and idealistic. Counsellors and service providers must attend to single, immigrant mothers' social locations (Collins, 2018c; Dollarhide, Clevenger, Dogan, & Edwards, 2016; Ratts & Pedersen, 2014) to fully appreciate the impact of these messages on their mental health and acculturation processes. Without this contextualized lens, practitioners are at risk of reinforcing dominant discourses that

serve to further oppress this vulnerable population, rather than supporting single, immigrant mothers with their acculturation needs and empowering them to feel confident within their cultural identities.

Embracing the need for systems level intervention broadens possibilities for the roles of counsellors and other service providers (Collins, 2018a; Ratts & Pedersen, 2014). Allyship and provision of pragmatic supports are essential to single, immigrant mothers. Single, immigrant mothers in this study required assistance with childcare, meaningful employment, and community engagement:

> *The childcare, the daycare facilities, as a single mom, as an immigrant, that's another struggle. There should be more resources*;
>
> *Just for jobs, if single mom, it would be more options . . . we need a job*;
>
> *I counted this alien place. I don't have anybody; I don't have nothing. I don't have a job. I don't have family; I don't have friends. I only have you guys*.

Supporting this population by actively addressing these basic needs (Collins, 2018c; Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2015; Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2012) can help reduce stress and other mental health challenges.

It is evident from this study that single, immigrant mothers also need allies to challenge harmful discourses and promote inclusiveness in Canadian society. This is particularly important in their communities, where they were searching for belonging, employment, and supports to succeed as immigrants and as single mothers. Counsellors have an important role to play in educating other service providers and fostering professional practice change by reflecting critically on, and challenging, the dominant discourses that shape both theory and practice (Collins, 2018e; Gazzola, LaMarre, & Smoliak, 2018; Wong, 2018). These changes must be addressed in a way that "validates the unique experiences of mothers and demands feminist analysis and deconstruction of motherhood" (Wong, 2018, p. 135). Further, creating safer and more culturally responsive communities involves actively fostering transformation of negative

public perceptions grounded in cultural, middle-class, and gender biases (Lewis Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2003; Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2015). Finally, the findings demonstrated the need to address the power differentials between single, immigrant mothers and the institutions from where they seek support and services, which often stem from imposing professional knowledge instead of creating space to invite and prioritize client-centred knowing (Combs & Freedman, 2018). As allies, counsellors can both empower single, immigrant mothers and work within social services to redirect power back to this population. In conducting this study and disseminating these results, we hope to function as allies and advocate for multilevel change in service provision.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

The findings of this study invite positive change not only for research and social services, but also directly for single, immigrant mothers who were often left feeling invisible and unheard. Intersectionality theory was the focal point to bring the unique experiences and challenges of single, immigrant mothers to light. A critical and transformative lens enhanced understanding of power and oppression within multiple group identities, to support service providers and counsellors in working more effectively with single, immigrant mothers. From a social constructivist perspective, the beliefs, knowledge, and experiences of the researchers contributed to, and are inseparable from, the analysis and interpretation of the data; however, the measures taken to ensure research rigour, as well as the use of direct quotations, foregrounded the participants' voices. The small sample size, although appropriate for this research design, provided a limited glimpse into the intersectional identities and lived experiences of single, immigrant mothers in on city in western Canada and revealed some directions for future research. Other possible intersections of the multiple identities and social locations of single,

immigrant mothers remain to be explored. These extra layers of cultural complexity, as well as larger samples with broad diversity of ethnicity, countries of origin, pre-migration social class, and origins of single motherhood status, will add to the breadth and depth of understanding of the lived experiences of single, immigrant mothers. The strengths and resiliency of these single immigrant women were clear to us as researchers; we encourage future research that taps specifically into their personal, interpersonal, and cultural courage and tenacity. We hope the findings of this study will prompt future research into the strengths, challenges, and counselling needs of this underrepresented population.

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Chapter 5. Synthesis and Implications

The objective of this study was to examine single, immigrant mothers' lived experiences of the intersections of gender, immigration, single motherhood, and social class, and their intersections. In addition, I aimed to explore how to support single, immigrant mothers in their economic and psychosocial acculturation processes, while recognizing the impact of their intersecting identities. Six individuals met the study criteria and participated in an in-depth, semi-structured interview. Much of the synthesis and implications of the study are included in the manuscript in Chapter 4. In this chapter, I briefly review the findings and discuss other possible implications to improve services for single, immigrant mothers.

Experiences of Gender

Participants' self-perspectives and experiences were influenced by various gender roles reflected in the *good woman* ideology (Schafer, 2006; Stoppard & McMullen, 2003; Wong & Bell, 2012; Wong & Russell-Mayhew, 2010). Throughout the world, those who identify as girls/women and boys/men are given different messages, expectations, and responsibilities that hold cultural standards of being male and female. Women are typically seen as weak, dependent, and of lower status than men in many countries (Curry Rodriguez, 2014; Maticka-Tyndale, 2014; Palmerin Velasco, 2013). Although change towards gender equity is occurring, many societies continue to pressure women to get married, have children, and take care of the house (Curry Rodriguez, 2014; Maticka-Tyndale, 2014; Palmerin Velasco, 2013). Each participant in this study was an immigrant who had lived in Canada for less than five years. Their experiences of gender shifted in the new host country, because they were expected to be strong and independent women in Canada. The road to fostering strength and autonomy can be a positive and meaningful experience for single, immigrant mothers. They are given more opportunities to express their

individuality in a space without family pressure. On the other hand, some of these women struggled with the concept of individuality and independence, because they were brought up in a country that promoted collective cultural identities.

Experiences of Motherhood

Ideologies of motherhood intersected with single, immigrant mothers' experiences of gender in their new host country and country of origin. This was evident in the findings when participants described their role as primary caregivers who must love and prioritize their children's needs above everything else. These findings correspond with the *good mother* ideology (Caplan, 2000; O'Reilly, 2004; Schafer, 2006; Wong, 2018). Single, immigrant mothers in this study held on to these messages, even after they transitioned to a new host culture. Some mothers were grateful to be in Canada, because it provides safety and freedom for their children; whereas other mothers expressed difficulties adjusting to the new laws and parenting culture.

Acculturation Experiences

In the current study, single, immigrant mothers' acculturation experiences were categorized under economic acculturation and psychosocial acculturation. These single, immigrant mothers had overwhelming demands in finding work and providing for their children. They also experienced systemic barriers that impeded their ability to find employment. Although service providers offered workshops and trainings, single, immigrant mothers raised concerns about childcare, discrimination, and work-life balance. Consequently, many of these women were unemployed or living at a lower socioeconomic status. These findings are consistent with Lu et al. (2017) and Khanlou and colleagues' (2017) research.

Single Motherhood

Participants' intersecting identities based on immigration and single motherhood shaped their social identity and overall experiences in Canada. Their experiences of single motherhood and immigration, as well as their self-perceptions, were determined by how well they accepted and conformed to these social categories, which included a set of rules and responsibilities. Ultimately, these women were left with no other choice but to conform. Single motherhood is viewed as a disadvantage in many parts of the world (Afifi et al., 2013; Ayubi, 2010; Wiegers & Chunn, 2015; Yu, 2011). Some societies consider single motherhood to be taboo (Ayubi, 2010; Wiegers & Chunn, 2015). Although Canada provides more support for single mothers, participants faced cultural stereotypes and discourses that assumed single and immigrant mothers were incapable of raising children. Some mothers expressed concern that the government would take away their children, because their mothering did not fit with "proper parenting." Lavell (2018) described *proper parenting* as "Just telling your kids what to do, and expecting them to do it, that's wrong. You should always talk with your kids, value how they feel, and negotiate rules together" (p. 158), which is not realistic for every mother, nor the norm in other cultures. Consequently, these expectations impacted the relationships these single, immigrant mothers had with their children and with themselves.

Personal Reflections

Examining these experiences with an intersectional perspective brought insight into the persistent and inherent effects of being oppressed, for those with multiple nondominant group identities (Collins, 2018). Intersectionality theory suggests that there is a unique and complex dimension of disempowerment within contextual forces such as sexism and racism (Collins, 2018). With this study, I had the opportunity to learn from single, immigrant mothers at a

personal and professional level. Findings highlighted the unique challenges of single, immigrant mothers and opened a window to understanding my own mother's experiences of isolation and social injustice. As the daughter of a single, immigrant mother, I am deeply indebted to my mother for demonstrating such strength and resiliency. Although I thought and behaved naively in childhood and criticized my mother for her "tacky" and "old school" parenting techniques, I recognize my privilege in this country, surrounded by family, which is something my mother did not have after she immigrated to Canada. My growth edge as a professional is to enhance my theory of counselling and influence positive change for disadvantaged clients, such as single, immigrant mothers, who need resources and services that fit their individual needs.

Implications

Drawing on intersectionality theory and qualitative description, I considered the intersections of gender, ethnicity, single motherhood, social class, and immigration within each participant, thus taking into account the existing gap in research about this population. As mentioned in the literature review, most studies address these cultural identities in isolation from one another. My study has implications for future research on the intersectionality of single, immigrant mother's nondominant identities. The findings of this study provided insight into the complex and unique experiences of single, immigrant mothers in one western Canadian city. In addition, these findings contributed to a rich awareness of single, immigrant mothers' experiences of cross-cultural transitioning, from their country of origin to a new host country, as they navigated mothering discourses, unequal power relations, and sociocultural limitations.

This research has important implications for education, counselling practice, and social change. The findings of this study cannot be generalized; however, they can sensitize and inform service providers and counselling professionals about potential experiences and needs of other

clients within this population. It is important for service providers to understand the nature of services required to support single, immigrant mothers in their new receiving society. Recommendations for counsellors and other service providers were included in the manuscript in Chapter 4.

Single, immigrant mothers are more likely to experience mental health and acculturation problems than partnered and Canadian-born mothers (Guruge et al., 2015; Muhammad & Gagnon, 2010; Sawers & Wong, 2018; Thomson, 2015; Vigod et al., 2017), so efforts should be made to provide single, immigrant mothers with specific supports in language, transportation, employment, and overall social support. Furthermore, the findings of this study highlighted single, immigrant mother's need for allyship from counsellors and service providers. Having little to no support systems in Canada, this population needs support, guidance, and advocacy in order to facilitate their transition to, and acculturation within, a new country.

Limitations

Due to the nature of the study, participants were recruited from agencies and communities serving immigrants. Therefore, the participants belonged to a pool of clients who have already received help and support from service providers. I gathered a rich and accurate description of these mother's experiences. However, the study could not encompass the perspectives and needs of all single, immigrant mothers in the one city in western Canada, particularly those who have not sought help or those who do not yet speak or understand English. My inability to offer translation services to non-English speakers was a potential limitation of the study. Although all participants did speak and understand English, some may have struggled to understand the interview questions. To help address this challenge, I engaged in member

checking and summarized the participant's experiences after the interview. Other limitations were addressed in the manuscript in Chapter 4.

Recommendations for Future Research

Researchers are encouraged to explore other possible intersectionalities that single, immigrant mothers may hold, such as with mothers from a broader diversity of ethnicity, countries of origin, pre-migration social class, ability, and single motherhood status (e.g., single mothers by choice). These extra layers of complexity might include unique challenges and additional demands that were not revealed in this study, because I only examined to a degree the intersections of ethnicity, gender, single motherhood, social class, and immigration. For instance, participants came from six different countries (Ethiopian, Syrian, Venezuelan, Pakistani, Indian, and Malaysian) and one gender (all self-identified as female). A recommendation for future research is to expand the interview pool to individuals who identify with other countries and specific ethnicities and genders. In addition, although there was some diversity in terms of financial positioning within Canada, the majority of the participants experienced a dip in their economic status when they separated from their partners and from their families. More class diversity would expand our understanding. It is important to note that single motherhood has many layers to consider as well. In this study, only one participant was a single mother by choice, for example. Furthermore, future research could explore the cross-cultural transitioning experiences of single refugee mothers and examine how those experiences may differ from the experiences of single, immigrant mothers for whom migration was voluntary.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Date:
Interview Code:

I. Background/Demographics

1. What country did you immigrate from?
    a. How long did you live in that country?
    b. What is your country of birth?
2. How long have you been in Canada?
3. How many children do you have?
    a. How old are your children?
4. Are you currently employed?
5. What is your total annual household income?
    a. 0-15,000
    b. 15,001-30,000
    c. 30,001-50,000
    d. 51,000 +
6. With which ethnocultural group(s) do you identify?
7. How would you describe your relationship status?

II. Semi-Structured Interview

A. Experiences of Gender

1. What was it like to be a girl or woman in [your country of origin]?
    a. What messages about women and girls did you receive from your family? Cultural community? Society?
    b. What does being a woman or girl mean in your [country of origin]?
    c. What are women or girls expected to be like in your [country of origin]?
2. What is your experience of being a woman in Canada?
    a. What messages about women and girls did you receive from people in Canada?
    b. What is the same about the ideas of gender in [your country of origin] and Canada?
    c. What is different about the ideas of gender in your country of origin and Canada?

B. Experience of Motherhood

1. What was your experience of motherhood in [your country of origin]?
    a. What messages about motherhood did you receive from your family? Cultural community? Society?
    b. What does being a mother mean in your [country of origin]?
    c. What are mothers expected to be like in your [country of origin]?
    d. How does being a single mother fit, or not fit with these expectations?

2. What is your experience of motherhood as an immigrant in Canada?
    a. What messages of motherhood did you receive from people in Canada?
    b. What does being a mother seem mean in Canada? Within the cultural group you are part here? Or within Canadian culture more broadly?
    c. What are mothers expected to be like in Canada?
    d. How does being a single mother fit in, or not fit in with these expectations?
    e. What is the same about the ideas of motherhood in [your country of origin] and Canada?
    f. What is different about the ideas of motherhood in your country of origin and Canada?
3. How have you navigated different expectations of being a mother between your country of origin and Canada?
4. Describe your relationship with your children?
    a. How have messages you received from [your culture of origin] influenced these relationships?
    b. How have messages you received from Canada influenced these relationships?

C. Acculturation Experiences

1. Who is part of your support system and where do these people live?
2. How welcoming or not welcoming have you found Canadians?
    a. Share with me any experiences of discrimination you have had and how those may or may not have been connected to being an immigrant or a single mother?
    b. During your time in Canada, has anyone made negative comments about your appearance? Culture? Parenting style? Way of living? Tell me more.
    c. During your time in Canada, did you have to change your appearance? Culture? Parenting style? Way of living?

3. How has the experience of immigration affected you?
   Probes:
    - Physically?
    - Emotionally?
    - Spiritually?
    - Parenting?
    - Employment/School?

4. What other challenges or barriers do you experience as an immigrant in Canada?
5. What services have you sought or received in Calgary?
6. What made it easier or harder to ask for help or to find the services you need?
7. How has being a single parent affected your immigration and acculturation processes?

D. Single Motherhood

1. How has the experience of single parenthood affected you?
   Probes:
    - Physically?

- Emotionally?
- Spiritually?

1. In what ways has your experience of mothering changes as a result of being a single parent?
2. How does being a single mother impact your options related to employment or school?
    a. What is the impact of working or not working on your experiences as a single mother?
    b. How is this similar or different since you immigrated to Canada?
3. What other challenges or barriers do you experience as a single mother in Canada?
4. How has being an immigrant affected your experience as a single mother?
5. What suggestions do you have for ways in which services for single, immigrant mothers could be improved?

NOTE: Upon review of the data from the first interviews, the following additional questions were added to the protocol to ensure a more complete picture of participants perspective on sociocultural discourses.

1. What does it mean to be a good woman in [country of origin]?
2. What does it mean to be a good woman in Canada?
3. What does it mean to be a good mother in [country of origin]?
4. What does it mean to be a good mother in Canada?
5. Have you ever thought that you were not a good woman? If so, why? How did it make you feel?
6. Have you ever thought that you were not a good mother? If so, why? How did it make you feel?

IV. Additional Comments

1. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about your experiences in Calgary as an immigrant and single parent?

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and experiences. This can be a difficult topic to talk about and your responses are very valuable to us.

Appendix B: Recruitment Materials

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH!

Purpose: To examine the lived experiences of single, immigrant mothers in Calgary, Alberta.

ARE YOU...

1. FLUENT IN ENGLISH
2. 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER
3. NEWLY ARRIVED IMMIGRANT (3 YEARS OR LESS)
4. A SINGLE MOTHER WITH ONE OR MORE CHILDREN?

If you answered yes to each of these questions, you are eligible to participate in the study entitled:

"The Intersections of Single Motherhood and Immigration."

We are looking for volunteers to participate in a 60 to 90 minute in-person interview. The interview will explore your experiences as a single, immigrant mother. The purpose of this study is to increase understanding and help single, immigrant mothers receive the best care for their needs.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Gia Lam at 403-629-1688 or gialam92@gmail.com

Note: It may not be possible for every who volunteers to participate in the study, because we hope to include women who come from different ethnic backgrounds.

Appendix C: Intake Survey Protocol

Hello,

My name is Gia Lam, and I am a graduate student from Athabasca University. In collaboration with Dr. Collins and Dr. Wong, I am working on a study called " The Intersections of Single Motherhood and Immigration. " I am interested in learning about:

- The experience of motherhood in your country of origin,
- The experience of motherhood as an immigrant in Canada;
- The experience being a single parent in Canada;
- The relationship you have with your children, society, and yourself;
- The barriers that you experience when seeking help; and
- Recommendations to improve services for single, immigrant mothers.

Before you can participate in this study, I will ask you a few questions to see if you are eligible:

1. Do you speak and understand English fluently?
2. Are you 18 years of age or older?
3. Do you identify as a newly arrived immigrant? If so, how long have you been living in Canada for?
4. What is your ethnicity?
5. Do you identify as a single mother?
6. Do you have children that are in your care?

If the answers to these questions are "No": I appreciate you for taking the time to answer all the questions. While your experience is valuable, you do not fit the criteria to participate in this study. *Offer resources if need.*

If the answer to these questions are "Yes": From your answers, you fit with our criteria.

However, I have one additional question for you to consider: Are you experiencing any distress related to trauma that might make it difficult for you to talk comfortably about the topics in this study?

If you have experienced traumatic events in your country of origin or as part of the immigration process, you may not want to participate in this study. It is possible that the questions asked will bring up difficult memories or emotions.

It may not be possible for every who volunteers to participate in the study, because we hope to include women who come from different ethnic backgrounds.

We are looking for participants to help us in our study by participating in a 60 to 90-minute interview.
The interview would be conducted in a private room at Immigrant Services Calgary - at a time that is convenient to you. We will provide you with transit subsidies and child care.

Your personal information will be kept confidential.

The findings of this study will be disseminated in the form of two manuscripts for publication in academic journals. The purpose of this dissemination is to spread awareness to service providers and help single, immigrant mothers receive the most appropriate care for their needs. No names or identifying information will be included in the manuscripts.

Do you have any questions? Would you be willing to participate in an interview?

Appendix D: Consent Form

Project Title: Intersections of Single Motherhood and Immigration

Researchers: Gia Lam, Athabasca University
Sandra Collins. Supervisor, Athabasca University

The purpose of this consent form is to provide you with information about the research and to explain what your participation in the study will involve. Free to ask questions or express concerns about any of the points below. Please take the time to read the consent form carefully to ensure you understand the information. I will provide you with a copy of the consent form for your records.

- The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of single, immigrant mothers in Calgary, Alberta.
- To participate in this study you must have immigrated to Canada within the last 3 years, be at least 18 years of age, see yourself as a single mother, and be able to speak English.
- Participation in this study will involve a semi-structured interview. The interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes of your time, and it will be audio-recorded so that it can be transcribed afterward.
- At the beginning of the interview you will be asked some background questions (e.g. age, country of origin, ethnicity). You will then be asked questions about your experiences of being a single, immigrant mother, the impact of these experiences on you, and the barriers/challenges that you experienced when seeking services.
- Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to participate in the interview if you do not want to. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to.
- You can withdraw from the research at any time as long as it is before we begin to analyze the data. If you wish to withdraw from the study, your information, your audio recording, and transcripts will be erased.
- Your decision to participate or not will in no way affect your application for Canadian citizenship or anything else.
- All personal information and the information you provide will be kept confidential. No names or other identifying information will be included in the written record of your interview.
- The audio-recordings and transcriptions of the interview will be downloaded to a computer file that is password protected. The audio and written records of the interview and the consent forms will assigned a number coded and stored separately in locked cabinets.

- Only members of the research committee will be able to listen to or read your interview.
- You will be asked about your relationship with your child(ren) in this study. Please note that we are required by law to report any incidences of child abuse or situations involving harm to children. Please talk to us at the beginning of the interview if we have any concerns, and we will explain in detail what might mean for you.
- You will be asked about your experiences of moving between countries and cultures as a single mother. These might include challenges adjusting to a new environment, culture shock, experiences of discrimination, feelings of isolation, or types of stress. These questions may result in feelings of distress. This is a risk of participating in this study. To support you further, we have provided a list of counselling resources and services.
- By participating in this study, you will contribute to our understanding of single motherhood, immigration, acculturation, and mental health. Your unique experiences will bring new insights about the ways in which gender, ethnicity, and social class may impact the immigration experience for single mothers.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood the information provided in this consent form and have agreed to participate in the study.

If you agree to participate in this research, please place your name and signature in the appropriate spaces below.

I _____ (print name) understand what the study is about and what participation involves and the signature below means that I agree to participate.

_____ _____
(signature) (date)

_____ _____
(signature of interviewer) (date)

Appendix E: Ethics Approval

Athabasca University
RESEARCH CENTRE

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

The Athabasca University Research Ethics Board (AUREB) has reviewed and approved the research project noted below. The AUREB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS) and Athabasca University Policy and Procedures.

Ethics File No.: **23247**

Principal Investigator:
Miss. Gia Lam, Graduate Student
Faculty of Health Disciplines\Graduate Centre for Applied Psychology

Supervisor:
Dr. Sandra Collins (Supervisor)

Project Title:
Intersections of Single Motherhood and Immigration

Effective Date: January 10, 2019 **Expiry Date**: January 09, 2020

Restrictions:

Any modification or amendment to the approved research must be submitted to the AUREB for approval.

Ethical approval is valid *for a period of one year*. An annual request for renewal must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date if a project is ongoing beyond one year.

A Project Completion (Final) Report must be submitted when the research is complete *(i.e. all participant contact and data collection is concluded, no follow-up with participants is anticipated and findings have been made available/provided to participants (if applicable))* or the research is terminated.

Approved by: **Date:** January 10, 2019

Simon Nuttgens, Chair
Faculty of Health Disciplines, Departmental Ethics Review Committee

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Athabasca University Research Ethics Board
University Research Services, Research Centre
1 University Drive, Athabasca AB Canada T9S 3A3
E-mail rebsec@athabascau.ca
Telephone: 780.675.6718

Appendix F: Full Data Summary

Theme 1: Former world verses new world

- **Subtheme 1: Economic and political turmoil verses safety and opportunities**

"Really, always, always. I thank God I'm very, very, very thankful to be here. To be in Canada. I feel safe. I feel like granted, uh, I feel very comfortable. I never have any, any fear. Nobody worms me. I mean, nobody harms me. Nobody can hurt me." – P2
"Well, completely different. Like, uh, like the difference like from Earth to sky completely difference. Uh, even in Israel to tell the truth even Israel, Israel also like, like almost like Canada. I mean, if I was in Ethiopia, I couldn't divorce, maybe he will put me in prisons and then he, because you know, uh, because it is developing countries, so many, just if you go to justice place, you know, he can't, he can't, he can do many wrong things." – P2
"Canada is more than my expectation." – P2
"It looks to me like a dream, like a dream. Always am very thankful. I feel safe. I feel like granted, if now, if I die always with my children or if I die with something, I never be afraid. Nobody hurt my children". – P2
"The government of Canada is very good for those people. For single moms or for children or for disables or you know." – P2
"Because economically it's poor country. If you work there in the night, you can't afford the life, you know, so uh, it is clear that you will be poor and your children will be, you know, maybe you couldn't have, you couldn't to feed them even so economically, socially." – P2
"When we arrive in airport the first day in Canada, in Toronto, my second daughter told me, mommy, wow, I saw one black person he's working like, like hit up like this, like important person. Wow. What country we came. She said that Miss, it tells you a lot. Even the first day when she see how he walks, she appreciates." – P2
"I guess maybe because Canada, they are very concerned about children. They love children, invest on children. So even I said maybe because of my children's, they, the pros, everything. Then I'm not sure, but my, this is my guess because everything is for children is good. So that's why I love Canada because I love my children. Everything is to my children I live in. But for my children. So Canada also, they are good for children, so it's good." – P2
"Because here in Canada they give you a better life. So I feel here I am happier than I, you were in Syria even he was work, but I don't like the feeling that he is the powerful in the family. I can do whatever I want here. I can do what. Nobody will tell me what I have to do" – P3
"Situation is not like Canada because Canada they offer help but in Syria there is no government, there is nobody to help them. So all people, you said you are lucky because you are here in Canada." – P3
"When I started, working here and then I figured out, oh my God, this place is, you know, they have support everywhere if you reach out." – P7

- **Subtheme 2: Increased self-reliance and independence**

"First of all, Canada. Everybody run just for their lives. They are not concerned about other life." – P2
"One time my son gets sick during the, the night and I feel how I can go. It's very dark, uh, how I can go my myself, it was hard. But finally I say to myself, the better way I call the emergency because if they came it would be safer for us. I can go. Sometimes you feel that you, that is something, you can do it by yourself." – P3

“Yes. Like women have their own voice. They are, they have a right to make decision. They have more support that if they are struggling, there is a support that they can be helped. They don't, they are not under the pressure of society that you have to follow what works for society. No. Here you can do what works for you.” – P6
“You have more independence here; you have more support as if what you want to do. What makes you happy? You can do those things. Uh, you, it's not that a, there's a particular expectation that you're a woman, you have to do this. No. You choose what makes you happy, what's good for your family. So you have an advantage here.” – P6

- **Subtheme 2a: Dependency on men verses self-reliance**

“They believe that women, uh, uh, people thinks are weak or you know, dependent with their husband.” – P2
“For single mom, I think it's, um, she had to do the both work, like, you know, like it's hard for them because when you are with husband, it's easy because you both are working together and you like emotionally and you know, financially you can each help each other, and can share your problem with each other.” – P5
“Most men, um, or the bread or like moneymakers of course here you see that of course men are working. Women, they have a same duties. Like yes, you can be a stay home for me as you can study, you can raise your family, but then of course if you are already in, you're willing, you also have an opportunity to work. Also they are support that can help a woman, like their daycare facilities that allows you to do things like that. Like, okay, you can take care of family, but then of course you can help your husband while making moneys and paying the bills.” – P6
“The woman for example, I'm not trying to be racist here, like a new Muslim country and then they will go. The woman tends to be controlled by the man” – P7

- **Subtheme 2b: dependency on family verses self-reliance**

“I could make decision with my parents even and they don't treat us like inferiority” – P2
“know friends, uh, when they told her she came, came here to Canada, she said, no, I can't come by myself alone with children. Impossible.” – P3
“because if she want to go work for example, who will take care of her children so hard, she should have the family, her mother, her sister. But then I incident, if I were in Syria for example, or my family with me, I can't leave my children with my mother for example and go to work. But here in Canada, no family. So you will have to pay to the daycare.” – P3
“In Venezuela it was fine for me because I had work. My parents helped me with my child. All my family is in Venezuela.” – P4
“They've always liked corrected her if she's not doing something right thing, she says in Venezuela, that's always your family's very involved in your upbringing. Um, even when you grow up in, you're a grown adult, they still correct you if you're doing something wrong.” – P4
“The relationship with my family’s very good, Eh, all times they help for me and my child. – P4
“You know, just as a mom, the way we take care of our kids, but it's. It's really different. Like I told like when I'm, I was with my parents, I never take care of my daughter. Like I just okay. Feed her like she was all the time. She was with my mom, my dad, you know, they were taking care of her and carrying her and you know, doing stuff.” – P5
“Um from Canada, like, um, yeah, most of, uh, my, even my friend, they are also single moms. Um separated from their husbands too, so I just realized that like um, it doesn't matter. Like, if you're a strong, you're good,

if you had a job so you can take good care of your kids, you don't need your family and stuff like that. You can do it, like you can give good future to your kids and yeah, take care of them." – P5
"I would say when I am on my own, whenever alone, when I need some support, when I'm, I think that I wish my family was there. That's when I really a stress out. Like if it was back home, if you are sick or if you have to do something, there's a community. There's neighbours, there are families there to support you. Right. But it's not same here. It's not. It's really close to community here. Yes, you have your neighbours, but then you cannot rely on them as if they are your family. Uh, you had a friends, but then everybody is struggling in the same way. They are also trying their best or settling in this country. Right. Uh, there are, uh, support groups, or agencies, but then they cannot be there for you. 24/7, you have to do things on your own. So basically you are all by yourself. And then yes sometime it is stressful. It is really lonely. Yeah." – P6
"The main struggle for immigrant parents is the support. Right? So when you're back home you have your extended family who can help you out, right. Uh, but here you don't." – P6
I don't know how to do this. You cannot depend on parents anymore. You have to be independence. Um, they're sort of always is teaching them." – P7
"My mom, my sister, my brother is the oldest looking after my children's cause they are small, there's our grandparents. So your uncle, your auntie tends to look after the children's. They help a lot around you. But here I don't see that you like you are on your own. Look at this woman we have here. If you're a single mother, you have to do everything by yourself. I see they have their parents, some of them who if they're born here but their parents never helped them out. Even they are struggling with their issues is it's your problem, is your responsibility there's what there's what they give you. I was spoke to [name]. Okay. Can you mom help, you know, my mom said to me, is your own child, you're responsible, but if you need time out where you want an hour to do, she cannot come and take a look. Said No. The expectation is like that. Your child, you look after your own child." – P7
"Um, I have to look after myself because I don't see that, uh, back home. My mom and she had a lot of people helping out my dad and here a, I do it by myself and uh, especially I had issue with my ex and he never helped me out around me and at one point that, oh, I was stressed out because I don't have family here. I don't have people to talk to. And I was struggling. Um, he, uh, I don't know who to ask. You don't know who to trust to ask for help either, nobody helped you. That's how I feel. I feel helpless when I arrive here because a, I don't see any, okay, who's going to help me out? Who's going to support me because I don't know that we have so much support around here." – P7
"I don't see that when I arrive here and, and I have struggling with my ex and to look after my kids and ended up, I don't have job, try to figure out, what to do next. Trying to figure it out. Okay, how am I going to do this alone with my kids, how are they going to support them? How we're going to raise them, how are we going to feed them? That's, that's what I see the biggest because I think family, friends, relative is the biggest support around you. But here even if you have sibling, you don't see any help because you are your own." – P7
"The expectation here. You are on your own. Nobody going to help you. When your own parents said to you, the expectation is you by 21 you out of my door. Even 18 not even 21." – P7
"You cannot depend on parents anymore. You have to be independence. Um, they're sort of always is teaching them." – P7
"Um, I have to look after myself because I don't see that, uh, back home. My mom and she had a lot of people helping out my dad and here a, I do it by myself and uh, especially I had issue with my ex and he never helped me out around me and at one point that, oh, I was stressed out because I don't have family here." – P7

Theme 2: Gender discourses

- **Subtheme 1: Gender roles and positioning within society**

“if you don't have children by any means by naturally or something, if you don't have children, you know, there is another challenge also, if you don't have children, I mean if you couldn't have children, maybe your husband divorces you also.” – P2
“After you marry, you have to have children. You have to give birth. That is your purpose.” – P2
“Even when someone gets baby, if the baby's boy, everybody, you know, celebrate. But if sometimes it's girl, even the husband angry and they don't feel good.” – P2
“Woman's always dependent. Always weak. Always. They, they don't have power. Most of them” – P2
“Women's are victim most of the time, especially in the times of relationship” – P2
“Who to marry, how to marry, what to what, what career options should be for girls. So these are the few things that they work on yeah.” – P6
“Follow rules. That's the main agenda for everybody. So like I said, you are told what to do, what is expected from you and you do that. Uh, there are, uh, there's a path set for you as soon as you're born that this is what you'll be doing. This is what you will be following and you just follow that.” – P6
“Follows her parents who follows her husband culture, their values. Um, of course, most all the household duties, takes care of the family. Um, if you are educated, yes you work, but then end of the day you come back and you make sure that you're balancing personal and professional life.” – P6
“Uh, I think it's general that um good women of course a woman who is somewhat settled so you can have a job if you want to study, you can study, uh, follow the laws. Of course. I think that that is something everywhere, even in back home for me in India. So I think I missed that point. Follow the rules. As long as they're not doing anything wrong. Um, uh, parenting styles, you're following what is expected here. So good woman, as long as I do everything that makes you happy and your family is settled and healthy.” – P6
“Uh, the only thing I remember my dad asking me to do, you know, when in this, this age I want you to get married to this kind of people. They said, but it's not forcing. I said, no, I don't want to, I will marry the person that I love. I said. And then there's this stuff of conversations. Well we suggest that you go for this one because you are my youngest child. We want you to stay here to look after the house and look after your parents. Is that not your choice? Up to you. And that's it.” – P7
“Um, loyal to the family always look after the family, support the family. Respectful is the best, the biggest one is, is sent to the woman is even though it is like again my culture, I know that like my brothers, uh, I know their wife is more look like a dominion over them but they still respect their husband and they want something to go somewhere, they still have to ask the husband.” – P7
“Okay, so in India, motherhood is, I'm doing everything for your child, right? Uh, of course, loving, love them. Uh, no end. But then you are a mom. You pamper them, you love them, you take care of all their needs, uh, you do everything for them. Uh, you have your own way of raising the kids back home. So I know there a, uh, like you decide everything for the child, like, um, what they want to do, what they want to eat, what they want to do, right. What they want to study, when they want to play, where they want to go, what to wear. So basically that's what you do back home.” – P6
“Well, my, my mom always said to me, you know, once you have your child, you, that's your responsibilities, responsibility to look after them and after your husband. You have to feed them. This is sort of exactly what she said to me. You have a, you have to do everything for your child.” – P7

- **Subtheme 2: Patriarchy verses equality**

“This view or from Canadian to the women and girls because they considered them as a man. No one, uh, is better. No one is the powerful, uh, equal, yeah, I like that.” – P2
“I think where I come from, it's more of a patriarchal society where men are given important. So being a women, you are a girl, you follow what your parents or your spouse or your in laws tell you. So basically you

are, uh, in, uh, what they call in obeying more where you listen and you do whatever has been told to you." – P6
"Uh, that there was more equality. Uh, it didn't matter how old you were, of what a background you have. You are free to do anything as long as, as something you had, you were willing to do. Like, uh, but I came, I started, so that was something, I never had an option back home after 25, 28, 30 years. You don't get to study because that's the end of your study phase. Right. But here they were more options. There's more equality. Uh, more opportunities. Yeah." – P6
"I seen that the girls or woman here. Yeah. More uh, freedom. No, I have another word. I seen, I seen like that in my country. But I think here more, you know, these open up you can choose, you have your, um, uh, there's no, uh, we have equal, oh, here more. You can see and back home I think is sort of, see you still have like this a little bit because I'm coming from Muslim country, but here is like our woman as a man is look like it's the same." – P7

Theme 3: Mothering discourses

- Subtheme 1: Culture of origin discourses about single mothering

"Even if your husband is violent and or something, they said all you have to be patient. You have to be, if he has another woman outside, you have to be patient. You'll have to carry him. You are a woman. Even he beats you. You don't have to scream. You have to be quiet. You don't have to tell to anybody because otherwise, you are not good woman." – P2
"According to the, the culture they evaluate you. If you are good wife, you have to be patient until well until the end, until he killed you. You see, so it's extreme ex. They are very extreme or most of them. Even sometimes, your family also, they don't appreciate it because tomorrow maybe you will be burden of them. Maybe tomorrow you will need help. You understand? Who is economically and socially. You know, you'll be isolated from other people." – P2
"Single moms, they have to like, they are only two options if you stay with your family, like your mom and dad or brothers and get another married, but you are not supposed to live alone with your daughter. Like I know the, she can do like without their family. So even when I was, my ex had house there, but when he come to Canada, I was living in with my parents because I needed family support. He said, no, you can't live alone. And this is just our society and culture. The woman can't live alone with their kids" – P5
"Being a single mother in India, I'm talking about India, I don't know about other countries, uh, it's, um, for now it's a social, usually we call it social taboo. That is something that is not accepted. Uh, if there are concerns between you and your partner, you still have to make an adjustment because that is, uh, something that is expected from you for the sake of your child that you have to be in a relationship so that the child doesn't suffer even if it makes you unhappy" – P6
"You see back home, it's more difficult for single mother because we didn't have support around, we didn't have the like we have, we have like social income here. They don't have that aside. You don't have shelter for the woman and children and in my country, but here to have it is the more, easy to access. anything here than back home for single mother. That's why the mom, they're still stay with your husband even though they know what it has been used and abused you because there is no support around them except their family. But financially, no thank you." – P7
"I think I had that phase when I had, um, when I was on the edge of deciding if I should be with my partner, not because there was some conflicts between us and that time I felt that I tried everything, but that was not enough. So that time I felt that I was not good enough whenever I was not doing everything that is expected." – P6

- **Subtheme 2: Shift in power from mother to child**

“How you can't discipline children in a certain way here or if she was in public, um, to not raise your voice at them in public.” – P4
“So how to handle them because in our like country we scream and here you are not supposed to do that. But here it's totally different. You have to be like friend of your kid and talk with them as a friend. But in our country you have to give order. No, no means no right?” – P5
“Oh, it was a cultural shock. Okay. It was a culture shock for me. Um, I come from a country where we have our particular way of raising on kids. Right? Um, how my parents raised me, they had their way, like I said, we all be there, we follow, they decide everything. Um, they are the decision makers, but then when I came to Canada, it was totally different here. Uh, the children, they have their say, they get to decide if whether they weren't things or not. If they like it or not. Even if it's good for them, like I as opinion I know this might be best for them, but then the kids can decide that if they wanted or not so they can go against that decision. So that was another big culture shock.” – P6
“The difference that I see is, um, you don't have say in what is best for your child. You can decide this is best for your child, but the child decides if the child wants that thing or not. So I think that is something I learned here that motherhood is different in Canada as compared to India.” – P6
“Oh. Like I said, mothers are expected, uh, to work more on the feeling of the children. Uh, so, and that's where the main struggle comes, that sometimes the child is young to decide what's good or bad for them. If something makes them unhappy, that doesn't mean that we should allow them not to go, not to do the right thing. Right. So that's what, uh, what I don't like and I'm, I'm, I am working on that, that, um, if the feeling should be taken care of, but then you have to make sure the parent knows what's best for the child. If there is something that is difficult for a child to do but then makes a better living or improve the future of the child, a child should be doing that. Yeah. Sometime laws doesn't allow that here.” – P6
“I think it's more of the parenting style I did there. I have, I had to attend a couple of workshops to learn about that. So I think I can say those words here in India we have more for authoritarian parenting style where you get to decide what's best for your child. Even if your child doesn't accept that, but then you make them understand that why this is important. I think that is something I, in Canada that's different because here it's more of for democratic, uh, that okay, if your child doesn't like it, you give them option. Okay. If you don't want to do it, you don't have to do it. But sometime is the parents are more mature, right? Parents have more experience. Parents have seen the life. So they should be able to emphasize on the child that, okay, this is good. How it's got to be better for your future. So they should be able to help them out. Canada sometime doesn't allow that. You cannot, and they use the words force your child what not to do anything or to do anything. I think that is something should be, uh, improved a bit because then it gives you a child, a better skill, a better education, better career for future. Right. And then there will be less college dropouts. Less um, uh, behaviour problems. If parents could be more, uh, they could make more decisions for their children. Yeah.” – P6
“For example with my daughter and the way she speak to me is back home you could not speak like that to your parents. We have to be respectful.” – P7
“You know, they have no boundaries for the kids and then the kids tend to like, um, that's why they start to disrespect the people older than them. Disrespect other people. Because, you know, here we go, give it to you. Everything. You can do whatever you want. You can go have sex, whatever you want to give you free condom, you can become gay. You can become lesbians. I know is human right. But I think you should put more boundaries around that. Those kind of message I don't like, you know, is every time my kids come home from school is a mommy we talk about sex. Oh my God.” – P7
“Well, I, I see my children is, they're very respectful. Uh, you want to talk to my friends, they were always called them, they don't call by name and every time they want to go call by name shush, it's wrong. You have to call this way. So, okay. Is, they didn't say anything when I, uh, tried to discipline them, try to say to them, this is what I brought up to you know, is when I was your age, I already know, do this. I don't know how to do this.” – P7

"You cannot even yell at them if they are doing wrong because I find it, the kids here is like um, government property, like a government property. So they own them. If they're involved with your case, you cannot even say one word that to stop your child if he's or she behaved badly because she can go to them or my mom, usually my mom abused me and then they will believe the child, what the child said to them, they were involved and you know, take your child away. That does hangs really tight. If here you cannot discipline your kids in this place because I have so many cases that here they took the children away because their parents try to discipline their kids." – P7
"Different Idea of motherhood here? I find that, I'm sorry. I think they, the kids. Yeah. They don't respect their mother is not respected and calling the mother's name. They can even call bad word to their mother, but in back home we don't do that. Don't really disrespect call my own mom by name and calling them something." – P7

- **Subtheme 3: Shift in power from mother to social institutions**

"I come from a community where it's a, it was, uh, there of course you have to live in a society where you are told and you followed that. So again, I come from a society. Society decides what you have to do." – P5
"I had to change. I have, I have to make sure that I am, uh, following what Canadian parenting, uh, is expected or what the law says or are those different school habits that are required." – P6
"They were like, the preference should be given to uh, um, what, what are the laws here and what are the, uh, what neighbours or society think about it. If a child is crying, don't let your child cry because you police or Child and Family services can come knock on your door. Well, if my baby's crying kids, the newborn baby cries all the time. So I was scared all the time. I was more scared of or how not to break the law then to take then how to take care of my child because I was worried, oh my God, my child is crying. It's, it's very natural for a child to cry. But then I was more worried about what people would say, so I would be focused on that rather than taking care of my child. So that was something really difficult that I learned here. That's what motherhood is. Taking. Worrying more about the laws and the neighborhood." – P6
"Uh, when I did those workshop, that helped me to understand what were the, um, what is expected from me and uh, how to make sure that you're not doing anything that can affect your, uh, parenting style. Because since I was a single parent, Child and Family services wanted to make sure that I was capable and I was able to do everything. So doing those, a workshop helped me a lot. So I was able to, I already knew what can I expect from me and that I was able to put that into my day to day life and it made my life very easy." – P6
"Only now I say is we have that like the government is more protecting the mother and the children is, I guess it's not the mother, is the children's, like I said earlier, like children is like a properties of government. You cannot even touch them." – P7
"They will threaten you want to take my kids away because it said that I'm not a fit mother because of my daughter mental state because she was stressed. Now it's okay. I dealt, I fought with them and if you read the report notes and I'm not a fit mother, I'm not a fit mother uh, I uh, am uh, um, not good mothers as, why would they put into their book? Because I'm not fit mother. She said that because my daughter was stress is my kids both of them were witness of trauma in their life. How the days my ex abused me and instead of chasing him, they come after me and, and then he, she brought me to the court again because system is only always one side. The judge not going to listen to me. They will listen to them because they agency, whatever they say, they will listen to them. Even again, the report that she has is completely wrong. This was our fault with her and because she was threatening me when it takes my kids away." – P7

- **Subtheme 4: Navigating good mother discourses (costs versus benefits)**

“The mother who loves their children more than themselves, they pay, a lots of sacrification until they passed my children now, as I told you, they're grown, not small baby. But still, I am paying sacrification. I will pay until I die. I have so many plan for them for after all I live for my children” – P2
“Okay, so like, um, ideal of perfect mother, so you take care of your children, you provide them with the best, uh, you make a safe environment for them. So where they, um, they can express themselves, they're happy, they're feelings are not hurt. So I think that's what it comprises off.” – P5
“I did all those workshops and it help me understand what was expected and what I'm supposed to do in this, uh, uh, environment. Uh, but then, uh, of course I have my own way of thinking, my own way of doing things. Sometimes I have, I am struggling to think, should I follow what my brain says or what my heart says because my heart is an immigrant and they have their own values, but my brain is like, no, Canada expects this. Sometime you struggle there.” – P6
“the culture group I am part of, we have, we have the same values that yes we have our own way of showing our love or taking care of her children. Um, so I still follow what my values are, what my cultures are, but then of course I do try to make sure that I have learned what Canadian parenting hood or motherhood expects. And then I tried to follow both.” – P6
“Raising a child is not that easy oh my God is a long way to go. It's like for me, it's like a business. If my children are success that means I'm a good business woman. But I still say that if I'm fair, I said to my kids, okay, if you guys is not success, I'm still a good business woman because you still live until today because I'm a single mother.” – P7
“Uh, I said to them, uh, is, is not easy. Being a mother is, is a lot of things to do. You sacrifice your time, your hours, your beauty, your needs. You sacrifice your, um, your friendship with other people because you need to look after your children's.” – P7
“All the woman, gonna have to put things together, have to responsible for everything. If doesn't work. Mother, did the blame. If success. Okay. Mother also will get praised, but everything is, it look like the mother job. Anything around them. The parents and siblings of your husband, uh, society, a, your friends, your neighbors. If anything happened, they look like they're pointing at the mother.” – P7

Theme 4: Mother-child relationship

- **Subtheme 1: Gratitude for children**

“It's very good. Very good. Now my children, my son will say, mommy, no worry, no work.” – P1
“Even three of them now they are studying at school very hard. There are three of them. They are very excellent students and they are doing Uh, what's volunteering in the church.” – P2
“They are very good children also. They, they are supporting me with not too much things but like dishing wash or making laundry or like grocery, some things they, they helped me and they are very responsible also for their homework, for their study, for their school.” – P2
“Well, I'm very grateful for them. They never giving me hard time. They woke up, they own, they go to bed around their bedroom. They do, they clean and they would the bedroom.” – P7

- **Subtheme 2: Friendship with children**

With my children. We have, we are like not only mother and children, like friends really. They are my best friends, my best friends. And they are. They have good minds. I never hide anything from them. – P2

"Yeah, I have a good to very good relationship with my children. Uh, my daughter just a little bit sometimes jealous, but, uh, she, she liked to talk with me always. She even, she's still small, but she liked to say a story with me. I do this and that. They care. My teacher do this, told me this, we've got a lot of this. I want to show you what I color. And even my big son, he's, he's like my friend too, when he always, when he come back from school, I want to talk with him. What, uh, what did you do today? Uh, told me or what, how, how's your day? And he told me a lot of stories. My friend told me this, we do this. I am very happy with them. I think I'm not like a mother with them. I am like a friend with them." – P3
You have to be like friend of your kid and talk with them as a friend. – P4
"We are, um, like you say a mother and child, of course that's the first relationship. We are on good terms. We are each other's best friend, uh, since I'm the only person who is in his life and he's the only one in my life. So we do everything together. We share everything. – P6

- **Subtheme 3: Fatherless family in a two-parent society**

"There is also still challenge, especially like Father's Day, the father when the father can, I never place, I never have place to hide to, to skip that day is, you understand? But not for me but for children, especially for my son really. I, tried to do so many things to, to not to feel bad." – P2
"They were asking to draw a picture or like present for their father, happy father, fathers to be something. And my son, he didn't have father so. Just he's, he keep quiet. He just, he sits quietly because he never have father so she told him, Oh you have mother, you have strong mother. So she's like your father, you can draw for her. Needs to do mother or even lucky you have lucky mother because Mother's Day, you give her gift again, Father's Day you can still give her too. He drew a picture and he could write it to my mother. You are (sobbing) like my father. You are my mother but you are like my father also [inaudible] and he give me but it is painful for me." – P2
"But if immigrant you have to like for a single mom, um, you know, you are a mom, you're a dad, you are, you have more responsibilities, you have more, um, like to do, uh, sometime get lost and we don't know where to start." – P5
"Even if I try my best to be my child's father, that I do everything I bring in for the activities and make sure that all his needs are taken care of. But then, um, he goes to a school, he goes to childcare, the, he sees other people. He sees other families, fathers, and of course he questions that and he is like, where's my dad? Or if he sees that string of particular activity with them or taking them out, he does have those questions. And because of that, Eh, this, uh, painful for me because I cannot provide that. And sometime just because of that, I have been asked to go find a man for you, find a dad for your child." – P6
"This the only thing that guilty because my children doesn't have the father figure in their life. My daughter doesn't have a man figure in her life as a role models because that's what I have. I have seven brothers around me. My father is there, my grandpa, my uncle, uncles always. So I have that experience, that father figures for my son to be a role models for the man, that ever my daughter have to be a role model is the, to see what is the man, you know, is not all the man is bad because I see my daughter said I hate men, but I don't want her to see that I want, I don't want her to have negativity towards on the man. That's not good for her. It's not healthy for her as well. My son as well, nobody would bring my son to go for a fishing or anything camping. No, he doesn't have that experience. That's the only thing that made me feel guilty." – P7

- **Subtheme 4: Prioritization of the child**.

"Children are the priority. You take care of them. Uh, they are, it doesn't matter who needs your help. Children comes first. Husband in laws, parents know they, they go in the back seat. That, yeah.

You have to make sure that they are well taken care of, their loved, everything is provided for. Uh, even if you have to believe everything and stay home for them, you have to do that. Yeah. There is no other option." – P6
"Like, uh, the same thing. One of those are expected to do everything. Love your child, no matter what, you have to take care of child no matter what. Every, every other family member goes in the back seat, yeah." – P6
"Uh, same ideas. Yes. Uh, I think child comes first. We make sure that our child is, uh, is well taken care of, very loved, no doubt in that. I think that's, uh, it's, uh, I think children are consistent all the world, uh, you have to make sure that your child is happy. Their feelings are taking like we emphasize more on the feelings that they are taken care of. Uh, you provide for them, you make sure that aspect, their age, uh, their education or their food or whatever it is, is, is up to the mark. Yeah. So that's general all over world." – P6
"Being a mother, well, there's a huge responsible, responsibility. You're not going to look after yourself anymore because you have to look somebody else. Your child will be number ones in your life." – P7

Theme 5: Psychosocial acculturation

- Subtheme 1: The road to employment is complicated

"Like my children, she's 18, she finished high school, she graduated from high school diploma and she applied University two university accepted her. Uh, now I'm worried about the payments, the University of payments, this big bill. Right. I don't like loan personally, I can't sleep if I have loan, but to pay, which is too big money. I started, I opened an account for three of them, uh, contribute every month, but not that much, you know, as a single mother. Not that much." – P2
"She said that's really affected her I guess employment aspect because she can't, she went from working to not only studying if she, even if she wanted to work, she doesn't have anyone to look after her kids." – P4 [translator]
"If someone, um, I applied for jobs then they want, they are night shifts. Right. Especially in nursing. I was trying to do that a six month goals but so they I could because they say just day and night shifts. Right. So I'm just thinking about like I just wanted to do something, uh, when she's at school then until six o'clock." – P5
"But then getting a job, it's not easy because you don't have Canadian experience. Right. So yes. Uh, um, being a single mom does affect, uh, if your unemployment it and I was in so much debt, I have my credit cards were going up. Um, I had to ask friends for help, uh, uh, like, uh, I had to study so that I am not unemployed that led to student loan. That's another debt. Um, so that it affects, and same way if you're working, it also affects because you have to figure out the job that works with your schedule. You have to make sure that they don't have odd hours. Uh, it at least pays enough money so that you are, have you pay your bills and take care of child's need, uh, schooling, daycare and everything. So yes, it affects both ways, whether if you're employed or not employed." – P6
"Um, not working is literally painful because if you're not working, uh, you won't be able to provide best live, even the basic living." – P6
"Working is that our security does mean everything as a single mother is security the huge part." – P7

- Subtheme 2: Systemic barriers to employment

"I studied in the university. I am a Journalist. I am a teacher in the university. I have a master's degree. I can work." – P4
"Yeah, like uh, schooling because um, I did a bachelor's from my back home, but when I came here, like I transfer, transfer my transcript, but they push me like tourists bag. But now I, I had a high school degree if I

transfer from Canada, so now I have to go for more education and for a good job and for that I have to go over loan or stuff like that" – P5
"Like sometime I feel, you know, and I go for a job, like apply for jobs and they see it like it's really frustrating for me because um, I put my resume because I had experienced teaching experience on Pakistan. I never work here. Here's how I'm going for volunteering now. But when I go for a job and they're calling me for interviews and they say we need ex. You don't have any experience. So they are not giving the job as if I don't have experience." – P5
"Like when I was applying for the jobs, they will be always questions. Ah, yes, you are qualified. Yes you have experienced, but what about the Canadian experience? So that was always a struggle that I had. You have no Canadian experience. How we going to work. How do we know that what you studied back home or what you did work home was something of value?" – P6
"Oh, so the biggest challenge is of course getting a job because that's totally biased. You, uh, you don't have Canadian experience. Uh, people think that you studied in a different countries, so your education is different. It's not up to the same level as what is Canadian education is. Right. Uh, so I of course I had to do my ICWA test, get my degrees evaluated. So that was a very different thing." – P6
"Well, for example, I'm grateful for my work but I still see the discrimination so I have working here and then you're working so hard and it is to have somebody more coming in that prefer to pick them on to put a different position than just give me like that and because of my skin color, because of my, uh, strong actions and then they know that I can do the job, but they don't give it to me." – P7

- **Subtheme 3: Balancing economic acculturation with mothering**

"But yeah, of course there is so many challenges, especially if you are single mom, uh, to, to, to afford the life. You have to work hard. If you work hard, you don't have much time to, to be with children" – P2
"I was spent all my time with them to advise them, to play with them, to encourage them, to tell them story to, you know, to make them strong, to not to repeat my life, my personal life. So, uh, as I told you, I have to work hard" – P2
"Last year I was working full time and I was studying full time the same time, so 16 hour every day I was outside. That means how can I be with my children?" – P2
"So you don't have anybody besides them, they are alone. They don't have anyone to, to encourage them to smile them too, you know. So I was doing my best but still not, I don't feel that it is enough. I like to be with them, but you know, I have to work also, I have to study, I have to, you know, so if I have, if I am not single mom, if I'm working outside, maybe someone can be with them." – P2
"I was studying also I work evening from three till 11 evening shift. The daytime I was studying in Bow Valley also." – P2
"For me, I like work. I liked to work hard, but it's contradicts. I mean, if I work hard, I work hard. Means it's not to, to be outside too many hours. If I, I can't do that. But my purpose is not to be rich, to collect money, just that money to help my family right? Sometimes. I said sometimes it is good to be with some [yawn] to bring you lots of money into, but you know, if you buy a computer or something, it can't substitute their mother." – P2
"Honestly, because of my daughter, I'm all the time thinking, I, I need to work and school. I want to do something in school because the timing, I can just go evening shifts because no one is there to take care of my daughter. I can't, like I'm all the thing, you know, if I go for studies, I don't, I can go for weekends. I had to some limited hours, limited options. So I'm just, I'm just tired. . . because after school she can stay but after six and I want to come home, spend time with her too. I have more responsibilities. I have to give her time too, I don't want to be busy all the time because I am the only one here and if I keep myself busy with this stuff she would be lost and I don't want that." – P5

“I think working is good but we shouldn't be work over like you know, it should be like limitation. We have to take like morning shift, like as eight until to six is good, but if you work over like so yeah we lose our kids. So we should, I think I should be working like I'm looking for work. Like I can just work during the day and after when my daughter is off from school and whatever, I have to pick her and spend time together, eat supper together, anything like that and weekend I want to spend with her doing activities.” – P5
“Okay. So being a single mom, uh, has been a struggle. Like, um, I am working full time too. Sometime I have to see how my schedule works or how I'm feeling by end of the day I have to juggle between a personal and professional and motherhood. So that's the third phase, right? But sometime it gets difficult. Uh, like let's say my child and that of the wants to do something, wants to do an activity or wants to go somewhere. Uh, being single moms, sometime you have to like ignore that or try your best to make them understand that mommy cannot do it right now because maybe I'm too tired, I'm just not feeling well, or I just have something more important to do right now. Uh, but then if you're a single mom, you have to bridge that gap. If sometime I'm willingly have to do things for your children, even if you're very tired, if you have other things to do. So that's always a struggle.” – P6
“Oh, it means that you are full of responsibilities and duties. Uh, you are the one taking care of everything. House, family, children. Yeah. That's how it starts there.” – P6
“Schooling, I don't think I can think of schooling because I like if I go to school was going to take care of my child, I need an income student loan. There were then there, of course you have to pay them back. It's not that they help you out, it's just that they just help you out for us for some time, but not, it's not a lifelong solution and if you want to study and work together, that's the biggest challenge you can, you cannot do that. I don't know. So being single mom, yes. If you have any support, you can do lots of thing. If not, then you have to see what is the priority. And like I said, child is always the priority and everything revolves around it.” – P6
“The hours are very flexibles I don't have issues with and seeing the, you know, when to drop the kids at the daycare because my hours is flexible. I can, you know, I can come nine o'clock, I need to drop my kids first and then I can leave at five o'clock. If my kids call me from school. I can go run to the school and come back. Is Is uh, this place is very, very good place for me is as a single mother is because of the nature that the work that we do here” – P7

Theme 6: Psychosocial acculturation

- **Subtheme 1: Loss of family and social ties**

“I was at home and I didn't have even friends” – P2
“depending because in Canada the state, the government gives you a lot of assistance but you're alone and you don't have family support.” – P4
“That was the when I was still with my ex and I was deciding what to do, what not to do. So that time I found that I had nobody in Canada. Um, and I was scared.” – P6
“So immigration of course. Uh, it is a big change because back home in my country, I had a settled life, I had home, I had job, I had family, everything. Right? You have everything back home. When you come here, you have nothing. You start from the scratch. Uh, of course. No family job. Yes. Um, it takes time, but then of course, no job experience, everything. So it's a big change. It's like basically being born again and starting everything from scratch.” Yeah. – P6
“Yeah. Uh, of course. Uh, the living style is very different. Um, um, like I said, they're very few social or support groups that you can have. Once you have settled down, you have to make your own friends. You have to start from scratch.” – P6

“I was stressed. A lot of stress. Stress moving to a new, I call it alien place. That's what I always said to my kids. I counted this alien place. I don't have anybody, I don't have nothing. I don't have a job. I don't have family, I don't have friends. I only have you guys.” – P7
“When I left my country or leave everything behind, I left my job. All what I have. Like my family to come here and at the beginning I was, there it goes. It's like I have like a kind of culture shock also when I arrive here.” – P7

- **Subtheme 2: Language barriers**

“Maybe you ashamed by yourself, maybe your phone is ringing in the train. You can't answer because you are not sure about your language. So you're afraid.” – P2
“I'm talking English, this is my English, what can I do? This is my second language so I'm trying to speak English.” – P2
“I don't know how to speak good English. So I, uh, from I came to here, I joined schools, English schools, uh, because I, I need to provide my children with a good life.” – P3
“I think the language. Communication because uh, in Pakistan, history, like it was hard subject, but it's totally different. So when I came here, people were talking, I was just looking, I couldn't understand, I didn't get what she's talking about. But the language was, yeah, even I can't communicate with them” – P5
“If you don't have English, but then there are resources in the language that you speak, you just have to know it. So that is, I think, another struggle that sometime people have. They don't know that there are resources.” – P6
“Languages is the biggest barrier uh, um, uh, I speak very limited English.” – P7

- **Subtheme 3: Prejudice and discrimination**

“But uh, I heard negative things. Some people like to like they taught like the tingle to be single mom is like a, an opportunity to be benefited with government or with something. So purposely like, like, like I choose to be single mom but to tell the truth, I never choose to be single mom.” – P2
“In Canada the other extreme, ah, you are a single mom. Okay. You are lucky. Something government helps you something. But to tell the truth, even if I'm married the child benefit, government give for everybody, right.” – P2
“Discrimination? I mean, hundred percent you can't avoid it. Hundred percent I never expect everywhere. Even if in my country, if I go my country, there is discrimination also with the tribe, with, you know, something with your status, with your income. Or is your everywhere. We can't avoid it.” – P2
“One day I was in the train and somebody asked me, where are you from? I say from Syria. And then they began to laugh. They are like homeless. I didn't consider their opinion, but they start to laugh and make fun.” – P3
“ I hear from my other friends, she's Muslim, she's starting something in school. Her friends, you know, they're making fun about job or stuff like that. A different people, different, you know, so you just, you should ignore it. I don't know, but it never happened with me.” – P5
“I think whenever you go, you see immigrants who yes, you are welcome, but then you only see those biases or sometime you see those questions, why you are here. Um, or um, you are the one who has taken our jobs and I have been asked those questions. I'm working on the street and somebody would just come up. So, and I guess it's mixed. So I wouldn't say like everybody's like that. But then I have people who have just walked there and we're like, why did you come to this country? You have taken our jobs. But then there are other

peoples who are, uh, who are, who have welcomed that. Uh, yes, this is your country. You are living here, you're part of this community." – P6
"And are there bigger discrimination was just because my name is immigrant name. That doesn't mean that I have no education or I have no English. Uh, people don't understand that. And sometimes they have asked me directly. Um, how long have you been in Canada? So I say like couple of years and they'll like, then how come your English is good? Uh, how did you learn your English? Why do you have good English? Well, English is knowing universal language. People don't realize that. So yes those discrimination. I have had lots of, yeah, they have them." – P6
"Would be traveling in train and then I would be with my child and people look at me and they would be like, uh, does she know how to take care of child. Just because I'm immigrant doesn't mean that my parenting style, um, I don't know how to raise children because that's what I think they assume". – P6
"If I'm wearing my traditional clothes and if I'm going to my temple or something. So you can see people staring at you and you're like, what is she wearing? Or what, why is she so colourful? Because we, we are very prone to colour and sometimes you, you can look at people and they're like, why you are dressed up like that or why you have bright colours. So yes, I have had with appearances also. And then like I said, when I talk sometimes before talking, people would just assume that I have no English and they would say things that assuming that I won't understand, but then when I talk back they get surprised." – P6
"Yeah, it's just that they think that our religion is a really different than what they have here. Uh, I think, um, any immigrant they see, they assume that they come from cultures where it's more of, um, you know, terrorist and things like that and they can look at your face and they can realize they see that. Yes. They don't welcome that." – P6
"Being a single mom accommodation sometime it becomes a difficult because uh, if I'm trying to rent out a place, they are like single mom, how can I pay your bills? Uh, why do you need to live in a house? You can live in a basement but then they don't, uh, like they start judging you on your being a single mom or why do you need things for your child? They are like, you can manage in small, why do you need to go for big? But then I know what's best for me and my child." – P6
"Okay, fine. You are making money, but don't think that just because I'm a single mom, I cannot pay my bills. Yes, I can pay my bills. Considered and give me a mortgage so that I can at least own something. Right." – P6
"This, uh, they see, uh, you are immigrant. They don't help you in the same way they should, they should be willing. There should be some policies around to consider those things." – P6

- **Subtheme 4: Information and resources**

"Not Easy. You have to work hard. There's nothing easy in, this is not no shortcut. You know, you know it better than me. There is no shortcuts. I never expect anything to come. Just like a chance. You have to locate all You have to work hard." – P2
"I didn't find it hard. It's a here in Canada it's easy because there is a lot of organization and all people helpful." – P3
"I don't know how to go outside and we were just, we were lost. Like I don't know what she, but then I started to get out and find out the system and how to live in Canada" – P5
"I think, uh, the hard part was not having the information. So when I, when my problems started or when I was looking for support, I had no information. Like what are the options for me? So I, that was the reason that I had to stay in a very, uh, poisonous situation for a long time because I just had no information. I was scared, I thought I had no support. So that is the biggest struggle I think have knowing about things, right. That you don't know what is out there for you." – P6

“Well, when I come to Canada that I actually already have bad experience with my ex and I don't know anything in this place. I don't know anybody. I don't know. The law here. I don't know any help around here.” – P7
“At the beginning is hard because I don't know they have these kinds of things, but once I start talking to people and then they said, they told me I have a lot of services around too. You can ask for help. I know it is when I stay at the shelter.” – P7
“You spiritually and yes, that also affect me. I was struggling, don't know where the church. Um, I found out when I drop my kids for school and then I asked people that voice that where is the church.” – P7

- **Subtheme 5: Culture shock and cultural barriers**

“Oh yeah. I change my, um, because in Pakistan we were, we are wearing a big dresses or stuff like that and it's traditionally really embroidered. But I change my dressing, I change my lifestyle. Yeah. Like about uh, you call it like where we are living. I'm trying to be, because it's in our, we are sitting on a floor like different things, but now we are using couches to this like a Canadian. Right. Because the culture is here like that. So I can't find the same things in here. So especially dresses you can't find the same and yes, but, but now I'm used to. And I wear my traditional dresses outside so I just feel a little bit uncomfortable. But I'm wearing at home.” - P5
“So for first year I had enough time to learn. Like I said, there was a culture shock and I was confused what to do.” – P6
“Uh, biggest challenge is food. Food is very different. Climate. Oh my God, it's so much harsher. So everything is different. They lots of barriers in settling down here.” Yes. – P6
“Oh, it was a cultural shock. Okay. It was a culture shock for me. Um, I come from a country where we have our particular way of raising on kids. Right? Um, how my parents raised me, they had their way, like I said, we all be there, we follow, they decide everything. Um, they are the decision makers, but then when I came to Canada, it was totally different here.” – P7
“When I arrived back home to churches, it's different from the here. I find that people go to, churches can get, they can wear whatever they want and you can wear short is I cannot take those. When you go to the House of God, you have to be respectful. That's all bad. Right? Do you have, you need to wear your blazer or a nice dress. Nice. You go to God house to be like presently some people just don't wear pajamas to school, which was bit of a culture shock seeing.” – P7
“When I left my country or leave everything behind, I left my job. All what I have. Like my family to come here and at the beginning I was, there it goes. It's like I have like a kind of culture shock also when I arrive here.” – P7

- **Subtheme 6: Mental health**

“Uh, when I feel alone, when my children, sometimes they're out of control, just crying and I tried to call them, especially my daughter. When I give, there's my son, she's jealous a lot. And sometimes just it and when I feel to make her stop crying, I start crying with her.” – P3
“Especially for the children. Always my heart pain me about them because I think always they will not feel like the other children. I don't think so. So that's the thing that hurts me a lot. I don't want this to affect their personality.” – P3
“I think I will have a mental health because I can just stay at home and do nothing. Always something inside me you have to do something so, so that's why I can't just stay home and do nothing.” – P3

“I never, um, I would just share because I never had a depression pills, but now I'm taking because of a lot of stress and I have really mentally, um, honestly I feel very angry, um, I never feel angry because even my family knows like as all the time cool. But now if my daughter do something small, like I feel angry because of anxiety or I don't know depression and I went to doctor, I talk to them. So then I'm on medication now every night I'm taking because of lot of things, you know, like it's too much. So it's physically I think I'm not like, I can't think like a normal person before I was because I don't know. I'm thinking too much about future and how, what would it be? You know, it's hard and even I'm taking thyroid medicines too this is also because of depression and I had um, like delay of my period and stuff like that. I just doctor also say because of depressions. Like, oh my gosh, too much things inside is going on. Even we don't know. But I think it affect me physically because everything just sudden, suddenly comes on me and I didn't think it would happen, but it happened.” – P5
“Oh, that was a, I think very stressful for me. You just don't know what to do. You try your best. Even if you don't want to do anything, you try to adjust things. Great. Uh, you want to try new things. Um, uh, just to make sure that this relationship works. So of course that was very stressful. That was sleepless nights. I will say. Yeah, I do. Pretty depressing. Yeah.” – P6
“Well, I stress out. Depression. A lot of people have stress and depressions, anxiety, fear because either don't meet the expectation from around them, from the society, from the family and from the hospital, from the parents.” – P7
I was stressed. A lot of stress. Stress moving to a new, I call it alien place. That's what I always said to my kids. I counted this alien place. I don't have anybody, I don't have nothing. I don't have a job. I don't have family, I don't have friends. I only have you guys. – P7

Theme 7: Importance of the service provider

- Subtheme 1: Nature of the supports required

“I think from the first day I came here, there is a counsellor. I like her too much. She gives me a lot of support and she, she, she, I speak Arabic and she told me a lot of things how I can buy Arabic food, where I can go if I need anything. And I am contacted until now because she always told me, if you, whatever you need, call me and I can help you. Look who else is there. Uh, the friends too. I have friends but at the beginning I have a friend, same me. So all of them depend on the counsellor. But now because I uh, with a school I know other, another people. So the friend support me too”. – P5
“I think counsellors who can, uh, guide them. Nice, nice way. In a nice way, not like me. Like go and do it. Nice. Like because some immigrants are smarter like they can do by themselves, but some needs really help because they don't know they have to start from the zero. Right. So it should be like someone guide them properly.” – P5
“Just for jobs, if single mom, it would be more options. Like it shouldn't be like that conditions they much like, okay, you have to do this, this is, you know, we need a job. So if there's any place I can find jobs easily then go for a lot of process and stuff, you know, struggling a lot. So I think jobs but the rest, opportunities, how to find job quickly and like really we want to do where we want to work. Like if I want to work at school, you know, because my daughter's young so I just should be some options. We can go and find related something in cool. Yeah. I can go and work.” – P5
“If you don't have English, but then there are resources in the language that you speak, you just have to know it. So that is, I think, another struggle that sometime people have. They don't know that there are resources.” – P6
“As an immigrant, I think another struggle that I see is, uh, the banks or the loans are mortgages. I wanted to apply. Like I am paying my rent, right? I pay my rent and utilities. So I just decided like, how about instead of paying rent, I, I'm ready to be mortgage. But then when I went to bank, they see your credit history. This, uh,

they see, uh, you are immigrant. They don't help you in the same way they should, they should be willing. There should be some policies around to consider those things." – P6
"So that is something I think I as an immigrant, I had to say I am struggling and as a parent, single mom early say again, yes, they should be more resources." – P6
"The agencies were my support, because they were the one who helped me, uh, who helped me transition from my home to shelter or do help me understand what else I can do. So like taking those parenting classes, taking uh, support groups to talk to people about my problems. About my concerns. So that was my social group. But even truly now I have friends, I have a colleagues that I have worked with. So those are my social group now. Yeah. Social support here." – P6
"I know I reach out to somebody that the pastor and wanting the church to connect me with the social worker, then my eyes is open as, oh my God. This place is there like heaven for woman's is for example, the place that I'm working right now, we are helping women and children's fleeing abuse, but I don't see that they helped me, but I'm, I'm sorry I'm not on the other side, but it's, I find it unbalanced, but I liked the idea that helping the woman and children's the empower them, but we still have a lot of work to do about that." – P7

- **Subtheme 2: Childcare**

"I have to pay daycare for, to have children and the daycare is very expensive here in Canada. So I said I should have a high wage so I can cover. So that why I am stunned, you know, you want improve myself because when I get a salary it should be high to cover the take it." – P3
"Well she's saying that as a refugee claimant and even as an approved refugee before she gets residents, she doesn't get childcare subsidy and it can take up to two years." – P4 [translator]
"And then, back home, another thing is that the childcare or things like that, of course you pay for them and then they are not so costly as compared to what we are paying here. So costly. And if I have to find somebody for, let's say I'm working Saturdays, the babysitter, all those things are very, very like That's another money. But back home you have support, you can ask a friend, you can ask your mom or somebody to help you out. So there you have support, but here you don't, that's, yes, that's a challenge." – P6
"And other things should be, uh, the childcare, the daycare facilities, uh, as a single mom, as an immigrant, uh, that's another struggle. There should be more resources. I know it's like Monday to Friday you have resources, but then government says, why cannot you have some daycares that are a seven days working? I am willing to pay for that. That would be way cheaper than paying a babysitter. So they should be, they should also provide resources for us. If you're a single mom, they want us to work fine, but then can you provide that resources for me to work? If you don't provide me resources, I have, won't be able to take a job that can help you right? Help me and the government. So they should be able to consider those things" – P6
"I've seen a lot of struggle woman that you know, they want to go to work but they cannot because they don't have support around them because the daycare only open from six to six, they cannot go to work in a Walmart or anything because nobody going to look after the kids." – P7
"If they have like evening, like go full support them to pay for the child care fee. I seen a lot of people prefer to stay home because if I go to work for, what if we just pay me 17 bucks an hour and then I have to pay another person to babysit my kids what $15 I'd rather stay home with my kids and I'm receiving money from the government so unless if they have daycare and yes I can work in evening. That's what we are already struggling day care." – P7

- **Subtheme 3: Delivery of the supports include workshops and support groups**

"If there's some like course or something like workshop to give them, like to not to feel bad." – P2

"One if there is something like, like workshop or something you know to, to like here in immigrant there's so many workshop but like to call them to the children to be near there, uh, to share experience, to talk together, you know, like to know there is another people also like them. You know, sometimes you feel like only you but there is also so many people like you even maybe worst. I told them sometimes if, but if we have that, it will be easy, good." – P2
"Uh, so I inquired around and uh, I did connect with some agencies and then told me that there are a couple of workshops that you can do to understand, uh, and to bridge those gap to see what is expected from you and what you have so that you're not losing your values, but then you making sure that what Canada expects from you, what laws expect from you. You are doing that. So I did, I did a couple of workshops." – P6
I connected with the they immigrant serve serving agencies, they made me realize that even if you don't have your own social group, there are community groups that can help you and settled down. – P6

- **Subtheme 4: What did not work**

Um, I will just share, well, my experience, because now my counsellor, she is different. But the first my counsellor, yeah. Uh, I, I was just, you know, honestly I was like a baby, like I don't know what to do. So when I, she was my first time, oh, when I ask her I need, I have appointment somewhere. So she was, she was just going to computer and print for me, you know, the paper that made and I said what I should do with that, you know, I was just looking at it, what I should do because I don't know about the math, where I have to go. And everything is just new for me. Wait, what is southwest, southeast, this thing, I don't know. And she said, no, you can do it. You can do, I feel so like she's like, yeah, you can do it. Just go there, take bus. And I don't know what the number is. It is what is for 12. What is right. So I just try once by my, uh, by myself. I said, okay, let me do it. And my daughter was with me, it was a doctor appointment time, and she was sick, it was number, a lot of snow, really cold. I don't have proper and yeah I sit on a bus. But I, I just got lost. I was just walking around the block and I was calling her, she didn't pick my call on and I don't know texting, but like for three hours I was just walking in a street and I was asking people like, uh, like knocking the doors because it was different place. Like all around houses. No market, nothing. No. And no one is opening the door. I think maybe I haven't asked someone please how I can go to as doctors stuff like that right or they will give me direction and I will walk. But it was really hard. That like she did that from four, three, two, time with me, the same thing. And then I changed my counsellor and I just locked myself in my house when I got back home, I was just too all the way and I just got scared after that for three months, I didn't go outside because I got really scared. I said, no, never. I never, I will never go because my daughter was really sick. She, her colour was green because of cold and stuff like that. I said maybe she, him, she will die, you know, and even she would get scared, she said, no mom, I want, I don't want to go with you outside. For three months, I locked myself at home even I wasn't going for groceries, stuff like that. So then I talk with the provider and I realize, hey, I don't want to live anymore because you know, she, then she changed my counsellor. I had another counsellor, she was like holding my hand like babies and she's okay this is the bus, she went with me many times, different places even when I learned and then she gave me volunteer. – P5
"I was in shelter, I was on Alberta Aid and Alberta Works and things like that. But that's not enough. They think they are enough. No, it's not. You're just living on the edge. You cannot do anything. Uh, for me it was even a struggle for them because, uh, Alberta Works helps you, but then they are like, they see your education, they see your everything. But then is that education getting me a job? They don't consider that for me. They would always say, you are very employable. You're very employable by go get a job. So I, I, that was another stressful phase for me." – P6
"My everyday schedule is around my work and then my child. I do, I do, I hardly get anything for me if I ever wanted, like I said, sometime I just see, I feel like I just need a good sleep. Right? So of course, uh, that's a struggle. I think apart from that, I wouldn't say if I had more supportive, or more resources. Who can understand that, Uh, not judge you by what's your income or judge you by what immigration status. Like for PR we have more resources as compared to if you're a citizen and if you become a citizen, there are lesser

resources. If your income is between this and this, you get more resources. If you have a little high income, there is no resources." – P6
"But then you need to understand, um, I'm a single mom. If I, even if I am making just above minimum wage, that doesn't mean that I get, I get to do everything. I'm still struggling. I still need those resources and that that is something I sometime I feel that government should be taken care of. Like not judging what is your income bracket and just also judging that, what is your personal status? What is your emotional status? Because they don't consider that. They don't see that. They just see what's your income and based on that they provide the resources and help. That is something I struggle here." – P6
"Like I said, first, that income bracket should not be a consider. It should be the family status or your status. Uh, what not only family status, your history should be considered. I know government collects all those information as soon as we land, but then do they consider that? Do they consider that? Yes, I was in shelter for this time. I struggled for this this many years. Uh, what is my mental status? What are the resources I need? They should consider on those things. They don't do that. Uh, if they would, they would, uh, be able to support me. And I will be able to provide better for my child. Right? I don't mind paying taxes. I know that's a necessity. But then would you take a minute and see my history that I, am I ready to be a part and pay my taxes and help you? Yes, I am. But then will it affect me personally? Would it affect my life? You have to consider that the government doesn't take that in consideration. Right? Uh, what is my history? They just see that, okay, person is working, but then job doesn't define you. Income doesn't define you. Your living style, your emotional status defines you. So I think that should be considered" – P6
"Oh my God, I was so stressed, so stressed to lose my kids. Those system have to be changed in Alberta Work. They need to change. Not Alberta Work. The children services. They need to change the system because not every situation is fit with their, what they are doing is not fit for me and my kids. Maybe if it was somebody, but you have to investigate and check what's going on with this family. You have to support them, not separate the family. That's what I tried to do. They try to separate my kids from me. Why don't you support me? Right. Support me and then you don't separate us. We need a stability and for the kids and the mom, this what we have issue here too. Uh, lots of them here with the mother when the children's services and then a mom have struggling to keep the kids safe and then here's these people come bugging them. Hey, you're not a fit mother. You unfit mother. We need to take your kids away. That's their job, take the kids away and give to somebody else? Somebody else get the money. This is all money about business. It was, I was always so struggling." – P7